
Scratching the Surface and Journey Man: A service evaluation



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Dr. Zoe Stephenson
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People are generally better persuaded by the reasons which they have themselves discovered than by those which have come into the mind of others'

(Pascal, Pensees)

1. Summary

Context

The summary relays the findings of the evaluation of the Geese Theatre Company programmes: *Scratching the Surface* (HMP Foston Hall) and *Journey Man* (HMP Hewell). These programmes were designed to be delivered in partnership with Safer Custody teams and Listeners/peer mentors to provide an alternative approach to suicide reduction and self-harm reduction.

The Geese Theatre Company have been established in the UK since 1987 and specialise in promoting a positive change in offenders through the use of theatre and drama methodologies and techniques. Programmes are grounded in Cognitive Behavioural Theory, Role Theory, Social Learning Theory and are informed by current thinking around desistance. Each programme begins with a short performance by Geese Theatre Company which is followed by drama exercises, role play and exploration of the theatrical metaphor of ‘the mask’ for the participants in each group. The programme ends with participants performing an individualised piece of work on the final day designed for them by Geese Theatre practitioners. They aim to address areas such as problem solving, self-efficacy, the concept of the ‘mask’ as a front, confidence, self-esteem, positive coping strategies, realistic goal setting, communication skills, and creative skills.

The programmes were delivered between April 2016 and June 2016. Three groups were run in HMP Hewell and four in HMP Foston Hall. Each programme lasted for five consecutive days and the number of participants in each group was between three and six.

The evaluation

Although the initial primary aim was to target vulnerable offenders (i.e. those considered to be at risk of attempting suicide and/or deliberate self-harm (DSH)), on the advice of Safer Custody staff, the programme was advertised by prison staff as aiming to address the broader areas of general well-being and confidence. Due to the length of the programme and small sample size it was not possible to ascertain whether rates of DSH and suicide had reduced as a result of programme completion. The evaluation, therefore, sought to answer the following research questions:

- Does completion of the programme lead to positive outcomes for offenders? More specifically, does the programme increase levels of mental well-being and hope (as measured by psychometric tests).
- What impact (e.g. cognitive, behavioural) do offenders feel the programme has had on them in the short-term and for their future?
- What views are held by prison staff (i.e. those who have direct or indirect involvement with the programme) regarding the impact of the programme on offenders?
- What are the views of the Geese Theatre Company practitioners regarding the pilot project following delivery?

Research design

Due to restrictions in conducting quantitative analysis with a small sample size and the need for in-depth information, the evaluation adopted a mixed methods approach - utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to gain insight into the impact of *Scratching the Surface* and *Journey Man*. Data were collected from prisoners who completed the programme (defined as a minimum of 80% attendance) through semi-structured interviews, pre and post psychometric measures, and Geese Theatre Company post programme Likert scale and open ended questions feedback forms. In addition, feedback was gathered from prison staff via an online questionnaire, and Geese Theatre Company practitioners took part in a focus group following the delivery of all seven programmes.

Sample groups

A total of 12 men and 23 women completed the programme. Of those, 11 men and 21 women completed pre/post psychometric measures. Twelve men and 21 women completed Geese Theatre Company questionnaires consisting of Likert scale items and open-ended questions. Ten men and 11 women volunteered to take part in semi-structured interviews. Six prison staff completed the online questionnaire and all six of the Geese practitioners involved in the delivery of the programmes took part in the focus group.

Findings

Psychometric measures

Analysis of the pre/post psychometric measures (Beck Hopelessness Scale and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale) showed statistically significant improvements in levels of hope and mental well-being. A statistically significant increase in mental wellbeing was found for both males and females using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale ($p = .007$ and $p = < .001$ respectively), and a statistically significant decrease in hopelessness was found for males ($p = .001$) and females ($p < .001$) Whilst being mindful of difficulties in making claims when using small sample groups, results indicate an apparent trend towards improvements in mental well-being and levels of hope as a result of participating in the *Scratching the Surface* and *Journey Man* programmes.

Semi-structured interviews: HMP Foston Hall

Participants spoke of their overall views and experiences of the programme as well as going into greater depth regarding specific elements/exercises. Women commented on how the programme had provided them with useful insights into their thoughts and behaviour. All participants described how such insights had changed their way of thinking for the good, and, for the majority of the women, that this had led to notable positive changes in their behaviour. Some of the additional benefits reported by the majority of interviewees included: increased positivity; increase in confidence; raised self-esteem; ability to control anger; increased ability to communicate with others and to ask for help. Women outlined ways in which they had felt the Geese Theatre Company programme differed from other programmes that they had taken part in. All feedback was positive with all women stating that they were very happy to have taken part in the programme and that they would recommend the programme to others.

Semi-structured interviews: HMP Hewell

Feedback from male participants was similarly positive with similar key benefits being identified by males as by their female counterparts. Broadly speaking, men went into less depth about their feelings but all made mention of positive insights gained and subsequent changes to their thoughts and behaviour. As for female offenders, some participants commented that they felt more confident and hopeful for the future; with some having since signed up for other programmes and/or taken on work as a result of their increased desire to make changes to their behaviour and offending lifestyle. Increases in confidence, anger control, positivity, self-esteem, communication and empathy were noted by the majority of male participants. The majority made reference to how *Journey Man* differed from other programmes; in short, participants found the programme to be more engaging, memorable, positive and interactive than other programmes. In line with responses from females, men remarked that the practitioners were non-judgemental, empathetic, thoughtful, supportive and friendly. Men and women also stated that they were glad to have taken part in the programme and that they would recommend it to others.

Geese Theatre Company prisoner questionnaires: Likert scale and written feedback

Data were also obtained through Likert scale and open-ended written feedback forms from male and female prisoners. Likert scale findings revealed highly positive views of the programmes from both groups on all items. For example, 100% of both male and female respondents reported that they would recommend the programme to others and that they had enjoyed the programme. Other items rated very highly included: feeling better about themselves; that the use of theatre made the programme more memorable; learning new skills; having more confidence; and being better at opening up to people. Responses provided to open-ended questions mirrored those given in interviews. Notably, as a result of completing the programme they had a more positive outlook on life, felt more confident, had more self-esteem, and had gained insight into their thoughts, feeling and actions. Comments were also made regarding the impact that the programme had had on their subsequent behaviour (e.g. agreeing to further programmes and their ability to control their actions) and participants praised the Geese Theatre practitioners.

Online questionnaires: Prison staff (HMP Hewell and HMP Foston Hall)

Feedback gathered through online questionnaires with prison staff was concurrent with information gathered from prisoners. All members of staff who had assisted in the groups gave solely positive feedback regarding the positive impact the programme had had on prisoners (observed during the programme and following the programme in terms of subsequent changes in behaviour). Staff also commented on the skills and professionalism of the Geese Theatre practitioners. It was commented by all respondents that the programme differed from other offender treatment programmes and all respondents said they would recommend it for other prisoners. Suggestions were made regarding the duration of the programme and at what point in the sentence a prisoner should participate.

Geese Theatre Company: Focus group

All of the practitioners involved in programme delivery felt that the programmes had been well received by prisoners and staff alike. Comments were made regarding the importance of the group environment, the impact of specific elements within the programme as well as the overall

impact, and the ability of the programme to meet the needs of the individual through adaptive tailoring. The practicalities of delivering a short duration programme within the prison were also discussed. Broadly speaking it was felt that programme delivery would benefit from greater awareness within the prison about the work Geese Theatre do, and from having a key member of prison staff who was provided with the time in their role to focus on referrals/recruitment and to facilitate the general smooth running of the programme.

Conclusion

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative projects show that the programmes have been well received and indicate that the programmes have had a positive impact in terms of changes in thought processes and behaviour. A larger sample size and extended follow-up period would be required to better establish the effectiveness of the programmes in the long-term. Additional outcome measures such as changes in re-offending rates, adjudications, and incidents of DSH and suicide could also be taken. However, the preliminary findings reported below are indicative that the programme is beneficial for prisoners by addressing areas such as self-esteem, confidence, positivity, self-efficacy, anger management, and communication skills. Findings from qualitative measures suggest that programmes were innovative yet incorporated a range of techniques grounded in previously identified 'what works' literature (e.g. cognitive behavioural theory, social learning theory, role theory, responsivity, good lives model principles, readiness to change factors, the process of behavioural change, group cohesiveness, and good therapeutic relationships).

2. The Evaluation

2.1 Context

Over the last three decades, Geese Theatre Company (hereafter referred to as GT) have been using applied theatre techniques to promote positive change in a range of individuals with a particular focus on offenders. They are accustomed to tailoring the content and intensity of programme elements to be responsive to the needs of specific population types and individuals.

Although drama has been utilised in forensic settings for many years, GT are known for their innovative approach which places emphasis on improvisation and interactivity as a catalyst for instigating cognitive and behavioural change (Baim, 2007). Baim, Brookes and Mountford (2002) note that applied theatre techniques allow for exercises to be tailored to the individual, and have the further advantages of not being constrained by the requirement of sufficient literacy skills and that they allow for realistic skills rehearsal.

The evidence base for the effectiveness of drama interventions with offenders is promising for a range of issues associated with depression (Chapman, 2014; Hamamci, 2006) and low self-esteem (Pendzik, 2008). Research into the effectiveness of GT programmes has indicated the programme to be effective in reducing anger (Blacker, Watson, & Beech, 2008), and increasing self-efficacy, confidence and motivation to change (Harkins, Haskayne, Watson, Beech, & Sweeney, 2009; Harkins, Pritchard, Haskayne, Watson, & Beech, 2011).

