

# Only Connect London

Research on the impact of Only Connect arts programmes on prevention, reducing re-offending and desistance



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## **Executive Summary**

### **Background**

This research was conducted for Only Connect over a 6 month period from May to October 2014 by the Institute of Education, funded by Creativeworks London Creative Voucher Round 6. The focus of the enquiry was to understand the role of the arts in enabling Only Connect (OC) members to become positive contributors, and to identify the value and place of the creative arts to the organisation and the immediate community.

This report considers the role of the creative arts in preventing, reducing re-offending and desistance and presents data and contributions from OC users, members, staff and associate artists, attained utilising a mixed method approach.

Only Connect describes itself as a crime prevention charity providing a positive community that provides training, support and creative opportunities for young people at risk, prisoners and ex-offenders. It delivers programmes to support its members at every point of the crime cycle to reduce offending and increase aspirations. Attention was therefore given to the demography of users and those engaged with OC programmes and activities.

The focus was on two OC programmes, OC Create which uses various art forms such as theatre, film and music to engage people that struggle in conventional education settings and OC Impact which is aimed at school students that are considered at risk of permanent school exclusion; engage in truancy, anti-social behaviour and young people serving community sentences.

OC's intention was to use the research as an opportunity to understand users and members understanding of the term 'value' and their views on the benefits of the creative arts opportunities provided in order to improve their services. This report will also add to knowledge regarding the creative arts and its impact on desistance, reducing and preventing re-offending.

### **Findings**

Respondents and contributors to the data described a number of benefits of the arts in supporting them to make right choices, develop confidence and developing teamworking skills. Many of the members or users referred to a benefit of feeling part of a family. They described the support they are given by OC as essential and which makes them feel 'included'. This finding was outside of the expected response to a series of programmes, but highlighted the extent that the organisation has gone to in providing a holistic environment for members.

Another significant observation was the number of BME members and users with a range of social challenges that OC support which is external to the arts such as housing and benefits advice, reminders to attend appointments. Tensions experienced with an organisation providing a service that they believe meet the needs of beneficiaries

## **Recommendations**

Recommendations are presented using three heading; preventing offending behaviour, reducing re-offending and supporting desistance using arts activities. It also suggests the engagement of positive role models who have cultural competence to support the provision of effective services to enhance those already provided by OC.

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## **Glossary and Abbreviations**

OC	Only Connect
Desistance	Stop or cease from offending
Members	Registered users of the OC services
OC Create	Arts programme
OC Impact	Schools programme
Offender	Individual that has committed a criminal offence
Ex-offender	Individual who has completed the conditions of their sentence; in the community or custody

## The Role of the Arts in Desistance and Reducing Re-offending

### Only Connect London

#### Introduction

Reducing re-offending can be described as the reducing or lessening of repeated criminal behaviour, usually related to reconviction. Desistance is the term used to cease or stop offending behaviour and the process of personal growth through which offenders become non-offenders<sup>1</sup>. Only Connect (OC)<sup>2</sup> is a crime prevention charity that describes itself as a positive community that provides training and creative opportunities that help serving prisoners in custody, ex-offenders, and young people at risk of criminal activity to realise their value and worth. In order to achieve its aim, OC delivers and facilitates a range of arts programmes and activities intended to assist its members (service users) – offenders, ex-offenders, people at risk – to develop skills that enable them to make the right choices. This report will consider *the value of the arts and their impact on preventing, reducing re-offending and desistance from offending through OC and identified programmes, OC Impact and OC Create*.

OC employs 50 paid members of staff and 20 volunteers. 7 members of staff are employed on OC Create and 6 on OC Impact.

Desistance from crime is a process that describes when an individual has stopped offending. Maruna (2001) states that this concept is typically understood as the absence and maintenance of crime-free behaviour. Reducing re-offending activities assist individuals to take personal responsibility for their behaviour and actions resulting in fewer incidences of offending. It is a process that results from a range of contributory factors that may include the engagement in an activity such as the arts, and according to McNeill (2006) family relationships, communities; society and government policies. It also can be linked to an event such as becoming a parent or the death of a significant other.

A number of reports such as Parks & Bilby (2010) suggest that arts-based interventions produce positive outcomes that support rehabilitation, reduce re-offending and desistance through bringing about positive change? in the participant. A project commissioned by the Arts Alliance, *Re-imagining futures: Exploring arts interventions and the process of desistance*<sup>3</sup>, considers possible relationships between arts activities and abstinence from crime. The research reflected qualitative outcomes because by their nature arts-based activities are influenced by engagement of the

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<sup>1</sup> Arts Alliance *Re-imagining futures: Exploring arts interventions and the process of desistance*

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.onlyconnectuk.org/>

<sup>3</sup> [www.artsalliance.org.uk/demonstrating-value-arts-criminal-justice](http://www.artsalliance.org.uk/demonstrating-value-arts-criminal-justice)

participant, their aspirations and expectations on themselves, the organisation, the ‘industry’ and the community. This research will assume the school of thought that the arts contribute to reducing offending.

Using various forms of art such as drama, creative writing and music. Only Connect programmes engage ex-offenders to contribute to desistance and reduce re-offending through arts activities, projects and programmes. This research will identify the possible value and benefits of OC arts projects, in particular *OC Impact* and *OC Create* based on user/member definitions of ‘value’, how and if their engagement with the identified arts programmes deterred them from committing further offences or supported their decisions to reduce or desist from offending behaviour.

Additional Soft outcomes with some evidence of tangible results have emerged from this study, identified through a mixed methods approach that included:

- 15 survey responses (Annex A)
- 5 telephone clarification interviews having received completed surveys
- 2 telephone interviews with the CEOs of OC and 2 staff members
- 10 face to face interviews including a group interview with 4 OC members and 4 members of staff
- An observation of a production currently touring the schools called ‘Back Story’.
- 5 unplanned discussions with members at OC Central

This study is focused on two specific OC arts programmes and the participants and tutors/project leaders’ contributions to questionnaires and interviews, as such reflects a range of planned and emergent outcomes. . When, how and what makes change occur can be subjective, however contributions to this research from participants give a flavour of how members have engaged with OC and its programmes.

The benefits of the arts are considered in relation to member/client expectations of OC programmes/activities, the role creative arts have played in supporting them to engage and contribute and whether outcomes result in prevention, reduction or desistance from criminal behaviour. Where organisations claim to reduce re-offending it is worth considering whether the provision can be effective across offence type, length of time an individual has been involved in offending behaviour, their age, maturity and culture.

As well as the impact on members and users of OC services, artists, staff and the community’s view contribute through evaluation of a performance and other forms of engagement within the OC community.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Community –a social unit sharing common views

OC Impact and OC Create considers the benefits of the arts and engages associate artists and a range of activities and programmes that provide opportunities for members to explore, experience and learn new skills across a spectrum of art forms which is reflected in this research.

This research outlines the benefits of Only Connect arts programmes and their impact on desistance, defined as a process by which people who have committed crimes stop. It will consider the views of staff, members and users of the services offered by OC and present findings on what works to enable ex-offenders to desist or reduce re-offending behaviour and what components of the programme delivered in schools can be claimed to prevent offending.

The following case study is a testimony to the benefits of OC to a former member:

**Case study – Clive (pseudonym)**

Former OC member Clive's initial career focus was to set up his own business in t-shirt design, which he did manage to get started with a group of friends but they parted company. He volunteered at OC and was involved in running workshops and engaged in school tours where he gave presentations to pupils encouraging them to focus on education. This work was supported using drama.