The work of GT is based on three key underlying theories: Social learning theory; Cognitive-behavioural theory; and Role theory. Rehabilitative work, grounded in such theories, has been found to be effective in producing positive change (Antonowicz & Ross, 1994). Geese Theatre enables offenders to learn and practice new skills and consider these within the social context, gain insight into their thinking patterns and how these impact upon their behaviour, and to consider the roles that they play in their lives – providing them with assurance that they can create new, prosocial roles (Baim et al., 2002).

Geese Theatre use a range of methods which promote and elicit self-reflection and change. ‘The Mask’ and ‘mask lifting’ are over-arching concepts used by GT as key catalysts in enabling offenders to ‘encounter the hidden thoughts, feelings, attitudes and beliefs of a character’ (Baim et al., 2002, p. 20). Furthermore, performances have been found to lead offenders to witnessing the character reveal ‘vulnerabilities, insecurities and fears which might otherwise remain hidden’ (Watson, 2009, p. 53). The technique has been found to be powerful and memorable with the metaphor being quickly grasped by offenders (Baim, 2007).

In addition to short performances by GT practitioners, a range of experiential exercises are used which aim to help offenders become conscious of and reflect on their thoughts, feelings, and ability to make decisions (Baim, 2007). Skills practice in sessions can be tailored to the individual’s needs and the situations that they struggle with (e.g. dealing with feelings of anger, communication with staff and peers, coping with negative feelings, and asking for help).

Issues addressed by GT include self-esteem, self-efficacy, confidence, motivation to change, hope for the future, healing of past negative experiences (e.g. trauma and abuse/neglect), perspective taking, problem solving skills, pro-social/realistic goals, empathy and social skills (Baim, 2007; Baim et al., 2002). Within a population of vulnerable offenders who have issues such as suicide ideation and/or who commit acts of deliberate self-harm (DSH), it would be

expected that addressing issues such as hope, self-esteem, control, and asking for help would have a positive impact on reducing such thoughts and/or acts.

2.2 Evaluation aims

The evaluation will examine the impact of the *Journey Man* and *Scratching the Surface* programmes through the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The research questions being addressed are:

- Does completion of the programme lead to a statistically significant increase in levels of mental well-being and psychological functioning as measured by the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale?
- Does completion of the programme lead to statistically significant and clinically meaningful increases in levels of hope as measured by The Beck Hopelessness scale?
- What impact (i.e. cognitive, behavioural) do offenders feel the programme has had on them in the short-term and may have on their futures?
- What are the views of prison staff (i.e. those who have direct or indirect involvement with the programme) regarding the impact of the programme on offenders?
- What are the views of the GT practitioners regarding the pilot project?

2.3 Methodology

A mixed methods approach was used, gathering both qualitative and quantitative data. Programmes were delivered over five consecutive days. *Journey Man* was delivered to three groups and *Scratching the Surface* to four groups.

Programme participants

- HMP Foston Hall: A total of 23 women recruited through the Safer Custody team completed the programme. Women were aged between 20 and 49 with a mean age of 31 (SD = 8.0). Specific information about offending behaviour was not provided, however, the majority of the women were felt by the team to be vulnerable and at risk of suicide and/or DSH. The majority ($n = 16$) were white British (69.6%). Other ethnicities in the group were two black British Caribbean women, one black British African, one Asian British Indian, one mixed white and black African, one mixed white and black Caribbean, and one Asian British Pakistani.
- HMP Hewell: Thirteen men were recruited through the Healthy Living department. The mean age was 34 (range 23 to 49 years; SD = 9.5). Again, specific information about the samples' offending history was not recorded. However, in addition to a minority considered to be at risk of suicide and/or DSH, offending issues fell broadly into the categories of drug and violent offences. The majority (77%) were white British, with the remaining being two mixed race and one white Irish.

Measures and design

Methods used in the project were as follows:

- A comparison of pre and post scores on two psychometric measures: The Beck Hopelessness scale; and the Warwick-Edinburgh Well-being scale. Both measures are

widely used and have been tested for reliability and validity (Bouvard, Charles, Guerin, Aimard, & Cottraux, 1992; Stewart-Brown et al., 2011). Prior to the first session, measures were administered to participants and administered again upon programme completion. Eleven males and 20 females (84.6% and 87% respectively) completed the measures.

- A Likert scale and open-ended question questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was administered immediately following the final day of the programme. The questionnaire aimed to provide largely qualitative feedback of the participant's experience of the programme and, as such, has not been tested for reliability/validity. Twenty-one females (91.3%) and 12 males (92.3%) completed questionnaires.
- In-depth, semi-structured interviews were carried out with eleven females and ten males regarding their experiences of the programme. All those who had completed a GT programme were informed of the evaluation project and were invited to volunteer to be interviewed, and upon acceptance, signed a consent form. Interviews were conducted by the researcher between two weeks and one month following completion of the course. Due to security restrictions, it was not possible to digitally record interviews, instead, comprehensive notes were taken by the researcher. Questions asked were open-ended (see Appendix 2). Prompts were used where necessary to obtain detailed information. Interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes.
- Online questionnaires using Survey Monkey (see Appendix 3) were administered to prison staff who assisted on one or more programmes, or who had close contact with prisoners during and/or following the programme. Six staff completed the questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of one Likert scale item and seven open-ended questions with space for any further comments.
- A focus group was carried out with the GT practitioners who had delivered the programmes in HMP Foston Hall and/or HMP Hewell. The focus group took place approximately six weeks following the final session. All six practitioners were present and responses were digitally recorded and transcribed. The focus group schedule consisted of a range of open-ended questions (see Appendix 4) with scope for practitioners to make any comment they felt to be relevant.

2.4 Analysis

Psychometric measures

Anonymised pre and post data for the Beck Hopelessness Scale and the Warwick-Edinburgh Well-being scale were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS: Version 22). For the female sample paired sample t-tests were conducted. However, given the particularly small sample size for the male group, both parametric and non-parametric tests of comparison (paired sample t-tests and wilcoxon signed-rank respectively) were conducted in addition to descriptive statistics for the data.

Geese prisoner questionnaires

Percentages of responses to Likert scale items were calculated and reported for both male and female participants. Responses to open-ended questions from each prison were collated and summarised.

Semi-structured prisoner interviews: HMP Hewell and HMP Foston Hall

Comprehensive notes taken during semi-structured interviews with prisoners were inputted into NVivo software for analysis. Initial codes were developed and thematic analysis was carried out to organise codes into sub-themes and overarching main themes. Thematic analysis is considered to be suitable where a combination of a-priori and themes emerging through data occur.

Online prison staff questionnaires

Template analysis was used to thematically analyse questionnaire responses. This method is considered suitable where a-priori codes exist. The NVivo software package was used for the process of coding and analysing data. Main themes and sub-themes were identified.

Geese Theatre Company focus group

The focus group audio recording was transcribed and inputted into NVivo software for analysis. The process of thematic analysis was used to develop overarching themes and sub-themes from initial coding and subsequent focused coding.

2.5 Ethics

The projects outlined above received approval from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) National Research Committee on the 12th February 2016 (Ref: 2016-016). In accordance with NOMS guidelines for research, consent was gained from all participants for questionnaires and interviews. Prior to the prisoner interviews, potential participants were given both written and verbal information about the project by the researcher and were provided with the opportunity to ask questions. They were made aware that they could withdraw from the project at any time (up to one month following the interview) and that the information they gave would be anonymised.

For psychometric measures and GT prisoner questionnaires, participants were asked to create a memorable 4-digit code in order to match pre/post responses and to enable a participant's questionnaire to be identified for removal should they wish to withdraw from the study. Respondents to the online questionnaire were also required to create a memorable code rather than give their name in order for responses to remain anonymous.

2.6 Strengths, limitations and methodological issues

2.6.1 Strengths

By adopting a mixed methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative methods it was possible to provide feedback in the form of the results of statistical analysis and to gather more in-depth information through the use of questionnaires, interviews and a focus group. In addition, the evaluation has provided data from the whole range of roles/individuals involved in the project; although the focus is on prisoners who completed the programme, data were also gathered from prison staff and GT practitioners in order to gather their opinions as to the impact of the programme on participants, as well as to highlight any further issues for consideration in future programmes.

The psychometric measures used for the evaluation are widely used and have been tested for reliability and validity. The Beck Hopelessness scale has been found to be valid (i.e. it is able to differentiate between depressed and non-depressed participants) and has good reliability (Bouvard et al., 1992). The WEMWBS has been found to be a valid and reliable measure of mental well-being (Stewart-Brown et al., 2011), which is suitable for use with diverse populations and ethnic minority groups (Stewart-Brown et al., 2011; Taggart et al., 2013). Although neither tool directly measures suicide ideation and DSH, the Beck Hopelessness scale has been found to be a valid measure of depression which is a risk factor for DSH (Klonsky, Oltmanns, & Turkheimer, 2003) and suicide (Berman, 2009). In addition, the WEMWBS contains questions which relate to issues related to depression, suicide and DSH risk such as hope, anxiety, self-esteem, and happiness. The tools were able to measure a wide range of additional programme aims of GT such as the ability to think positively about the future and form goals, confidence, self-efficacy, and communication.

Through interviews with participants it was possible to gain an in-depth insight as to why participants' scores on psychometric measures improved following programme completion. As data gathered from the vast majority of participants through psychometrics and questionnaires were all positive, it is not considered that a selection bias occurred (i.e. self-selection being more likely to occur for participants who viewed the programme in a positive light).