Clive is now a full time paid Youth officer having been assisted by OC to complete an application. He started volunteering with the project and was then given a full time permanent contract. No longer using the services of OC, Clive states that the organisation is a family with all of the characteristics you might find – joy, laughter, conflicts and resolution which makes it unique; it is a family first.



## Research Approach

This research was commissioned over a 6 month period from May to October 2014. A range of activities – paper survey, electronic survey, follow-up discussion; observation and serendipitous conversation were negotiated that would facilitate a mixed methods approach for data collection. The aim was to gain a rich source of information that adequately reflects the creativity and diversity of the arts and discover if and how OC programmes contribute to prevention, reduction of re-offending or desistance.

## Surveys

Surveys were used to support the collection of quantitative data showing the volume of members/participants that are or have previously been engaged in OC projects. Structured and semi-structured interviews were used to gain qualitative data particularly with staff managing the Impact and Create programmes. Face to face and telephone interviews were conducted and where members submitted survey questionnaires, some follow up conversations took place to gain further clarification of responses.

An electronic survey was created with a series of questions opened for OC members to contribute their thoughts on a series of 10 questions across 6 pages (Annex A). Questions were devised based upon the research enquiry and the audience we expected to engage – OC staff, members and associate artists. A draft questionnaire was sent electronically to the main contact at OC and it was circulated for feedback to ensure the language used would be appropriate and amendments were made. This engagement was imperative in understanding the clientele that engage with OC services.

The form asked the following questions

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Education history and attainments
4. Criminal record
5. Activity and outcomes since release from custodial or community sentence
6. Programme involvement at OC
7. Perceived benefits of OC programme
8. Opportunity to share further their views about their experiences.
9. Identify benefits of OC programmes from user/members and staff perspectives and the 'value' of the arts in reducing or preventing offending behaviour.

To encourage a good number of responses and to aid analysis, the survey was devised electronically on Survey Monkey. Survey questions were developed over a number of email communications and negotiations with OC to ensure that the questions posed would elicit the right type of information. Access to and the completion of the survey by members proved challenging and those that did complete the survey skipped many of the questions. However in discussion after receiving the

complete questionnaire, respondents happily shared their views. To address the poor response, the form was distributed in printed form to members, scanned and then submitted.

Impromptu discussions with members and staff at OC Central gave a good insight into how the organisation was perceived.

Observations of OC members taking part in a production called 'Back Story' in September 2014 enabled the collection of information from the cast, audience and funders and gave an opportunity to gain an immediate reflection of the storyline and performances impact on the audience.

This report introduces the organisation from respondents' perspectives and considers how their experiences and specific activities support them reduce or desist from offending or criminal behaviour. A phenomenological approach to interpretation of data is presented which identifies the emergent dominant theme that will determine a response to the research question but also allows for the researcher to be a visible contributor.<sup>5</sup> The researcher's perspective is also an enriching addition to the data.

## **OC Programmes<sup>6</sup>**

OC deliver a range of activities which include Resolve; a conflict resolution project where participants work with peers and trained facilitators in sessions, group work and away days as preparation for the work force or going into business. Participants are supported to achieve an Arts Award qualification and supported into work experience, employment or starting their own business.

Some examples of outcomes of the programmes are:

- Young people submitted a pre-project survey at the beginning of the project, assessing their attitudes and then completed a post-project survey at the end of the project. According to OC's initial internal evaluation, the participants felt that they were better able to manage situations of conflict at the end of the project.
- Through participating in arts-based projects, including two public performances, the young reported that they felt that they felt more confident.
- Young people submitted a pre-project survey at the beginning of the project, assessing their attitudes and then completed a post-project survey at the end of the project. According to initial OC internal evaluation, the participants felt that they were better able to solve problems.
- Through participating in various team-based activities throughout the project, the young people demonstrated improved team-working skills

Other opportunities on offer include:

- An accredited Arts Award qualification

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<sup>5</sup> Plummer, K (1983)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.onlyconnect.london/our-work/oc-impact/>

- Personal and Professional Development sessions
- Access to support services
- Support in finding placements/employment with local organisations

OC Central which is a centre in Kings Cross offers a place for members and others attending that is always embrative. When people are barred for a range of reasons including unacceptable or repeat criminal behaviour, the head of OC Central suggests that it is not goodbye. People are members for life because rather than simply an arts programme, it is a community, a supportive space, and a place where the older members “look out for their younger’s”. OC Central opens ideas and possibilities and embraces real community. It is flexible to individual’s personal needs, which are supported by a mix of staff.

The OC Create programmed uses various art forms, predominantly: theatre, film and music to engage people that struggle in conventional education settings but have a talent for expression. They develop life skills such as teamwork, confidence, and working towards a goal. (See appendix B)

OC Create is aptly named as it engages users in a host of creative arts activities and experiences which includes creative writing; filming, visits to galleries and theatres, music production and drama.

Over the past quarter, 117 users - 77 unique overall, attended the range of activities offered through the programmes OC programmes. Feedback from some users is reflected in the *findings* of this research below.

OC Impact is a schools based programme offers a 90-minute interactive presentation for year 6 pupils transitioning into secondary school and secondary schools. It is designed to deliver an alternative to traditional teaching and learning and seeks to engage young people through exposure to social issues such as: gangs, peer pressure, substance abuse, cyber bullying and sexual exploitation using art as a medium.

There is a growing interest in these social issues, resulting in developing theory about their affects on socially excluded people. However, there are also young people affected by gangs that may not come from a socially excluded background, for example, girls that become the girlfriends of so called gang members and engage in criminal activity to support their partners. It is unclear if these issues have been explored by the organisation, thus this research will consider whether the opportunities offered meet their described needs.

OC Impact uses writing, drama, music, dance and leadership to create productions that allow individuals to express themselves and engage participants, usually younger people in the community or school. However according to the head of OC Impact, this activity is not solely responsible for

reducing offending neither is it a solution in its own right but it can play a part in supporting individuals to make decisions about changing their life story .

Although this programme is aimed at school pupils to impact on their behaviour and prevent offending behaviour, there must be some element of the process that assists members to change. This is deemed to occur through the enactment of past life experiences and being given an opportunity through writing and drama to reflect on these in order to ultimately change future behaviour. Performers receive appropriate training and also receive clinical supervision from a trained counsellor bi-weekly. This means that they reflect on situations that they have faced in their lives, create stories that are enacted for an audience, particularly of young people. The young people are given an opportunity to discuss and rationalise the content of the play with the actors. The plays are usually based on the effects of social exclusion, poverty, crime and its effects and are expected to prevent young people commit crime<sup>7</sup>.

Historical data provided by OC Central Offices from 2013 (Annex F) shows the number of members that have engaged in identified arts programmes and includes the number of participants on each programme, their ages and whether or not they have criminal records and outcomes. This data assists OC to evaluate their programmes and gain on-going support in maintaining funding and provision or to consider progression opportunities.

The following section will present data and interpretation that identifies and interprets dominant and emerging themes.

### **Survey Results and supporting data**

At least 70 survey requests were distributed on paper and electronically but only 15 were received and not all questions were answered. Given the paucity of information gained, surveys were clearly not the best method of collecting data, thus the survey presents only a snapshot of views to be considered. What was evident from the responses was that the average age ranged from between 20 and 25 years, and exceptionally for this type of programme, 2 respondents were aged 45 and 46. By this age unless they are working in a leadership or supportive role this type of project is intended to engage younger people. Only 1 female completed a questionnaire.