2.6.2 Limitations and methodological issues

It was felt by prison Safer Custody Team staff that prisoners may be less likely to volunteer for the programme if it were to be overtly targeted at those who commit DSH and/or contemplate suicide. As such it was advertised to prisoners as being suitable for those who wish to address confidence and general well-being. As a result, participants on the programme were not all considered to be at high risk of DSH and suicide. However, groups did contain prisoners who were considered vulnerable to such thoughts/behaviours. Pre programme scores on the Beck Hopelessness Scale indicated that approximately half of each gender group were at increased risk of attempting suicide (See section 3.1).

Furthermore, difficulties in the referral process led to smaller group sizes than expected for male prisoners. Due to the small sample size (particularly for male participants) it is problematic to draw firm conclusions from statistical analysis. In addition, it was not possible to control for extraneous variables, therefore inferring causality regarding the impact of the programme is not possible.

Time gaps between completing the programme and being interviewed differed between participants (ranging between two and five weeks); resultant differences in the level of detail of programme may have occurred. However, participants did not note any difficulty in recalling information. Furthermore, the longer follow-up period may serve as a strength of the study by providing the participant with more time for skills practice and thereby give a more accurate indication of the benefits of having completed the programme. Also, it was not possible to obtain data from those who started the programme but chose to leave before completion (one female prisoner and two male prisoners). It would be of interest to explore the reasons underlying programme attrition.

Due to the small sample size for the quantitative study and the use of qualitative methods, generalisability cannot be inferred. Future evaluations may benefit from larger sample sizes, access to data on frequency of incidents of DSH by participants pre and post programme, and access to data on adjudications within prison in order to measure changes in behaviour following the programme.

3. Pre and post psychometric measures

The Beck Hopelessness scale (BHS; Beck et al., 1974) and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS; Tennant et al., 2007) were administered immediately prior to the first day of the course and then again immediately following the final session.

3.1 The Beck Hopelessness Scale

The Beck Hopelessness Scale is designed to assess three main aspects of hopelessness: loss of motivation; expectations; and feelings about the future. The scale contains 20 ‘true or false’ statements and participants are required to tick a box to state whether they either agree with a pessimistic statement or disagree with an optimistic statement. As outlined above, whilst not directly measuring suicide ideation and DSH, the tool provides an indication as to changes in levels of depression (Bouvard et al., 1992) and general hope for the future. As *Journey Man* and *Scratching the Surface* programmes aim to address issues such as these, this was considered an appropriate measure for use in the evaluation.

3.1.1 Male participants:

Wilcoxon signed-rank and repeated measures t-tests were carried out to explore differences between scores obtained on the Beck Hopelessness scale prior to and following the programme. Ten sets of scores were collected due to inaccuracies in completing the questionnaire for one participant. The t-test showed there to be a statistically significant improvement in scores given prior to ($M = 9.70$, $SD = 5.77$) and following ($M = 6.00$, $SD = 5.48$) on the hopelessness measure ($t(9) = 5.17$, $p = .001$, $d = 1.64$). Similarly, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed there to be a statistically significant reduction in levels of hopelessness ($Z = -2.68$, $p = .007$).

Five of the ten participants scored above the clinical cut-off point of 8 (implying the individual is at a heightened risk for suicide) prior to taking part in the programme. A reduction in scores occurred for all participants, with the average reduction being 4.6 points. Two of the five male participants who scored above the clinical cut-off point moved to a score below the cut-off point in their post programme responses.

3.1.2 Female participants:

Repeated measures t-tests were also conducted for female participants. As for their male counterparts, statistically significant reductions in scores on the hopelessness scale were identified ($t(20) = 5.58$, $p = < .001$, $d = 1.26$) between questionnaires completed prior to and following the programme ($M = 8.52$, $SD = 5.32$; $M = 3.38$, $SD = 4.08$).

Ten of the 21 respondents scored above the clinical cut-off point of 8 (implying higher risk of suicide) prior to the programme. A reduction ($M = 8.3$) in scores was found for nine of these participants. In all of the nine cases this led to the score moving from above clinical cut-off for increased risk of suicide to below the cut-off point.

3.2 The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale

The WEMWBS contains 14 Likert scale items designed to measure subjective wellbeing and psychological functioning (Taggart, Stewart-Brown, & Parkinson, 2016). Developers note that an interest in mental wellbeing is a comparatively recent phenomenon and, as such, there are no specific clinical cut-off points although increases of between three

and eight points would indicate meaningful improvements. In addition, it is suggested that very low scores relate to depression. At an individual level the measure has value as a qualitative tool on which to base further investigation of a person's mental wellbeing in a clinical context (Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008). More specifically the WEMWBS was considered to be a suitable measure for the current evaluation due to the focus on areas targeted by the GT such as hope, anxiety, self-esteem, positivity, confidence, self-efficacy and creating future goals.

3.2.1 Male participants:

A repeated measures t-test was conducted to compare scores on the WEMWBS completed prior to and following completion of the GT programme. There was a statistically significant increase ($t(10) = -3.42, p = .007, d = 1.04$) in scores gathered prior to the programme ($M = 37.72, SD = 9.75$) and following completion ($M = 48.18, SD = 8.76$). Due to the small sample size, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was also conducted on the pre and post programme well-being data. The results showed there to be a statistically significant improvement in well-being scores ($Z = -2.50, p = .012$).

Although the WEMWBS is not designed to measure clinical change, the developers estimate that an increase of 3 to 8 WEMWBS points would indicate a meaningful improvement in mental well-being. As such, according to the measure, nine of the 11 participants could be seen to have experienced a meaningful improvement in mental well-being.

3.2.2 Female participants:

A statistically significant increase in scores on the well-being scale were found for females between their scores prior to the programme ($M = 37.33, SD = 9.70$) and scores following the programme ($M = 47.71, SD = 7.72; t(20) = -4.50, p < .001, d = 1.18$). Scores from 19 of the 21 women showed an increase in well-being; 16 of these were such that they indicated a meaningful improvement in mental well-being.

3.3 Conclusions

The results of pre/post comparison tests suggest that the programme improved levels of hope and mental well-being. It must be noted that due to the small sample size (particularly for male participants) it is not possible to draw robust generalised conclusions. However, the results can be seen to provide an indication that improvements may also be seen in scores on the Beck hopelessness scale and the WEMWBS for a larger sample.

As shown above, the findings indicate a greater improvement for the female group than for males (however, again, the small sample size for males must be noted). Statistical significance was slightly higher for females and a greater percentage moved from above cut-off points to below indicating meaningful change.

Concurrent with previous research, increases in mean scores for items on the WEMWBS suggest that the GT programme was helpful in building confidence and self-efficacy (Harkins et al., 2009; Harkins et al., 2011). Furthermore, improvements in scores on both measures is suggestive that participation in the programme leads to a decreased risk of attempting suicide, a decrease in indicators of depression and corresponding increases in levels of hope and mental well-being (i.e. anxiety, problem solving, future planning, ability to communicate with others).

A larger sample size would allow for robust conclusions to be drawn from the data analysis and for findings to be generalisable to a wider population.

4. Participant views and experiences

Thematic analysis was conducted on detailed notes taken during semi-structured interviews with female and male participants (see Tables 1 and 2 for themes and sub-themes). Responses are summarised and illustrative quotes are provided.

4.1 HMP Foston Hall – *Scratching the Surface*

Theme 1. Revelations

All women reported having learnt something new about themselves as a result of participating in the programme. A range of revelations were mentioned relating to issues such as self-esteem, hope, needing support, the need for change and taking control/responsibility of their futures. In addition, the majority of women made direct reference to what they had learnt about themselves as a result of the masks exercise.

1.1 Self-discovery and change

The majority of women commented broadly on having reflected on their lives and having learnt more about themselves in relation to their past behaviour. Comments regarding things they had learnt about themselves were made in conjunction with comments regarding the need to change former thought process and behaviours:

...helps you see where you went wrong so you know where not to go. It brings a lot of things to light...It helped me see how I was going wrong...You get to know more about you on the course...I feel I know myself better. (P7)

You're putting someone on a platform to screen – and that person is yourself and that brings up alarm bells...It shows that you can learn things at different ages... I want to use this time to change. (P3)

1.2 Lifting the mask

In addition to general comments on self-discovery, all women commented on what insights they had gained from the masks exercise. Respondents made reference to the type of masks they use and commented that they no longer want to wear a mask:

I took away about it was that all the masks we wear – we don't realise we're doing it – we're covering ourselves and protecting ourselves – saying that we're braver than we are and hiding away. But the masks stuff helped me see my own thoughts and weaknesses...The screen shot of someone's life – that's where I identified masks that I wear in everyday life. You sort of realise what you've been doing in life. (P3)

In addition, many women commented that the masks exercise had made them better able to recognise what masks are being worn by others which they felt would help with future interactions:

It's amazing how much you can see what other people are like – could see people's different emotions and what masks they were wearing. You know they are putting on masks to protect themselves. (P7)

Like a couple of days ago a girl started shouting at me and it made me think about other masks people wear and I know they aren't like that so I know how to deal with them a lot better. (P8)

Table 1. *HMP Foston Hall Interview Themes and Sub-themes*

Theme	1. Revelations	2. Why it works	3. A change for the good	4. Suggestions
Subtheme	1.1 Self-discovery	2.1 Practitioner skills and characteristics	3.1 'Just being me'	4.1 Duration
	1.2 Lifting the mask	2.2 ...but Geese was different	3.2 Anger management	4.2 Who will it help?
	1.3 I'm in control of my life	2.3 Group bonding	3.3 Taking action	4.3 Nothing but praise
	1.4 Self-esteem and confidence	2.4 Different things to different people	3.4 Asking for help	
	1.5 I can have hope	2.5 That's me, that is.../eye opening	3.5 Confidence and assertiveness	
	1.6 Perspective taking	2.6 A safe space	3.6 Don't just take my word for it...	
	1.7 I need help			

1.3 I'm in control of my life

One type of revelation mentioned by nearly half of the women was that they now know that how they behave is their choice and their responsibility. Reference was made to decision making when faced with situations which could potentially result in violence:

I used to get angry, but know that what she does is in her control and what I do is in my control ... It's set me up for life I think. Whatever I do is down to me and my control. I realise that I was taking control for 30 seconds (like punching someone) but realised that then it's all out of my control as get restrained by officers. Before I thought that I was alright the way I was (laughs) but I was naughty. (P9)

Furthermore, one respondent made specific reference to how she now intends to take control of her life; that how she responds to situations is within her control:

My self-esteem was at rock bottom and guilt and worthless, but during that week I learnt not to focus on negatives. There's a bigger picture and it's down to me which route I take; I can turn a negative into positive ... Its' how I deal with negatives – do I sit in self-pity or learn distraction techniques. They said it's okay to have negative feelings but don't focus on them. (P10)

1.4 Self-esteem and confidence

Seven women made reference to the programme having had a positive impact on their levels of confidence and self-esteem. For example, one commented that she had learnt '*how to be more loving towards myself.*' (P1), and another that having her '*thoughts and feelings being valued built my confidence up.*' (P4). Some women made reference to both confidence and self-esteem: '*It built up confidence and self-esteem and I can hold my head up high ... I am a human being – I'm not a statistic.*' (P7). One woman went into greater detail about one of the exercises which she felt helped build up her confidence and self-esteem:

She was acting and then she would tell us how to be more assertive and confident and be yourself and believe in yourself and have self-esteem ... The game with the socks – like building confidence – it helps you feel good. Feel good in myself ... I come out of my shell when throwing the ball. I was feeling 10 times better. I could feel confidence coming out. You couldn't believe it – such a simple thing can actually build confidence...Just a little game, it can mean so much to me and build my spirits and confidence and feel happy in myself. (P6)

1.5 I can have hope

Six women made comments which showed that they now have more hope for the future. It was felt that the programme had helped them see that, despite obstacles, they can reach their goals and can therefore look forward to the future:

The stuff on goals helped me see I can still have goals and have light at the end of the tunnel – good things can come out of this... (P7)

It was felt that reaching for goals and dealing with negative situations would be more achievable due to changes in confidence, self-esteem and a general positive outlook on life:

My entire life I've had a sort of prospectus of how life should and shouldn't be but now I've decided to just go with life. I can cope with life now even if things get a bit messy. (P1)

...having confidence helps me do my sentence and pursue other things when I leave – I recognise my skills. I think acknowledging there will be blips but that it will be okay.' (P10)

1.6 Perspective taking

The majority of women ($n = 7$) made reference to being able to see things from different perspectives than before. Comments were made regarding how they perceive others:

In the role plays you learn about communication and different perspectives – it can look one way but be another...It told us and helped us in understanding other people. (P5)

I thought it might help me see things from a different perspective and it did...In my outside life I never had time to stop and see things from different views. (P3)

In addition, women commented that they had learnt more about the ways in which others behave and either implied or made direct reference to now being less judgemental of others:

...I learnt that it doesn't matter what you're in for – we're all the same – we've done something wrong – we're human...It's amazing how much you can see what other people are like – could see people's different emotions and what masks they were wearing. (P7)

1.7 I need help

Lastly, three women commented that they now realise that they need help and that they should accept help from others rather than trying to cope without support:

...didn't realise that I sometimes need a shoulder to cry on or a hug...Today I now identify that I do need help and support more in my life – more than I've ever realised ever before. (P3)

I can open up more and feel more at ease like asking for help is alright. (P8)

Theme 2. Why it works

All women elaborated on comments made about how the programme had impacted upon them to explain why they felt the programme was helpful, i.e. what elements of the programme and/or programme delivery led to their revelations and subsequent changes in thoughts and behaviour.

2.1 Practitioner skills and characteristics

All participants provided detailed descriptions of their views on the programme practitioners. Feedback regarding the skills and personality traits/characteristics of the practitioners was solely positive. Words used to describe the practitioners included *empathetic, helpful, non-judgemental, friendly, approachable, and patient*. It was also commented that they were able to meet the needs of all individuals on the programme.

They [practitioners] are the perfect team – down to earth, engaging, just sit and listen and they met everyone's needs in that room. There is nothing they could have done better – perfect at meeting everyone's needs...the way they handled everything well in general conversations...They [practitioners] were a great team. (P1)

[names practitioners] made you feel welcome, listened and didn't belittle you - treated you as a person not a number...They weren't judgemental. They were empathetic. It makes you feel better. (P10)

In addition, it was commented that the practitioners were able to bring people out of their shells and make them feel at ease whilst not pressuring them to take part in any of the activities if they felt uncomfortable doing so.

They were like cool about it, they...there was nothing we couldn't do with them. We weren't pressured – it played well – just worked out well...I never liked group work

before coz I had anxiety issues. They made me feel comfortable and brought me out of my shell. (P11)

The tutors were really good – they understood that we all have different issues and life experiences and they had a way of getting everyone to take part. (P3)

Four women made reference to the practitioners being skilled actors, and one woman went further to state that she feels that the fact that they can act makes the course more effective:

They were brilliant – I don't know how they do it but they can act – I tell you – them two girls – they can act – they must be really trained. 100%, 10/10 they were great. The fact they can act made the course work man...Real acting – real in every way. (P6)

They were so patient and assertive and funny. [names practitioner] re-enacts them so well. I can relate to everything that came out of her mouth when acting. (P9)

2.2 ...but Geese was different

Although they were not asked to comment on whether the GT programme differed from others they had participated in, most ($n = 9$) mentioned ways in which it did differ. Women frequently mentioned that it differed in that they felt they had had a lot of fun whilst learning. In relation to this, it was commented that the programme more memorable partly because it was fun to participate in. Furthermore, mention was made that the course is interactive and creative which had a positive impact in terms of learning.

Sitting and talking doesn't get through to me but doing something fresh and original helped make me understand and they weren't droning on...Everything was fresh and different...It's right in your face and it's something you won't forget – it's so unexpected. Every little part was helpful and constructive in some way. (P1)

I liked Geese Theatre a lot as it's not piles of written work...The whole feeling was like quite creative therapy. It helps you look at things but by doing rather than sitting and listening. I struggle to sit and listen – things in other courses are often repetitive – you don't take it in...I enjoyed it more than other courses so it will stick with me more. Positive, creative and fun and I felt supported so it was more memorable...You get a real acting feel/vibe so you really get into it. I didn't have a clue before but learnt that I enjoyed acting... (P5)

I really enjoyed it. It was a laugh as well which made it stick in my mind...The first day was a laugh. I never finish anything but did this...I'm usually doing one to one stuff but this had got me used to it [groups] ...You always remember the good time register more. (P9)

2.3 Group bonding

Nine women made reference to the support they received from other women on the programme. Comments made indicated that each group had bonded well and positive relationships were formed. Group members listened to each other and were supportive and encouraging of each other:

Everyone was listening to each other. All different personalities and no one clashed. The group were really supportive of each other. The group calmed me down if I got angry. (P1)

You feel like you're a part of something...I made a friend on the course...you get to work in a team and individually. (P7)

I'm usually doing one to one stuff but this had got me used to it [groups]...I learnt to mingle. (P9)

2.4 Different things to different people

Six women remarked that the programme was able to cater to the needs of individuals, i.e. women had different past experiences, needs and future goals, and they all felt they had learnt from the programme:

Everyone related to different parts of it...Everyone took their own thing away from it. (P2)

We all learnt about things that were relevant to us so we all learnt different things. (P4)

Two women made reference to the individual level work that is done on the final day of the programme, when the practitioners develop individualised exercises for each woman based on what has been shared in the group on previous days, for example:

I know for a fact that every girl on that course related to one thing or another – brilliant. At the end we all went in separate rooms and they asked us what stuff meant to us. (P9)

2.5 Eye opening

In addition to comments made regarding self-discovery (see subtheme 1.1), two participants went further in commenting that the programme was beneficial as it had led to firm realisations:

Sometimes in life you don't realise a lot of things. You don't stop and have to look at what's happening in your life despite what age you are, but here you do...It would be an eye opening course for anyone. (P3)

It's just knocked some sense into me. It really hit home. (P1)

2.6 A safe space

Linked to the sub-themes of group bonding (2.3) and practitioner skills and characteristics (2.1) comments were made regarding the way they felt within the group setting. Three women stated that they felt comfortable in the group and were therefore able to be themselves and open up, for example:

...it was an environment that's not threatening... [names practitioners] made you feel welcome, listened and didn't belittle you - treated you as a person not a number. (P10)

They were like cool about it, they...there was nothing we couldn't do with them. We weren't pressured – it played well – just worked out well...I was upset about my partner dying. I felt comfortable opening up and didn't feel like I was gunna be judged. (P11)

Theme 3. A change for the good

In addition to discussing things they had learnt about themselves, all women made reference to ways in which they had already changed and/or ways in which they are planning on changing in the future. Some women also provided short accounts of instances in which their change in behaviour has been observed by prison staff and peers.