Publicity and web activity portray BME males advertising the services of OC in relation to reducing re-offending or desistance, cultural awareness and ensuring that there is an understanding of their

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.onlyconnect.london/our-work/oc-impact/>

needs may be necessary. This requires that the needs of this group are culturally specific and need to be addressed mindfully. According to Phillips & Webster (2014) interventions for this group requires an understanding of crime and justice from the BME perspective in order for provision to be effective.

Seven respondents stated that they received community orders and 6 respondents stated that they had received custodial sentences. All respondents attained a basic educational academic level, 7 of whom indicated that their qualifications were achieved while in custody.

### ***Arts activities and awards***

6 respondents stated that they gained OC Certificates and each one indicated that they received a 'Rising star' for achievement, Conflict resolution, Mediation and Level 2 coaching. 3 respondents achieved Arts awards at foundation and entry levels.

### ***Goals and progress reviews***

As part of the research, OC staff were keen to know how members engaged in goal setting and reviews. 4 respondents answered this question and stated their goals were negotiated with staff and set to establish a career path, access advice and guidance support. 2 respondents stated that no targets had been set. Only 1 respondent stated that he had reviewed his goals but did not find it beneficial.

An associate artist supporting OC described an assessment process based on the type of activity and interaction that members engaged in. For example, a goal may be to perform in a production with the end result acting or whatever role the individual is tasked with. The commencement, progress and outcome would be a good way to measure progress for all concerned. It is possible that respondents did not understand the concept outlined in the survey and therefore did not consider the achievement of an outcome, a completed goal.

### ***Members' Expectations of OC***

Important to this research were survey responses regarding members expectations that members stated that they had of OC in relation to arts. 3 respondents hoped for an academic outcome as a result of the involvement with OC; 3 wished to gain employment; 6 want to become mentors; 8 hoped to work in the media and 3 wish to become actors. This last expectation is managed by the organisation through supervision, inviting actors in to talk about the reality of the sector. 2 respondents indicated that they want to have a successful music career and start their own business.

An OC Studio Engineer at Central (permanent staff and Alumni Member) referred to the studio as being "like therapy, even for me, when I go through stresses at home and I go through so many things

in life that put me on a bad place, I feel that music is the only thing that can help me get through it. It helps me take away all the focus from all the stress and the pain. Music is the only remedy that can take me out of that and put me in my own dream – I do not have to think about any negative, only positive and creative”.

‘PC’, an Alumni Member in relation to performing said, “Once you get behind that mike you become a new person. It is a way of relieving some of that tension you have and I think it helps you deal with some of the things you are going through”.

Another individual worked as a Christmas temp 5 years ago. At 24 years of age, this individual stated that he had no aspirations or goals. He was asked what stopped him from re-offending. He did not respond to this question

Another interviewee stated that at 33 years of age, and having spent 11 years in prison overall, he has been attending OC every day for 6 months since his release from custody. He has supported an OC Impact production. When asked about employment, he stated that he worked for 2 weeks as a cleaner before being sacked for arriving late for work. He applauded OC and stated that it helps him because people care. He said that the environment ‘calms you down’ particularly as you can get upset with pressures of life.

According to these responses, the expectations that members had of becoming professional music artists need to be managed in the same way as individuals that wished to become actors. This can be very much a cultural expectation of Black males in particular who believe they can become music artists. This is inadvertently supported by a number of organisations that may not understand the expectations of a Black man to successfully enter the music industry. In the media and in particular music channels, the music industry appears to be saturated with successful Black men and women. In reality unless there is an understanding of the market it is difficult to make a success in the music industry. Rather than imagining themselves behind the microphone, individuals could be encouraged to explore the range of opportunities available behind the scenes such as sales, marketing and engineering.

The benefits of OC as described by respondents include developing confidence and an understanding of themselves and public speaking. There was also a notion presented of ‘giving something back’. When asked to define this concept, the main description was the importance of role modelling in order to prevent others getting involved in crime.

Staff responses concur with the members, stating that participants developed esteem and their increased confidence can be observed in their everyday engagement and participation, also when presenting and acting in productions.

A part of the research was to identify the value placed on OC and the programmes and opportunities offered. Respondents were given an opportunity to give their personal definition of the term which would then be used to present responses using the term 'value'. The following definitions were given by members and a contribution from associate artists was offered:

- o Something of worth
- o Something that makes one excel
- o Something you can stick to
- o Something good
- o Enjoyable
- o Priceless
- o Has purpose
- o The benefits/enjoyment/personal development gained from an activity

One member-stated benefit of OC programmes was the opportunity for members to share their views and ideas. Some feedback from members about the benefits of the organisation was 'opportunities to share their views and ideas', one individual stated that he 'would be at risk without the services of OC', and another said that he was 'so busy it stopped him re-offending'.

Adversely, some other comments made through discussion about their feelings were less positive included:

- "There are no real strengths at this current moment. I know I am in a bad place and want to change"
- "Not having enough confidence in myself."
- "Self-doubt, occasionally becoming a bit depressed"

Individuals that were interviewed following the receipt of their contributions from completed surveys were able to highlight their views on other support that may be of benefit from the organisation. They believe that counsellors are needed to assist with wider needs and they made reference to difficulties they experience not being in paid employment.

### **Comparative data and their relationship to theory**

The following tables give an overview of comparative findings relating to the Only Connect Impact and Create programmes and are linked to their relationships to desistance theory or policy, reducing re-offending and prevention of offending behaviour. Each theory is grouped within the organisations expectation of the programme, staff or workers perspectives and members' views.

## Comparative data OC Impact

Desistance Theory	OC Programme Impact	OC Staff perspective OC Impact Programme	Member's views of OC Impact Programme
<b>Desistance</b> To cease from or stop offending behaviour. Contributions to this concept take into consideration life changing experiences, not simply an absence of crime. (Maruna (2007:652))	A description of OC Impact from OC website states that 'Impact is aimed at school students at risk of exclusion, truancy and anti – social behaviour. Young people serving community sentences with Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and other young people at risk of offending. It uses teams of professional facilitators and trained ex-offenders to deliver interactive presentations, workshops and in-depth training courses, delivered by people that students listen to, in the voices they understand'. <sup>8</sup>	According to staff interviewed for this research, they stated that this programme offers support and paid employment; 1-2-1 sessions enabling members to set goals and identify progress with performance. Members get two weeks full time and on-going training in finance, personal development, practical skills training, facilitator training and practical arts training. With reference to the participants, one interviewee stated, "They do a nice job and get paid for it; they are creative and can be a positive voice and role models for young people".	Through OC Impact, members have spoken about their ability to work in schools and the notion of 'giving something back'. They enjoyed the opportunity of engagement and consider themselves role models. They find the experience of developing a play amazing. Monetary awards are only offered for up to three months and may not lead to permanent employment. Participants spoke of developing confidence and self-esteem which supports desistance through individuals making positive decisions.