3.1 'Just being me'

In relation to accounts provided about lessons learnt from the masks exercises, three women went further to say how the realisation that they put on a mask will impact upon how they act in the future. It was apparent that, for these women, the masks exercise served as a gateway to change:

I have an angry front but really I want to cry so now I just cry...It's about thinking paths and 'just being me'. (P1)

I can be more myself – not somebody else. (P6)

3.2 Anger management

Not all women on the programmes had issues with anger or violence, however, for those that did ($n = 4$), mention was made of how the programme had led to changes in how they cope with situations which, in the past, would have resulted in them becoming angry and expressing that anger with violence:

It helped my confidence and anger. Like learning about how to stop the anger cycle. (P4)

You learn about positive relationships and managing conflict. (P5)

One woman recounted the role play she took part in during the programme which led to her being able to control her emotions and walk away from a real life situation on the prison wing after the programme:

Before I thought all things going round in my head led to anger – I used to automatically think people were out to get me. I learnt to take a step back and think...there is more than one way of dealing with things like anger...Acting the situation in the pub – the acting agro in the pub like 'you talking to me?!' – I had to act in how I would and then cut dead and I had to say how I should react. Now I ain't gunna react – I take control by walking out...I used to get angry but know that what she does is in her control and what I do is in my control...The more I do, the more I am shocking myself – like walking away from situations. I was gunna punch someone in the face last week. I clenched my fists and had the lump in my throat and would normally go wild but didn't and felt so proud of myself. (P9)

3.3 Taking action

In addition to saying how they felt they had been changed by participating in the programme, five women went further to give more specific examples as to how the changes have impacted upon their actions. These included actions such as having the confidence to make contact with a family member, agreeing to do take part in other programmes offered, gaining credits on the prison wing for helpful behaviour, and the decision to help others. For example:

I now work in the DPA now which is a like a little shop. I help when they come in with clothes and stuff. I like helping people. I don't think I'd have been able to do it before the course – I wouldn't have been as good at interacting. (P8)

I was a naughty prisoner but am enhanced now...I've had 15 positives after that course for doing more than normal duties, like helping. I've put it [the course] into action. (P9)

3.4 Asking for help

As outlined above, the programme helped some women to see that they needed help. Four women went further to describe how they have since requested help as they feel more able to do so than before doing the programme. One woman commented:

I never used to talk to anyone but now it's like I'll go to officers or friends with a problem and I'll accept help. They might understand. I self-harm to relieve pressure. Officers will come and ask how I am and I'll now tell them. (P7)

Comments made about asking for help were most often made in the context of now having the confidence and/or skills to communicate with others, increased levels of self-esteem meaning that they feel they are deserving of help, and that they now feel a hope for the future. For example, with reference to asking for help, one woman felt that her new found impetus to communicate motivated her to ask for help when needed:

And the games were a lot of fun but there was meaning behind the games – like learning about different thinking skills and needing to communicate and getting across the room. Communication is key...I've found it easier to communicate since the course and to ask for help if I'm struggling. (P2)

3.5 Confidence and assertiveness

As mentioned, the women felt more confident and felt they had higher levels of self-esteem following completion of the programme. Further to this, seven women described how the increase in confidence was having an impact on how they behave on a day to day basis. For example:

I definitely felt more confident and just joined in more. I wouldn't even sit in the dining hall but do more now and am more confident with people and become friends. (P11)

Three women commented that their confidence has led to an ability to be more assertive and say 'no' to people, for example:

I was nervous about acting but they made me more assertive. Like now I can say 'no' to people – it's [the programme] changed people...I'm still quiet but I've got more confidence to stand up to my boyfriend. (P7)

3.6 Don't just take my word for it...

In order to support comments being made regarding how the programme had led to changes in behaviour, nearly half of those interviewed ($n = 4$) choose to provide examples of where changes in their behaviour has been recognised by others such as prison officers, for example:

...but now I'm out more and officers have noticed there's a change in me. I never used to interact with girls or have girls as friends. (P7)

One participant gave details of a specific incident where prison officers and peers had expected her to react to a situation with violence but were surprised to find that she was able to control her temper.

...Like when staff said they thought I was gunna punch someone in the face last week – they said they had their hands on their alarms but then I didn't...All the people standing round started clapping and said 'you took control'. (P9)

Theme 4. Suggestions

When asked if they had any suggestions for GT, all participants praised the programme and there were no suggestions for improvements other than making it last longer as they had found it to be enjoyable and helpful. Comments were made regarding who they felt the programme would be suitable for and one woman made a suggestion as to where in the sentence she felt it would be of most use.

4.1 Duration

Six women felt that the programme should last longer. Where specified, the consensus was that they would have liked it to last about two weeks. However, two participants commented that they felt the length was just right:

...The length was good and you weren't overloaded – it was just right. Good mixture of practical and theory and nice to have interaction. (P10)

Another woman suggested that perhaps the sessions could be shorter but done over a longer period of time. It was also suggested that the programme is run at regular intervals throughout the year:

They should make it longer – 3 weeks or maybe a regular thing that you could do – that would be good that – I'd go...it was fun and all helpful. (P5)

One woman made reference to how she felt that if the programme lasted longer it would benefit her in terms of further building her levels of confidence:

I wish the course was longer as I feel my confidence could have been better – I would be even more confident if it was longer. About 2 weeks. At 1 week you are just getting into it...Would be better if it'd gone on for a week longer. (P6)

4.2 Who will it help?

The general consensus amongst women who commented on who the programme would help was that it would be good for any offender:

I think it should be done in all prisons...I'd definitely recommend it to anyone – men and young offenders as they're gunna be scared and not know their emotions so it would help and no one is pressured. (P7)

Where women commented further, it was suggested that it is perhaps particularly beneficial for people who lack confidence (P10), people at the beginning of their sentence who feel vulnerable and isolated (P3), those who are unaware of their emotions and are scared (P7), and those who self-harm or who are violent (P2). One woman went further to suggest that the programme should be mandatory in all prisons:

Particularly good for people who lack confidence – it [the programme] was an environment that's not threatening...I think everyone should do it to get in touch with their feelings and emotions – it should be mandatory...I think that would change everyone's behaviour...It should be mandatory. (P10)

4.3 Nothing but praise

As mentioned, all women felt they had benefitted from the programme; no participants had any criticisms. The majority ($n = 9$) made specific comments praising the programme in general and the practitioners. Comments included:

There's nothing I'd change – they didn't fail on anything. (P1)

When we all started we were a bit like 'pfft' but loved it...there's nothing I would have changed. (P10)

I'd recommend it. All of it...There is nothing I would change. It was definitely worth doing. (P4)

All of it was good...It made me a better person I reckon. (P8).

One woman went further to highlight that she felt that she is sure that the programme was relevant to all the women in her group:

It was wicked, absolutely brilliant. I know for a fact that every girl on that course related to one thing or another – brilliant...Nothing I would change – all effective in its own way. (P9)

4.2 HMP Hewell – *Journey Man*

Theme 1. Revelations

All participants ($N = 10$) made remarks regarding how participating in the GT programme had led to some form of personal level revelation. General comments were made on the topic of self-discovery; mention was made of past thoughts and behaviours and a desire to change. In addition, six participants mentioned that they now realise that they can have hope for the future if they take action to make changes in their own lives. The vast majority ($n = 9$) made specific reference to the mask exercise as having led to gaining an insight on their behaviour.

Table 2. *HMP Hewell Interview Themes and Sub-themes*

Theme	1. Revelations	2. Why it works	3. A change for the good	4. Suggestions
Subtheme	1.1 Lifting the mask	2.1 Practitioner skills and characteristics	3.1 Relaxation	4.1 Duration
	1.2 Self-discovery and awareness	2.2 ...but Geese was different	3.2 Anger management	4.2 Who will it help?
	1.3 Self-efficacy	2.3 Team bonding	3.3 Communication	4.3 Where in the sentence?
		2.4 Positivity	3.4 Confidence	
			3.5 See how I've changed...	
			3.6 Don't just take my word for it...	

1.1 Lifting the mask

Nine out of the ten participants interviewed made mention of the masks used as part of the programme, providing positive comments regarding how the masks exercise had provided them with insight into how they think and act:

They showed different types of masks we wear – it helped get insight into what we wear...it's about fragments of personality – it showed how my personality works and how other people have masks – it's really clever. (P1)

...Just seeing them masks – I wear those every day. Wow, even now...I didn't know the mask I put on. I had lost contact with part of me. Every day from then [the course] I have cried. (P7)

Reference was also made to how the masks exercise led to participants being open and honest in the group:

The masks showed me how many masks I wore. One minute I'm a cool dude, one minute violent, then an angel and then a liar...I want to get to know myself. Be reborn again as the course made me look at myself in so many ways. I related to the four masks. You had to be really honest and really explain why the masks fits you. I was a Jack the Lad before. (P10)

In addition to making reference to revelations that they had had about themselves, the majority of participants ($n = 7$) also went further to comment on how they recognise and consider the masks they wear outside of the programme in everyday life:

I've been a little shit but I've changed a lot. Its [Geese] has helped me identify where I'm going wrong and why I snap – the masks help me see where I'm going wrong...If having an argument then I can see when I'm getting defensive. (P3)

Basically everyone puts on a mask – like defence mechanisms or to hide inner feelings – basically controlling inner feelings. A lot of people do it, especially in prison; you're scared but put on a bolshie act but it's a mask. You didn't realise how many masks. It can be a mixture of 2 or 3...You see it on a daily basis – people can't sit there and tell the truth so put on a mask. It's hard for some people. The younger people find it hard – they don't look for the inner person as that's not a real person – just a mask. It's hiding pain and unresolved issues with masks. (P5)