Reducing Re-offending policy Theory	OC Programme Impact	OC Staff perspective OC Impact Programme	Member's views of OC Impact Programme
<b>Reducing re-offending</b> The Ministry of Justice is promoting an integrated approach to reducing re-offending. This means that no one activity, organisation or contribution to an individual will make a difference. It suggests that engagement with specialists that can provide for assessed and identified needs of offenders should be engaged <sup>9</sup> . Payment by Results <sup>10</sup> is a way of appropriately using resources and measuring outcomes.	Members develop skills to become youth workers and deliver a range of activities to younger people. Theory states that a range of social contributions are required to reduce re-offending. An expectation is placed on the ex-offender/member/ contributor to conduct themselves in a positive manner, thus influencing personal actions and decisions.	OC provide this through its holistic approach to employment, family relationships, housing and community. Having accountability to somebody or a group that cares makes an individual feel they are cared for. According to Arts Alliance Unlocking Value report <sup>11</sup> OC's impact on reducing re-offending shows that 19 of 72 members released from prison have re-offended. The integrated approach to supporting members aligns with policy which should impact on reducing re-offending	Reducing re-offending would be as a result of being a role model and also having support from the organisation with issues other than the arts. There is support for individuals for example with benefits, finance and accommodation and employment issues therefore the 'familial' aspect of being part of the OC group is beneficial. According to some respondents, members have been excluded from OC if they have been identified as re-offending, which some respondents raised as a

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.onlyconnect.london/our-work/oc-impact/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/integrated-offender-management-iom>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/search?q=Payment+by+results>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/unlocking-value/>



			concern.
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These comparisons show relationships between policy, the organisation and members' expectation of the OC Create opportunities. While it shows the benefits of the arts, the dominant theme from respondents was the sense of belonging. Exclusion from such an organisation could have devastating results as it implies the removal of an individual from their 'home and family'. This is probably a situation they already had to face as a result of imprisonment or involvement in crime.

<b>Crime Prevention Theory/Policy</b>	<b>OC Impact Programme</b>	<b>OC Staff perspective OC Impact Programme</b>	<b>Members views of OC Impact Programme</b>
<b>Prevention</b> Young offenders need education and training to enable them to return to school or college or find employment, but too many lack basic skills <sup>12</sup> according to the MOJ policy on preventing more young offenders from re-offending.	<b>OC Impact</b> is aimed at school students at risk of exclusion, truancy and anti – social behaviour, young people serving community sentences with Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and other young people at risk of offending. It uses teams of professional facilitators and trained ex-offenders to deliver interactive presentations, workshops and in-depth training courses, delivered by people that students listen to, in the voices they understand (see ref 10)	Artists that contribute to the programmes delivered in schools feel that their efforts are effective. One actor stated that he felt that he was able to make a difference when they can present alternatives to crime and encourage young people to make right choices.	Members and participants believe that their experiences portrayed through drama and workshops prevent young people from getting involved in crime. The young people are able to ask questions about the lives and experiences of the actors which OC believes make a difference to decisions making.

<b>Managing expectations</b>
Some members believe that they might be scouted to become actors; however the programme manages expectations by establishing OC Impact's purpose which is predominantly about social change through their passion for working with young people and supporting them to address their issues. The arts are secondary to the social aspect of the programme. Project members are assessed prior to going into a school; they receive counselling, supervision and therapy before presenting sessions about their past life. This ensures that they are prepared as well as safeguarded. The reality of the arts industry is consistently explored through training and discussion.
<b>Reducing re-offending Outcomes</b>
It is unclear how many of the members engaged in OC Impact re-offended as this data is not available. The number of members that gained employment and training, which policy and theory suggest are important factors in reducing re-offending, was not established. 1 member has been employed on a full time basis for a couple of years and others have moved on to pursue other opportunities according to the records. There are those however that have re-offended and not returned to OC programmes but according to the organisation, have maintained contact.

An independent evaluation of OC Impact for the London School of Economics (2014) found that 68% of students showed improvement in their pro-social attitudes as a result of its work, with particular success among Black British students and students with low confidence<sup>13</sup>. Reference is made to Black British students which is an ethnic option not usually offered when selecting ethnicity. It is an interesting inclusion and it would be useful to know whether the school defined pupils as such and at what stage this was identified and why.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/preventing-more-young-offenders-from-re-offending>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.onlyconnect.london/our-work/oc-impact/>

Another quote from OC website refers to a survey which suggests that ‘of nearly 400 Wandsworth school students taking part in this activity, data revealed a sharp decrease in those students saying it is ‘ok to fight to solve conflict’ (from 53% to 11%) and those saying they ‘would carry knives for protection’ (from 42% to 10%).’ It would be useful to know how long these views were sustained after watching the play as only then could the claim be made that offending behaviour is prevented.

From the same report, following the presentations:

- 90% of respondents demonstrated an aversion towards gang membership
- 89% of respondents demonstrated a negative attitude towards violence as a form of conflict resolution
- 82% disapproved of the use of violence as a means of restoring lost pride’

These statistics were gathered immediately after young people watched an impactful production and engaged with actors, some of whom were ex-offenders. Further enquiry would demonstrate whether pupils maintained those views, whether they engaged in the behaviours they stated they would refrain from and whether school exclusions occurred as a result of unacceptable behaviour.

### OC Create

OC Create /Policy	OC Create Programme	OC Staff perspective OC Create Programme	Member’s views of OC Create Programme
Creative opportunities provided by the arts is deemed to enhance an individual’s self-esteem and ‘develop positive behaviour and attitudes of offenders in prison, according to Miles and Strauss (2010) also help to address the needs of ‘damaged communities outside of the justice system’. The arts create co-operation and consideration of others.	Create activities include music production, filming, creative writing and acting. All of these activities require working with others and can therefore develop consideration of others and working towards an outcome. It is an empowering experience for individuals and groups to plan work towards and experience an outcome such as a production.	Create is a collective of activities that support and meet a range of needs. Members have opportunities to participate in various roles on a number of projects at different levels. According to the project manager, activities on offer in OC help individuals to progress. The media projects and exposure to professionals assist them to develop self-worth, confidence, and discipline and instils a concept of ‘hard work’.	Participants on this project work together in partnership which requires them to consider the views and feelings of others. Access to music studios, computers with up-to-date music software, film, CD production as well as theatre and other visits give short bursts of activity and opportunity that could last a day or several weeks.
<b>Managing Expectations</b>			
Create’s project manager believes that members have strong beliefs in their own identity but do wish to achieve the benefits of celebrity life style of an artist. Professional artists are invited into the centre to share the practical experiences which give them details about the struggles they have in working as an actor or artist. This helps to keep dreams realistic and plans and goals achievable. The organisation is open and honest with members to reduce and avoid disappointment. Feedback is a common feature which gives members an opportunity to reflect and manage their aspirations.			
<b>Reducing re-offending</b>			
As with OC Impact, the range of arts activities on offer supports reducing re-offending as part of a wider framework which is in line with the integrated offender management model which identifies and meets the needs of individuals offering negotiated solutions – where staff and members discuss and agree targets or goals. Reducing re-offending has not been demonstrated here as statistics that demonstrate outcomes have not been followed up or feedback has not been directed to the project manager. OC is however working towards this. One interviewee has been out of prison and at the organisation since 2009 and has never worked. He stated that he needs help to find some type of manual labour. Instead this individual was creating music on computer software. When asked what he hoped to achieve at the centre, he stated that he finds it relaxed and he is kept occupied. He referred to the people at the centre as being his family. Where explanation is not given, this research recognises that there may be underlying factors that result in individual’s long-term attendance at OC – this was not ascertained by this research.			

An example of activity conducted by OC Impact is reflected in the production 'Back Story' which was presented to an audience of people from the community, the playwright, their family, supporters and funders. The audience was predominantly white and did not apparently reflect the cast or storyline experience of social exclusion. The playwright, a full time OC staff member is from the BME community created a storyline that presented the journey of three young people into adulthood demonstrating a range of social issues that OC Impact endeavoured to capture. Using the negative experiences of participants as a preventative to crime through enabling and encouraging individual's to make right choices legally, during the production; we were all encapsulated within a whirlwind of experiences presented by the actors. The message is predominantly designed for delivery at schools however the storyline can reinforce stereotypical views of people that are both socially excluded and observers of the experiences. It is unclear whether and how this helps or hinders the prevention of offending behaviour.

The lighting, sounds and ambiance portrayed a series of experiences that addressed family and its breakdown, education and exclusion. Sirens, fear, paranoia and behaviour that resulted from situations in childhood that neither of the characters in the three storylines had any control over were convincingly and creatively portrayed.

## Discussion and analysis

This section returns to the research question *‘What are the values and benefits of the arts opportunities specifically offered by OC programmes on preventing, reducing re-offending and desistance from offending behaviour’*.

The arts contribute to an individual’s sense of esteem, belonging and confidence. These characteristics were described by respondents and staff alike. Individual informal discussions with members demonstrated appreciation of the opportunities to engage in the range of opportunities on offer but the support outside of the arts was imperative.

Results from interviews with older respondents at the OC Centre, one stated that he had been attending OC for 5 years on and off. This presented a concern as these men were engaged in the same type of activities as younger people. When asked if he saw himself as a role model, he said “no”, he was just “looking after his own interests”. However he stated that he was supported at the centre; it was “somewhere to go and something to do”. For his maturity and experiences, the centre could use the opportunity to use him as a role model. Giving all attendees negotiated goals, as well as benefitting from the social aspects of the organisation they can engage in planning and working towards outcomes.

A general feeling of hopelessness and being disenfranchised from possible employment and elevation from the social cycle of social exclusion was sensed and verbalised by a group of men sitting at computers producing music. These individuals could add to the social capital within their community as a result of their experiences. Innovation and understanding of the impact of exclusion on those individuals can be used to proactively address issues that excluded groups are likely to face.

Socio-cultural differences need to be understood and socio-structural mechanisms implemented to ensure that as well as receiving what could be described as superficial, short-term fixes. Change described in the production Back Story can be expected and achieved. Staff were asked for the whereabouts of original members who had been involved with OC around 8 years ago. They explained that they appeared to struggle with the changes that occurred within the organisation as it continues to develop and move towards addressing a more diverse clientele. One individual in particular has returned to prison, others have been excluded for a range of reasons which we did not explore.

Staff are sensitive to the needs of the OC community and seek to provide services that meet the needs of the whole person and is reflective of an integrated offender management approach. They believe that through the arts, personal experiences being presented to others strengthen them as they are able

to reflect and alter the outcomes through drama and can help to prevent individual's engaging in revolving offending cycles.

There is also dichotomy between the perceptions of organisations that provide services to socially excluded groups which differ from the group it represents. This presents tensions that were evident through this research so that the expectations of what is provided and how, can be at odds. One face to face discussion with a group of men at the OC Centre stated for example referred to the staff as being 'upper class and white' and suggested a need for more staff that looked like himself (BME). This type of experience could result in barriers to success and worth consideration.

The dominant theme revealed throughout this research was the significance given to OC by its members as being a family; one respondent described it as a 'surrogate family' to members and friends. This raised another question for consideration, why 'the family' as a metaphor been presented? This could be summarised by the establishment of a 'members' system that was intended to create a sense of belonging. This concept is described aptly in Maslow's hierarchy of need<sup>14</sup> which places the importance of love, family and belonging immediately after essential, basic physiological needs.

This fundamental need may account for the constant reference by members to the family and belonging, despite the main aim of the programme and this research which was about the benefits of the arts in reducing re-offending. An answer may also be found within the underlying ethos and establishment of OC derived from responses to interviews conducted with the founders of Only Connect.

Interviews with the CEOs of Only Connect revealed that the organisation was birthed through a passion for people that were socially disadvantaged. They recognised that individuals with chaotic backgrounds did not respond as well to traditional teaching and learning methods. A kinaesthetic approach to learning was utilised with positive results. This was extended to prisons through drama and theatre work which proved effective and resulted in participants joining Only Connect when they left custody as members. This would instil a continued sense of belonging. Additionally, each Wednesday a meal is cooked and attended by members, the CEO of the company and other staff. They share a meal together seated around a large table and have a discussion regarding a current topic. The CEO invites individuals to contribute and also to conclude the discussion.

Overall, the main benefit of OC programmes and activities presented by members and participants of the programme was the notion of 'family' and belonging. Respondents stated that within a family,

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.learning-theories.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs.html>

one can have a tantrum and know that they will not be rejected. This was important to the respondents as it enables them to be 'themselves'.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion of this research it is clear that there are a number of benefits to the OC Create and OC Impact programmes. There are however two main themes that are dominant through the report. One is that the organisation is perceived as a family with its complexities, disruption, love and care; another is the need for an understanding of the diversity of members and how to meet their identified needs based upon their background, experience and culture.

A number of staff working in the organisation that have engaged with this research have a rich source of experience in the arts and have a keen interest in working with people that are dealing with the effects of social exclusion. They present as being committed and dedicated to making a difference for OC members.

It is important for research to reflect the difficulties that are inevitably faced by organisations working with vulnerable people. Performance of such organisations centre on the success of outcomes, however there are issues that we observed and discussed with members which we believe would benefit from further exploration. For example, a number of members described some of the issues they face and the role OC play in addressing them, such as benefits, housing or employment matters. What is the level of support offered? What specialist skills do staff use? How is the status quo maintained with regards to relationships, behaviour management and conduct?

As indicated by one of the interviewees, OC reflects the institutions from which many of the members are referred. It is therefore to be commended that the researcher for this research is reflective of the BME community that it predominantly serves. Currently, 26% of the prison population is from the BME community where disproportionality is reflected throughout the Criminal Justice System. Staffing within institutions and organisations do not reflect the community it serves. OC at least attempts to redress this through its engagement with staff and the community.

The following sets of recommendations result from the interpretation of data collected using a range of sources and are presented under three heading; General recommendations; Preventing offending, reducing re-offending and desistance from offending recommendations.

Assessment of need often with the use of psychometric testing may be beneficial to aid the organisation in meeting the needs of individuals. Some of the people that reflect the dominant group supported by OC are considered to have psychological and mental ill health issues. They are more likely to have been excluded from formal education, attended a pupil referral unit, be unemployed, possibly dwell in social housing and engaged in petty crime before being incarcerated. There is no

doubt that the sum of these issues can impact on an individual when they are released from custody and attend a provision such as OC. The organisation will be particularly skilled in managing the impact of these experiences on behaviour etc.

Previous research does not reflect the difficulties that inevitably arise when working with this vulnerable group therefore as a professional within the criminal justice system I would recommend that further research could benefit the organisation to identify how it overcomes these difficulties to achieve its commendable outcomes. Results and methodology would be of benefit to other organisations delivering similar provision.

Some respondents believed they would become scouted as actors during the delivery of their roles – when acting in productions with a diverse audience. This did not happen for most and indeed was not the primary goal of productions, but to instil confidence, competence and self-esteem. Recommendations presented below may support the organisation to address this and other observations resulting from this research.