1.2 Self-discovery and awareness

All participants made reference to discoveries they had made about themselves and an increase in self-awareness. Five participants went further to mention that they had been afforded insights into their past offending behaviour which they felt would assist them in their efforts to change:

They did plays of where people were in a bad situation and then asked what to do...they asked how they had behaved wrongly and then how to change to do the right thing. I'm not normally comfortable with that type of thing but it helped to see why I did stuff; I found it challenging...(P1)

They did a play of the old me and the new me – I could see what kind of man I was – they were spot on...I didn't care about anyone...There was a scenario where a guy was getting drunk and then doing robbery – I was seeing where he was going wrong. I'm not a thinker. I act on impulse but this made me think about the outcome of the situation...I didn't care about anyone - was selfish but feel more settled now...it's helped me take a step back. (P3)

One participant made specific reference to how the programme had led to him feeling more remorse for his past actions:

Courses like this help you learn about yourself. It made me think about what I'd done and why I was in jail and what I'd done. There's being remorseful and then actually feeling it... (P4)

Lastly, three participants made mention of how the programme had led to a greater awareness of how their behaviour has had an impact on loved ones:

There was one thing where we had to pretend to be someone that knows us. So I was my grandad – I dunno, it was pretty good – it was a bit emotional like. They were serious ish but emotional. I guess I just looked at things I do and how I act and how it effects people I love the most. It showed me that I've done pretty selfish stuff in the past. (P6)

...they triggered emotions and took me back to when I was a kid. Fucking hell, it's amazing. I'm sobbing...Basically the role play about dads – the kids come down and he ignores the kids. It made me cry. It showed me how I was bad. It made me realise I did that and it was bad and that I've got to get out of it...I've been that dad – the dad was emotionless...That course helped me see that it's a vicious cycle...the course showed me I have issues. It shows you why you're acting how you are. (P7)

1.3 Self-efficacy

Following on from comments made on the topic of self-discovery, six participants made comments regarding taking responsibility for past actions and wanting to change. Such comments were often coupled with remarks indicating a desire to take action to change:

They called it 'Journey Man' which is apt as we are on a journey and reflect every day. This is my last time in prison. I've got to grasp every good situation...I did what I did [names crime] and only have myself to blame... (P5)

...It showed me how I was bad. It made me realise I did that and it was bad and that I've got to get out of it...Always in life it's gunna be hard, but it's always my choice. (P7)

Theme 2. Why it works

All participants provided some detail as to what aspects of the programme led to their positive view of the programme as a whole. Positive feedback was given about the practitioners regarding their acting skills and personal characteristics. In addition, participants spoke of ways in which the GT programme differed from other programmes, their positive experiences of group support, and the general positivity they felt the programme elicited.

2.1 Practitioner skills and characteristics

All participants gave positive feedback about the practitioners with reference to how much the programme helped them. Six participants mentioned the acting skills of the practitioners. For example, one participant commented that the acting skills made the role play feel realistic:

They [practitioners] played the part of people trying to persuade me to take drugs. [names Geese practitioner] played prisoners really well. He played an intimidating prisoner...It did feel real – even without the actual drugs in front of me it felt really real. (P6)

In addition to commenting on acting skills, three participants described the practitioners as being genuine in their desire to help offenders, three commented that the practitioners cared about them and two described them as being non-judgemental:

They were such good actors. They did it first and then got us up...The tutors were that good. I've been in five and a half years and have come across people who aren't good but they give hope that there are good people out there. You could see that they genuinely wanted to help and that they were genuinely happy that they had helped and put a smile on people's faces. (P2)

They [practitioners] were really good actors. They was shit hot. They had time for people and seems like they care. In other courses the trainers don't even have a smile but these guys were uplifting. (P8)

They [practitioners] were brilliant actors. They actually cared – that's what was different. They was interested like. Not just because it's job. They talked me down from wanting to do drugs again. (P10).

2.2 ...but Geese was different

Although participants were not asked how they felt the programme compared to other programmes they had participated in while in prison, seven participants outlined comparisons with other programmes saying they felt the GT programme to be more beneficial and enjoyable:

I've spent a lot of years in prison and seen other people do courses and done them myself. This is the best course I've done – it's had a bigger impact than any others... (P2)

I thought it would probably be fucking shit as it's prison innit but actually this one is totally great – I give this the highest rating. (P8)

I've fobbed off courses for the last 8 years. I thought this was gunna be shit but now I'd like to come back as a mentor. (P3)

Where mention was made of specific differences between the GT programme and other programmes, factors such as the inclusion of games to help people interact, feeling able to open up, and the programme not being workbook based were cited as being positive differences:

I've done a few courses but this was the most fun. I liked the quick changes and little games to keep interested. Other courses should do little activities to help people interact more. It did make a difference. (P2)

I've never talked about problems before. I've been on other courses but I've never opened up. With other courses it's a rushed thing – it doesn't work. (P10)

In other courses when you're going through a workbook with written examples you don't take it seriously or it doesn't sink in or something. (P6)

In addition, four participants felt that they had found the programme to be more challenging than others:

...it put me outside my comfort zone which helped. (P1)

...It's an 'in yer face' thing. (P8)

One participant commented that the GT programme was more helpful than others as it provided him with the self-awareness necessary to learn and change:

To tell you the truth other courses were a bit shit for me...They [the courses] couldn't tell me what I think as I didn't know myself. (P7)

Furthermore, exercises specific to the GT programme were mentioned with reference to how they had been challenging but ultimately beneficial:

They did plays of where people were in a bad situation and then asked what to do...they asked how they had behaved wrongly and then how to change to do the right thing. I'm not normally comfortable with that type of thing but it helped to see why I did stuff; I found it challenging...They obviously thought a lot about it and structured it in a good way. There was always something that helped someone. (P1)

Lastly, one participant remarked that seeing and performing was thought provoking and led to deep insights:

The masks was good like, the way you had to explain yourself with them – it makes you think – seeing it and performing it – it makes you see it...it made me feel like I didn't want to wear my mask anymore; that deep down that's not me...I learnt to think first before start reacting on things. The masks helped see it is different angles. (P9)

2.3 Team bonding

Seven participants made reference to how they enjoyed and benefitted from the group environment; comments were made regarding increases in levels of confidence and in ability to interact with others:

It gives you motivation and confidence in group situations...It helped me to see changes in others. (P2)

...it's good to get to know people. I'm quite quiet in general but I've been getting to know people...Even just introducing yourself to people is hard so it gives you experience. (P4)

Four participants went further to explain that group exercises/activities led to closer bonds within the group, for example:

It's about trust and working as a team and cooperation...There is a lot of camaraderie. People need pulling out of themselves. Like the falling forward – it's quite challenging – to start people are a bit shy and not talked in front of people before. I tried to

encourage others...The course helps social skills. We didn't know each other but it's like community and trust builds up. We're all encouraged to make conversation. (P5)

I like how they get people to come out of their shells. They got people to work as a team and people to look at things in a different light...I could see the way people changed from the beginning to the end. (P8)

Furthermore, two participants remarked that having small groups enabled bonding; one of these provided an example of a situation where a group member was supported by the group members:

One of the lads broke down – we bonded so well – it was nice to be there for somebody...we came really close...The ball games teach focus and concentration and trust. I was blindfolded and just had to trust...We had little talks [in the course] and I couldn't believe one guy was crying and the amount of people who comforted him. If it had been a bigger group I don't think it would have been the same. It was fun getting to know the other lads. (P10)

Lastly, one participant commented that he was in a group with people he wouldn't normally interact with but that they bonded regardless:

...But interacting with prisoners that I wouldn't interact with and had to do things that took me out of my comfort zone. They were a good group of lads. (P6)

2.4 Positivity

The majority of participants ($n = 7$) remarked that the programme had led to them having a more positive outlook. For example:

It's prison but I'm doing alright – I didn't think that before Geese. (P1)

...everyone takes away something different...I took that things (life) aren't as bad as it seems. (P4)

Two participants went into more detail as to ways in which the programme helped them feel more positive:

I remember all of it. Really good. Positive...and put a smile on people's faces...Having the fun exercises at the beginning (like the ball up in the air although every day it was something different) wakes people up and everyone would have smiles on their faces – it was a good way to start...It was Geese that gave me that boost...I felt refreshed afterwards – felt a lift as had been down in the dumps a bit...I normally feel deflated but so far I've kept up positive thinking. (P2)

The individual work showed the old and new me – all positive things were listed. I'll leave all the bad stuff and keep all the good stuff...So far it has definitely made me a lot more positive. Normally I'm grumpy but now I take time to listen to others...It was hard to think of something I was proud of but now I know I'm a good cook and would like to have qualifications. (P3)

Theme 3. A change for the good

All participants made reference to ways in which they had changed as a result of the programme. Decreases in levels of anxiety were noted, as were increases in self-control, confidence and the ability to communicate with others. Furthermore, participants gave examples of actions they had taken as a result of said changes (e.g. work in prison and enrolment on further programmes) and, in some cases, participants mentioned that these changes had been remarked upon by members of staff.

3.1 Relaxation

Five participants made reference to having learnt useful relaxation techniques on the programme. One participant went in to more depth to explain that he now has a way of calming himself down and lessening anxiety levels:

It gave me practical ways of calming myself down...I had 8 years in mental health with nothing that helped – Geese gave me techniques to help me help myself...simple little things like using the breathing when I'm anxious. This works better than meds – I don't know why...helped me relax a bit more. (P1)

In addition, participant who had mental health issues commented:

I had 8 years in mental health with nothing that helped – Geese gave me techniques to help me help myself... (P1)

3.2 Anger management and self-control

Half of all participants ($n = 5$) commented that the programme had helped them control their anger. The methods through which the programme had helped in this area included becoming aware of anger building up, the ability to walk away from a situation, an understanding of why others may attempt to elicit anger in them, and the ability to think about the outcome of a situation. Participants cited different elements of the programme (e.g. watching the role play, and breathing techniques) as having helped develop these new skills. For example:

I've learnt anger management techniques. I reckon it will last as they are simple things – I just need a safe place for breathing and picture myself on a beach. They teach you how to do it properly and the right length of time can feel different properly...I suffer from fits of rage. It's helped me think about situations – I can see why people try to get a rise out of me. (P1)

I didn't realise before. I've seen different parts of me doing situations. I lose my temper quickly but it gives other options how to deal with situations...I can lose my temper quick but I can look at the role play and see it building up. I got to practice – I'm not gunna learn over night. (P2)

They hit the nail on the head with the role play and I now know how to approach a situation differently...There was a scenario where guy was getting drunk and then doing robbery – I was seeing where he was going wrong. I'm not a thinker. I act on impulse but this made me think about the outcome of the situation. (P3)

The masks exercise was also cited as having helped in developing the skills necessary to control anger. One participant provided an example of how he has become less aggressive through being able to reflect on his own behaviour and being able to listen to others:

I think now before I act. If having an argument, then I can see when I'm getting defensive... I'm more patient. I can take myself away from a situation and think about it... Like with the transgender person – before I would have spat in her face but now I listen – staff were surprised... The bird and masks help me keep my temper. If I'd done it sooner rather than later then that would have helped more. I'm now a role model prisoner for the first time. (P3)

3.3 Communication

Half of the participants ($n = 5$) commented that the programme had given them experience of communicating with others. One participant provided an example of where the programme had helped someone in the group who found it particularly difficult to communicate; reference was made to them being encouraged by the practitioners to make conversation:

There was one lad who it was his first time in prison and he was a bit defensive to start with but he's opened up a lot. At the end he was a totally different person. He went from being reserved to being open... The course helps social skills. We didn't know each other but it's like community and trust builds up. We're all encouraged to make conversation. (P5)

Three participants went further to state that they had put the social skills they had learnt and practiced in the group into practice following the programme (e.g. understanding others, approaching other prisoners and making conversation). For example:

...I find I'm more able to chat to people...gave an understanding of how to approach people and read people...Even just introducing yourself to people is hard so it gives you experience. (P4)

Furthermore, following on from feeling more able to open up to others about thoughts and feelings, two participants remarked that they now felt they would be able to ask for help if needed. One of the two commented that prison is not an environment in which you would normally show emotion but that he now feels able to do so as he has learnt in the programme that asking for help is not a sign of weakness:

Me and the lads had just got to learn that it's not a weakness to ask for help. Before thought don't show weakness and don't cry. Your word's your word but not emotion; in prison you keep emotions to yourself...I learnt how to be honest with myself and others and don't be afraid to ask for help. (P10)

3.4 Confidence

Participants also made reference to an increase in confidence as a result of the GT programme. Comments regarding an increase in confidence were made with reference to how this confidence was instrumental in helping them communicate with others (see subtheme 3.3) and in leading to them taking action (subtheme 3.5). Regarding confidence in relation to communication, comments were made such as:

...just getting to know people and having chats – it's good to get to know people. I'm quite quiet in general but I've been getting to know people...I took away that I'm more confident with people and goals. (P4)

Four participants made comments regarding how the increase in confidence had been instrumental in them taking action:

It helped me with confidence...I've got confidence to get out and do things in the prison – I've just been sat in my cell for weeks. (P1)

...I've seen confidence in myself – like I've now started another course and signed up for another one...confidence is a major thing in jail – I know it's helped me focus on doing other groups...It gives you motivation and confidence in group situations – there's a lot of nervousness when it's a first course. It's given me confidence on the wing – talking to people and staff. (P2)

3.5 See how I've changed...

The majority of participants ($n = 7$) offered up examples of how they felt they had changed. The participants made reference to actions they had taken since the programme ended, for example, with reference to health, one participant commented:

...it changed my ideas. It just, like, helped me give loads of motivation. I just started being more healthy and getting a set routine down. I've been in 2 years but have been sloppy. (P6)

Other participants made reference to signing up for further programmes (when before they had dismissed them) ($n = 3$), taking on work in the prison ($n = 2$), becoming a mentor ($n = 2$), and generally making pro-social plans for the future ($n = 3$). For example:

I've now started another course and signed up for another one. Geese helped me see I can do other programmes...I've now signed up for other programmes so got Cat C back – for me it has changed my life and helped things move in the right direction. (P2)

...but now I know I'm a good cook and would like to have qualifications...I've fobbed off courses for the last 8 years. I thought this was gunna be shit but now I'd like to come back as a mentor...I've put it into practice straight away...I now have a good job in the chapel, like cleaning and stuff. (P3)

It helped as I was like a brick wall which led to rage but it's shown me how to open up and I've now gone on to be a mentor...I'm a mentor now – I immediately went on to the course for mentors after Geese – I help people with English and Maths. It's nice to help people who genuinely need help. (P1)

The amount of officers I've beaten up in the past but now I want to work with young offenders...I plan on not getting back into drugs. I want rehab and to be tested every day so if I use I can be caught... (P10)

3.6 Don't just take my word for it...

Two participants made reference to how the change in them has been noted by prison staff:

I came on the course with a reputation – staff didn't think I'd do well but they got interested when I changed. A few officers were impressed. (P2)

I'm now a role model prisoner for the first time...Like with the transgender person – before I would have spat in her face but now I listen – staff were surprised...staff have seen how well I'm doing...Staff can see I'm changing. (P3)

A third participant mentioned that the change had been noticed by his partner:

...I'm more loving in letters, especially to my partner – my girlfriend has commented on it. (P10)

Theme 4. Suggestions

When asked if they had any suggestions for GT, participants commented on the length of the programme ($n = 8$), who they would recommend the programme to ($n = 5$), and one participant made reference to where he felt the programme should be in the sentence. No suggestions were made regarding the content of the programme.

4.1 Duration

Five participants commented that they would have liked the programme to last a bit longer as they were enjoying it, for example:

I'd make it longer because of the impact that it was having...I dunno...as long as it's as good as it was with the activities then only good can come out of it. (P2)

However, other participants ($n = 4$) remarked that a lot was included and accomplished in the space of a week and therefore felt that a week was enough:

I did think 'what would be done in 1 week?' but they did loads and I looked forward to it...Nothing I'd change – it was good and a good length. (P4)

They [practitioners] put a lot in a short space of time. Courses need to be less repetitive like this one. (P5)

4.2 Who will it help?

Five participants made reference to the type of prisoner they think would benefit from the programme. All five said it would benefit the majority of prisoners; however, three were more specific in stating that it would be particularly helpful for those who have learning difficulties (P5), those who are open to change (P7), and to those who are in prison for the first time (P10).

4.3 Where in the sentence?

One participant commented that it would be beneficial for prisoners to participate in the GT programme near the beginning of their sentence as he felt that it may deter prisoners from getting involved with drugs whilst in prison:

It would possibly be best near the beginning. If they get them to do it at the beginning then it would get them not to start taking drugs. (P8)

4.3 Conclusions

Participants of both *Scratching the Surface* and *Journey Man* described a multitude of areas in which they felt they had benefited from the GT programme. Broadly speaking, benefits fell into the two themes of ‘Revelations’ and ‘A change for the good’. Regarding revelations, participants from both groups spoke positively of discoveries they had made about themselves as a result of various elements of the programme. In addition, through the exercise ‘lifting the mask’, participants mentioned how they had gained an awareness of the various fronts they put on and commented that the programme was integral in helping them see that they have the power to change their future. Furthermore, they describe how the programme increased levels of self-esteem, confidence and knowledge that they need help.

Such responses have parallels with the multifactor offender readiness model (MORM; Ward, Day, Howells, & Birgden, 2004) and the transtheoretical model (TTM) of change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983) which suggest that, for a behavioural change to occur, an individual must first have an awareness that they need to change and a belief that they are capable of change. Participants report being given insight into how they have acted which, in turn, appears to have assisted them in realising their need to change. The programme content moves to looking at skills necessary to change behaviour (i.e. anger management, increasing self-esteem, improving communication skills), to skills practice and then to taking action to change in their day to day lives (e.g. participation in further programmes, mentoring, work, controlling aggression).

In addition, a lack of confidence, self-esteem and social skills are mentioned by respondents as having been addressed during the programme; issues which literature suggests act as barriers to change occurring in offenders (Burrowes & Needs, 2009). Furthermore, although explicit mention was not made of feeling motivated to change, the vast majority of participants commented that previously they lacked a desire to make changes but that they now felt more positive about the future and went on to describe how they were planning to make changes. As such, it could be inferred that the programme had addressed the issue of motivation to change which previous literature in the field of rehabilitation of offenders suggests increases the likelihood of behavioural change occurring and being maintained (McMurran & Ward, 2010).

Regarding changes in behaviour and thought processes noted by participants, the findings support previous research into the effectiveness of GT programmes in the areas of anger control (Blacker et al., 2008), self-efficacy, confidence and, as mentioned, motivation to change (Harkins et al., 2009; Harkins et al., 2011).