## **General Recommendations**

To avoid unrealistic expectations of members who take part in the range of arts projects and programmes with OC, drama therapy could be considered as a form of expressive arts therapy, which can utilise a range of methods. It can be appropriate for individuals, couples, families, and various groups, offering an opportunity to ‘recreate ourselves’<sup>15</sup>, which aptly describes the OC Impact project. It is deemed to help individual to discover their creativity, their ability to feel the power to change the individual’s way of being and acting.

The role of a drama therapist is to find a safe way of working that suits the individual and may involve other activities such as music, drawing, using objects to represent things, movement and images to permit each person to participate at his/her own level. There is no standard of performance, only self-critique. As a recommendation, for this methodology:

- Drama therapy could be employed by OC; using culturally competent therapists. This is also an opportunity to engage the knowledge and experiences of members – particularly those that are mature (older) to support such activities. This research shows that members attend OC for many years without receiving funding or the benefit of salaries through employment.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.dramatherapist.net/dramatherapy-clients>



- Members should be encouraged to become therapists - a simple Open College Network course may be available to provide awareness and possibly an introductory certificate
- Information regarding art as a therapy can be introduced to manage expectations of the purpose of the arts in preventing offending behaviour as opposed to entering the world of professional acting

### **Preventing Offending Behaviour Recommendations**

Consistently affirming and reinforcing stereotypical representations of socially excluded people that have been involved in crime is not necessary. School children being exposed to the productions presented by OC Impact which are seen daily through the media consistently replays the effects of social exclusion. A further question for research might be an understanding of the demography of the schools and communities. For example, what do parents think about the content of plays? What are the effects of these programmes beyond the production, does it prevent offending?

- Emphasis can be placed upon the results of healing rather than of damage which is of more benefit to young minds, particularly those that are transitioning towards young adulthood. OC has funding, kudos and opportunity to present change and benefits of being an upstanding positive contributor to society rather than consistently reinforcing stereotypes.
- Engage professionals for advice and guidance in the range of activities that the organisation hopes to deliver to ensure that provision is appropriate and relevant. This means working with socially and culturally competent professionals who can be sourced through research or contact with identified universities and institutions.

### **Reducing Re-offending Recommendations**

Reducing re-offending we discover is not about one activity or provision, but a host of services that meet the identified need of the offender. Just as people have multiple needs, so there has to be a move away from one size fits all for interventions. OC Impact and Create offer contributions described in this report such as self-esteem; self-confidence; the ability to speak and present competently. However, a distinction between care giving and caretaking may be considered. Members and staff refer to their experiences in OC like being part of a family. OC's role as care takers is to take care in times of need but also to set boundaries and establish structure that will cause formal membership to expire, yet giving individuals an opportunity to visit and provide updates at scheduled periods. See the following example:

- member signs up when s/he leaves custody

- An assessment of need takes place – possibly psychometric and a negotiated SMART<sup>16</sup> action plan is developed
- Appropriate referrals are made – housing, careers advice and guidance, employment agency
- Establish a set of goals attributing time scales as appropriate
- Member agrees to a plan that sets boundaries, gives information about goals.
- Agreement is made for individual's to review action plans as appropriate with an identified member of staff (preferably culturally competent).
- A negotiated review plan is developed showing progression and movement.
- At the end of the negotiated time frame, a review and final report/reference is provided for the individual who is employed with a set contract, supported to move onto the planned outcomes

Taking this approach may support the expectations of individuals that for many reasons commit to spending a number of years at OC. There are guidelines defined within and OC Membership Tracking Document which OC states, is intended to be better implemented. These stated guidelines, boundaries and plans will support members' in developing realistic expectations of the organisation and understanding how OC services and provision can support their lives free of offending behaviour.

## **Desistance Recommendations**

In order to stop or desist from offending behaviour, an awareness of the causes, effects, types of crime and who is known to commit identified offences must be understood. Knowledge of the contributory factors that support desistance is also required, particularly when the group for which support being offered represents a culture other than that of its service providers. For example, according to Calverley (2013) turning points of change and what individuals perceived as affected desistance was similar between offenders from 3 ethnic backgrounds – White, Black and dual heritage and Indian Bangladeshi.

- Financial and emotional support from significant others
- Reorientation of aspirations and actions towards a non-criminal future

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<sup>16</sup> <http://sbinformation.about.com/od/businessmanagemen1/a/businessgoals.htm>

The ability for organisations to support these characteristics is important. However, there are socio-structural differences that contribute to individuals from various groups to desist from crime. Black and dual heritage people for example according to a study conducted by Calverly (2013) demonstrated that desistance is more individualistic as there was often a damaged or non-existent family upon which they could rely. Where there was a family, members were dispersed widely and often there was little resource to support them in their quest to desist from offending. These offenders were more likely to be self-reliant and where they have poor employment history and less likely to gain employment or develop marketable skills. Ex-offenders from Indian and Bangladeshi communities however were reliant on their close community and family networks.

- Cultural competence and awareness of the needs of members and friends from various communities is imperative if the claim that service provision supports desistance
- An awareness of mental health, housing, family and other needs must be understood. Engaging staff or volunteers that are culturally competent will support this immediately
- Structured links with employers and established relationships with significant others can be explored, developed and supported with the use of drama and art therapies as a methodology for creating change
- Basic survival skills, use of members as peer role models when they are engaged in the centre would be advantageous to the mentor and mentee
- Use funding to support a long-term strategy that enables employment and financial stability particularly for those less likely to gain employment

## **Reflection and Limitations of this Research**

Engaging in this research was of interest due to my professional background in offender learning with a specialism in preventing and reducing re-offending. OC is an organisation that I came across, while working in the Prison Service, that provided exceptional and engaging arts programmes.

A recent thesis that I conducted as part of my professional doctorate gave me the opportunity to interview a number of members which contributed to the development of my specialism. It is the emerging issue reflected here which cannot be avoided due to the demography and race of people that feature in school exclusions, offending behaviour, re-offending, community and custodial statistics which show that 26% of offenders are BME. Indeed throughout the Criminal Justice System is the overwhelming presence of this group. This study demonstrated the exceptional efforts of OC over a number of years dedicated to offenders, ex-offenders and those at risk of offending behaviour. Challenges are faced by this and other organisations providing activities and support, yet their continued resourcing and identification of ways to engage the identified group is exemplary.

This research had its draw backs, and like any good research, many questions are left unanswered and give way for further enquiry as indicated within this report. Limitations to this research were discussed with OC and it was agreed that the length of time given to conduct this research and the time of year made collection of data sketchy. Staff were on leave and those that were not were very busy with their day job.

Finally, it would be a positive result if the recommendations of this research will be considered and where possible, changes implemented. There is no doubt that information gleaned throughout this research will make valuable contributions to the work of the arts in preventing, reducing and desistance from offending behaviour.

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## **Survey Monkey Questions**

### **Page 1 Contact details**

- a) Name
- b) Email address
- c) Phone number

### **Page 2 General information**

- a) Please indicate your age range?
- b) What is your gender?
- c) What is your ethnic background?
- d) Are you a college student?
- e) Have you ever been convicted of a crime?
- f) Have you ever served a community sentence?
- g) Have you ever serve a prison sentence?
- h) How many times have you been in prison?

### **Page 3 Your Education**

- a) Which of the following have you attended?
  - i. School
  - ii. College
  - iii. Higher education
  - iv. Other training opportunity prison education (please specify)
- b) Were you excluded from school?
- c) What education certificates do you have?
- d) Did you achieve any of your qualifications in prison?

### **Page 4 Your experiences and involvement with OC**

- a. Are you an employee of OC?
- b. Which OC programmes are you involved in?
- c. What do you do at OC?
- d. How long have you been in your position?
- e. How did you hear about OC?

### **Page 5 Purpose of my involvement with OC**

- a. Have you agreed goals with staff that you hope to achieve form your engagement with OC
- b. Did you complete an OC course and gain certificates?
- c. If yes, what level of certificate did you achieve?
- d. Do you have reviews about your agreed goals?

### **Page 6 What is your goal for attending OC**

- a. Attain the next academic level
- b. To get any job
- c. To work in some area of the media
- d. To become an actor in the theatre
- e. To become a mentor
- f. Other – (Please specify)

Page 7 We are interested in your views on the arts on reducing or stopping re-offending

**Which of the following statements do you agree or disagree with about the benefits of OC arts projects?**

- a. Gained confidence
- b. Understand self and needs
- c. Able to speak publicly
- d. Drama is a positive distraction
- e. I feel I am giving something back
- f. I hope to gain employment in the arts world (TV, radio, music)
- g. I enjoy social activities in OC

**Page 8 How would you describe the word 'Value'?**

[Free text]

**Using personal definition of 'value' respond to the following statements from strongly agree to strongly disagree (each question was given an opportunity to include free text)**

- a. OC adds value to me as an individual
- b. OC adds value to my peers
- c. I can see the difference that OC makes to the community
- d. OC is needed for people who may be excluded from school
- e. OC programmes and staff help individuals to change their life style
- f. OC creates opportunities for members
- g. The right numbers of staff are employed at OC
- h. The right numbers of women are employed at OC
- i. The right number of men are employed at OC
- j. The right numbers of ethnic staff work at OC
- k. I am given the chance to share my views with OC
- l. I am able to give ideas for improvement at OC
- m. I make valuable contributions to OC
- n. I would be at risk of offending without the support of OC
- o. Being at OC has stopped me from offending/re-offending

**Page 9 Re-offending is when someone commits a crime after they have finished a prison or community sentence. Do OC programmes and activities stop individuals from re-offending?**

[free text to explain answer]

- a. What kind of art forms have you been involved in?
- b. Have you received any input or involvement from external artists?
- c. What were your views of this involvement if your answer was yes?
- d. Use this space to share your views on the OC Create and Impact programmes or anything else you wish to say about the arts and reducing re-offending

[Free text]

Thank you for completing this form. We may wish to contact you to gain further clarification of your responses

## **Face to face and telephone interview with OC staff**

- 1: Tell me about your background and why you chose to work with offenders / ex-offenders?
- 2: Why did you choose to work for this organisation?
- 3: What benefits do you think the organisation offers to members?
- 4: What percentage of member's progress into education or employment?
- 5: Do you know how the Create helps the individuals to progress?
- 6: What percentage of members / clients did not move on and why?
- 7: How does OC assist members that are unable to find employment?
- 8: Do members have aspirations of being the next Idris Elba or JZee? If so, how do you ensure they have realistic expectations about the arts?
- 9: How does OC deal with members / clients disappointments in relation to success in arts?
- 10: What 3 things would you say are the overall benefits of OC Create to the individual, staff?
- 11: Do you believe that the arts prevent or reduce re-offending? If so how, if not why not?
- 12: What aspect of the arts programme would you say are most effective?
- 13: How does your role contribute to this?
- 14: How do you prepare associate artist to work with members?
- 15: Have you ever had to challenge the behaviour of staff or members in relation to their response to historic criminal activity?
- 16: What is the relationship like between staff and members, are they likely to share if they have re-offended?



## Questionnaire – Only Connect Associate Artist Questionnaire

*Your responses in confidence, to the following questions will give us an indication of the work and purpose of your engagement with OC arts programmes.*

<b>(1) Age:</b>		<b>(2) Ethnicity</b>	
<b>(3) Qualifications and level</b> (Please enter a list of formal qualifications and levels attained)			
Qualification name		Level	
(a)			
(b)			
(c)			
<b>(4) Specific Arts Qualifications (Please enter a list of arts qualifications/certificates)</b>			
Qualification name		Level	
(a)			
(b)			
(c)			

**(5) Experiences:** Please give a brief outline of your artistic experiences; (theatre; concerts etc.

**(6) Why did you choose to work for Only Connect with its client group?**

**(7) Do you know the aspirations/expectations of the members/clients that you have worked with?**

(a) Yes                      (b) No

(c) If your response was yes, please indicate the main purpose of their engagement with the arts.

**(8) Did you agree goals with the members/clients that you worked with?**

(a) Yes                      (b) No

**(c) If you agreed goals, please indicate the three most popular goals agreed with clients.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**(d) If you set goals, did you review progress? If yes how, and how regularly?**

**(9) Did the activity you offered meet client's expectations**

- (a) Yes (b) No

**(c) Please clarify your response to question 9.**

**(10) What is the name of the programme that you were involved in with OC?**

- (a) OC Impact (b) OC Create

(c) Other (*Please indicate*)

**(11) What art form do you deliver and what in your view are their/its benefits?**

**(12) Were certificates or qualifications linked to your course?**

- (a) Yes (b) No

**(13) Were the certificates or qualifications accredited?**

- (a) Yes (b) No (go to question no. 17)

**(14) If so, what is the name of the awarding body?**

**(15) Is this awarding body and certificate recognised in the art sector?**

- (a) Yes (b) No

**(16) What are the benefits of certificates attained by your clients?**

**(17) What are the benefits of the arts activities that your clients are involved in? Please tick the relevant statements:**

(a)	Personal development	Yes	No
(b)	Develops self-esteem	Yes	No
(c)	Develops confidence	Yes	No
(d)	Gives an insight into the arts sector	Yes	No
(e)	Will give the individual access to the arts sector	Yes	No
(f)	Other – Please indicate		

**(18) Did you evaluate the activities you conducted with learners?**

- (a) Yes (b) No

(c) On a scale of 1 – 5, with **5** being **excellent**, on the whole how did learners grade the activity they engaged in? Please also give a reason for your answer.

**(19) If you did not conduct a formal evaluation, how did you evaluate the benefits of the activity?**

**(20) What is your personal definition of the term 'value'?**

**(21) Using your definition, what would you say that the value of the arts is in reducing or preventing offending behaviour?**

**(22) Do you have any recommendations that wish to contribute to OC through this research?**

***Thank you for your time completing this questionnaire. I may contact you again once I am in receipt of your responses***

**Questionnaire for Director of Only Connect**

- What is your professional background?
- What influenced your involvement with Only Connect?
- What is your main role at Only Connect?
- What is the direction of Only Connect now?
- What do you think is the importance of the arts is in preventing of reducing offending behaviour?
- What involvement do you have with the members?
- What do you believe are the views of members about the organisation and how they benefit?
- What is the approach of Only Connect if members re-offend and what support is offered?
- What do you believe are the three main benefits of Only Connect to members and friends?

**Information from May 2013- April 2014:**

Over the last 12 months our creative arts work has further evolved. We have worked with 56 members on 19 projects. We have seen 19 of these members move into education, training or employment.

Creative projects included:

**Adaptation**

Eight Only Connect members partnered with a mentor in the music industry, Random Impulse, Jimmy Davies or Kate Tempest, to cover a song that inspired, encourage or moved them. The project was led by Secret Sessions Director, Harriet Jordon-Wrench and culminated in a live concert of their tracks and the production of a CD sold online.

**A Version of a Day**

In May last year, 12 members worked alongside photographer Rose Collins to document 24 hours of their life. Using a variety of lenses from camera phones to SLR, members took a photograph every hour, on the hour for a 24 hour period. The final images were displayed in a public gallery space at the N4 Library.

**Mix Tape**

Over the past year our Studio Manager has continued to develop the production of our highly successful quarterly Mixtape albums, compilations of original tracks produced by our members in the OC studios. The project has developed as members' skills have progressed from performing their lyrics over other artists' tracks, to being able to write, record and produce original pieces of work. We were fortunate in being able to collaborate with Barbican Arts Centre, where members performed orchestral adaptations of their songs with a live orchestra and choir; we have also teamed with likeminded charity St Giles Trust and its SOS Project. The SOS programme also works with ex-offenders and at risk youth, with a focus on gang intervention. The theme for this Mixtape was set around positivity and change. A total of 15 Only Connect and SOS members feature on this album, with input from hit producer Fabien Waltmann, Bionic (ex-London Posse), and Ziad of PureGroove Music. This is by far Only Connect's most ambitious Mixtape, which is on the public music sharing platform Sound Cloud and has been listen to over 800 times since March.



The next Mixtape will be open to all our members, not only people with a musical background, and will be available for purchase through download, creating a professional platform for the members and generating income to support the studio.

**Podcasts**

Further to the work we did in 2012, last year we ran another podcast/ photography project. We ran a project where we wanted to put on a photography exhibition of our members but the audience were also able to listen to pod casts of the guys in the photos. This project run with Kate Peters (photographer) and Steve Urqhart (Audio). Due to Kate's un-relenting schedule this has had to be put on hold but we still were able to record the pod casts. One of these was picked up by BBC Radio 4 and was aired in October 2013. This was a story from Phill Clarke.

### **Family Day - Creative showcase**

The idea was to hold a street party type event for family day, rather than having it at Calthorpe Community Park as we had done in previous years. Our Centre Director wanted to try and re-create a big sense of community with everyone bringing food, with Cubitt Street closed off and food and entertainment available for the community. There was then going to be a showcase in the hall, later on in the evening once the day party was over. This didn't happen in the end because we found it difficult getting permission from the council and it was a far bigger job logistically than previously imagined.

### **Flash Mob @ Kings Cross**

The flash mob, originally, was part of the Centre Directors' fundraising event. It took some time trying to get the permission to use Kings Cross station and just when it was starting to go pickup, our Director moved roles to lead the new centre in West London.

### **Video Column**

In our report last year we highlighted that we would create monthly video blogs. As our Mixtape project has developed, this project has adapted slightly. Our Studio Manager has been responsible for facilitating the creation of short films documenting the activities of our members in the music studio. To date we have created six videos and will be creating six documentaries per quarter in 2014. These will be available to the public via YouTube, as well as providing evidence of the creative participation and progression of our members for their CVs and as a showcase tool for supporters.

### **Creative Showcases**

As part of our monthly community dinners, members use the period after eating to showcase recent projects they have been working on; these are hosted at OC Central. Since our last report we have hosted 12 Big Wednesday Showcases. Highlights have included nine members performing some of their songs as part of the Snap Shot Songs Project (our work with the Barbican Arts Centre); a film launch where films made in 2013 were shown and the new season of work was introduced; and a scratch performance of Heartache of my Eyes, a joint piece with eight of our members, Raging Calm Production and Che Walker, that explored the use and supply of heroin. Over the past 12 months members have showcased their work to audiences of up to 80 people.

### **Autumn Tour: Entourage**

Since October 2013 we have been touring schools with our OC Impact team and "Entourage". A hard hitting play involving a series of dramatic monologues, role-plays and music performed by our ex-offender members. The play illustrates that everyone is the star of their own life – and everyone has an entourage, the people around you who make you or break you. OC Impact has delivered Entourage to more than 7,500 students in 41 school settings this school year (13/14).

Issues explored included gangs, peer pressure, substance abuse, cyber bullying and sexual exploitation. The children and youth in Inner London are the most deprived in the country and poverty is a risk factor for being involved in anti-social behaviour and criminal activities. OC Impact recognises this and therefore targets our work to the most disadvantaged schools, colleges and pupil referral units across London, reaching the most disengaged and most at-risk students (as identified by their schools).

Our ex-offenders' true to life performances achieved high levels of engagement with even the hardest to engage young people. They featured personal testimonies from our ex-offender presenters, highlighting the far-reaching repercussions of antisocial behaviour and criminal activity in young adulthood, on later life chances.

### **Launch of Create Season Two: Rising**

Late last year Only Connect started to develop a new arts season under the headline theme Rising. This theme bears on issues of personal and social progress - the desire to be better off, and the impulse to mass insurrection against unjust circumstances. It speaks to Only Connect members' deep desire for individual betterment and our ethic of solidarity. The season will be co-produced with Only Connect members, who will contribute ideas and expertise as well as taking roles in the performance, production and management of projects.



To launch this work, we held a creative session at the Criterion Theatre with nine professionals from the creative industry, including Isabella Branson; Director, Ellie Browning; and Sally Green, Chief Executive of The Old Vic Theatre Trust. The idea was that we brought together a group of industry professionals to feed in ideas for Only Connect's creative output, specifically with a view to the Rising season. We were looking to build relationships, get feedback and input into our plans and also have a network of great industry contacts that we could tap into for help they could provide or further contacts they could get us access to.

## Annex F

Activity	Number of participants
Big Wednesday (January)	8
Big Wednesday (February)	14
Encourage Monthly Track	4
Film Crew	3
Forward Funding Film	1
Gallery Visits	1
Hope Springs	2
How To	6
Lift	3
Mixtape	4-16
Mixtape	5-16 ?
OC Music	15
OC Music- Central Studio Log	32
OC West Crime Road Show	2-2
Partner visits	8
Uprising R&D	11
Snapshot Songs	4
Theatre Trips	18
<b>Total number of participants [77 unique]</b>	<b>117</b>



## Project plan overview

The following plan was drafted at commencement of the 6 month project.

Activity	Objective	Responsibility	Time scale
Meet with staff	Meeting at OC offices to discuss research outline	Researcher	March '14
Create survey	Develop survey and distribute through OC office	Researcher with contributions from OC	May '14
Arrange interviews with identified staff	Interviews with leaders of OC Impact and OC Create/ transcribe and present to interviewee	Researcher	May/June/July '14
Data collection	Historic data of member engagement	OC Office	May '14
Observation OC London West	Identify 2 opportunities to observe project activity	Researcher	July '14
Arrange meetings with stakeholders and OC staff	Arrange meeting through OC Office – mid-term report and update to Creative Works and IOE	Researcher/ OC office	August '14
Findings to date	Draft report	Researcher	August '14
Arrange meeting with CEO of OC	Meet CEO to discuss findings to date and information re next steps	Researcher	September '14
Draft report and comments from OC	Peruse and feedback comments to researcher	OC Office	September '14
Amendment and final report presentation	Report submitted to OC, Creative Works and IOE	Researcher	October '14