As outlined in theme 3 (‘Why it works’), participants in both groups highlighted a range of factors which they felt had led to the programme being beneficial to them, and also commented

on ways in which the programme differed from other programmes that they have participated in. Participants cited the therapeutic relationship as being an important aspect of the programme. It was evident that participants had respect for practitioners; a factor which previous research suggests has a positive impact on the likelihood that an offender will engage with a programme (Kozar & Day, 2012; Marshall et al., 2003).

In addition, in line with the ethos of the good lives model (GLM; Ward & Stewart, 2003), participants commented that the programme had focused on positives and on how they can go about achieving pro-social goals. Furthermore, as supported by previous research (Hudson, 2005) participants mentioned having found role play to be beneficial. Mention was also made of group cohesiveness which previous research has also highlighted as an important factor in treatment programmes for offenders. For example, Yalom (2005) stated that 'it is the affective showing of one's inner world and then the acceptance by others that seems of importance' (p. 56).

Participants made specific reference to how GT was different from other programmes they had participated in. Broadly speaking, participants remarked that they preferred the GT programme to others they had taken part in. Where detail was provided, comments were made regarding the interactive nature of exercises, having fun, the lack of written elements, being responsive to their individual needs, being memorable and specific applied theatre methods (i.e. acting, watching performances, skills practice). Lastly, suggestions made by interviewees regarding the programme reflected their positive view of the programme (i.e. no suggestions were made regarding how programme content or delivery could be improved). In addition, some participants suggested they would have liked the programme to last longer, whereas others commented that it was an appropriate length and noted that much was achieved over the five days.

Overall, responses by both male and female participants offer support for literature regarding the benefits of applied theatre in general (Blatner, 2007; Jackson, 2007; Prentki & Preston, 2009), applied theatre in prison settings (Baim, 2007; Balfour, 2004) and, more specifically, the particular content and delivery of GT (Baim et al., 2002; Watson, 2009).

5 Participant questionnaire feedback

Programme participants provided written feedback regarding their views on the programme by completing a questionnaire consisting of Likert scale questions and some open-ended questions designed by Geese Theatre Company. Feedback was gathered from 12 males in HMP Hewell and 21 females in HMP Foston Hall.

5.1 Likert scale responses HMP Hewell

- 100% strongly agreed that they would recommend the programme to someone else
- 100% agreed that they now feel better about themselves (63.6% strongly agree; 36.7% agree)
- 100% agreed that they enjoyed the programme (90.9% strongly agree; 9.1% agree)
- 100% agreed that using theatre and drama made the project more memorable (81.8% strongly agree; 18.2% agree)
- 100% agreed that they are now better at opening up to people (45.5% strongly agree; 54.5% agree)
- 91% agreed that they now have more confidence (54.5% strongly agree; 36.4% agree)
- 81.8% agreed that they feel they have now done something they are proud of (63.6% strongly agree; 18.2% agree)
- 81.8% agreed that they have learnt new skills (54.5% strongly agree; 27.3% agree)

Where participants did not respond with 'strongly agree' or 'agree', a response of 'neither agree nor disagree' was given. No participants disagreed with any statement.

5.2 Likert scale responses HMP Foston Hall

- 100% agreed that they would recommend the programme to someone else (90.5% strongly agree; 9.5% agree)
- 100% agreed they enjoyed the programme (61.9% strongly agree; 38.1% agree)
- 100% agreed they have learnt new skills (38.1% strongly agree; 61.9% agree)
- 95.2% agreed they now have more confidence (33% strongly agree; 61.9% agree)
- 95.2% agreed that using theatre and drama made the project more memorable (81% strongly agree; 14.3% agree)
- 90.5% agreed they had now done something they are proud of (33% strongly agree; 57.1% agree)
- 85.7% agreed that they are now better at opening up to people (28.6% strongly agree; 57.1% agree)
- 81% agreed that they now feel better in themselves (33.3% strongly agree; 47.6% agree)

As per their male counterparts at HMP Hewell, where participants did not respond with 'strongly agree' or 'agree', a response of 'neither agree nor disagree' was given. No participants disagreed with any statement.

5.3 Open-ended question responses HMP Hewell

Which elements of the project were found most useful/memorable?

Five participants made specific reference to masks as something they found useful and/or memorable. In addition, the use of role play was mentioned by three men. Other comments made included the usefulness of anger management and confidence building exercises, general

self-reflection techniques and exercises involving future goals. It was further commented that it was useful to hear other people's views, be challenged to open up and speak in front of people and '*just having a laugh whilst learning*'. For example, one participant wrote '*I found the role plays good, the part with the masks was very interesting! Breaking down old ways and then showing how things could look. Using new skills is also something I found very good!*' and another commented '*Acting out and watching other people and recognising myself doing that.*'

Which elements were found least useful/memorable?

The vast majority ($n = 9$) responded that there were no elements which were not useful or memorable. Where other responses were given, one felt that he found reliving hurtful memories to be hard and two made reference to some of the warm up exercises: '*Only very few of the warm up games. Overall the course was great.*'

What impact did participants feel the project had on them?

Participants felt that the programme had led to an increase in levels of confidence ($n = 3$), that they had developed a deeper understanding of those around them ($n = 2$) and were able to be more open about their feelings ($n = 2$). Nearly half commented that they were now more positive about their futures and felt motivated to change. For example, one participant stated '*I will use the relaxation techniques showed. I learnt that we use masks in certain situations – I believe I will stay positive now, this course was the kick start that I needed to carry on and progress with my sentence.*'

A further three mentioned that they were more able to think before acting on impulse, and one participant who had a history of violence and mental health issues felt that he was now better able to control anger, stating '*It massively helped build confidence and control building of rage. Been in the mental health service for 8 years and done more in a week here than the whole of that 8 years.*'

How did participants feel about the way Geese staff interacted with them?

All respondents made a positive comment about Geese staff. Adjectives used in responses included: '*awesome*', '*very good*', '*interesting*', '*sensitive*', '*great*', '*wicked*', '*brilliant*', '*genuine*' and '*helpful*'. More detailed comments were: '*They was really good sensitive with certain subjects but got deep*'; '*The Geese staff were brilliant, they seemed very genuine and it was a pleasure to meet all of them – Their acting skills were very good and I enjoyed their company very much!*'; '*Very polite and helpful. They also take the time to listen and understand which is greatly helpful.*'

Any other comments?

Ten of the 12 respondents made additional positive comments about the programme. Three reiterated praise of Geese staff and further comments were made stating that they felt the course should be available to other prisoners ($n = 4$). For example, '*More people should get a chance to do the course*' and '*I would recommend this course to anyone who wants to have a better more positive outlook on their lives!*'

5.4 Open-ended question responses HMP Foston Hall

Which elements of the project were found most useful/memorable?

Regarding specific elements, four women mentioned that they felt role play to be useful/memorable. In addition, four participants commented that the masks were useful - *'Acting out things with masks was a good source to reflect on our self.'* More generally, participants commented that they felt they knew themselves better as a result of the programme ($n = 5$), one participant commented, *'Learning about how I can react to different situations and how the outcome of the situation is down to me and my decisions.'*

Others felt they were now better able think about how their actions affect their future in the short and/or long term ($n = 6$), and to think about life goals ($n = 3$). Four participants made reference to enjoying and/or seeing the benefit of feeling supported by others in the group and team work, for example:

Being in a safe environment which has enabled me to look at myself as a person and recognise that I am not a bad person. Found working as a team to solve problems in particular the games that were played.

In addition, reference was also made to the benefits of individual acting tasks ($n = 5$) such as developing coping skills, problem solving skills and confidence. With reference to her particular issues, one participant commented *'...helped me with situations with my children and problem solving – they're fantastic what they do - I'm a different person.'*

Which elements were found least useful/memorable?

The vast majority of participants ($n = 16$) stated that there was nothing in the programme that was not useful. Four respondents felt the warm-up games were not necessarily useful and one commented that she was not comfortable with a particular game that involved pointing at people as she felt this to be rude (potentially a cultural issue).

What impact did participants feel the project had on them?

All participants made reference to solely positive impact of participating in the programme. There was a range of positive impacts noted. Four women made remarks that they felt the programme had given them a more positive outlook on life and six felt the programme had resulted in an increase in confidence and/or self-esteem: *'I can see to the future, it looks a lot brighter and I have more confidence.'* In addition, some participants ($n = 4$) mentioned that they are now more able to think before they act: *'To think what might that word or action have on my future achievements'*.

Furthermore, eight participants felt they had developed new skills and/or changed their behaviour, for example: *'It has made me see a better me and it's showed me new skills that I can use in everyday situations'* and *'Will allow me to build up self-esteem. To have more confidence in self and ability to carry things out that I find difficult.'*

How did participants feel about the way Geese staff interacted with them?

All respondents made positive comments regarding Geese staff. Similar to adjectives used by male participants, words such as *'friendly', 'approachable', 'fun', 'understanding', 'fantastic', 'amazing', 'supportive', 'creative', 'non-judgemental', 'empathetic', 'helpful', 'respectful'* and *'gifted'* were used to describe the practitioners. It was also commented they were easy to interact with and engaging.

Where women went in to more detail regarding their thoughts on the GT practitioners, comments were made such as, *'They were amazing, supportive and very creative. They engaged with us well and listened to us as much as we did to them - extremely respectful and passionate'* and *'They were supportive and helpful they made me think I can do this.'*

Three participants noted that staff were able to meet the needs of individuals despite it being group work. One woman went further to mention how GT practitioners made her feel able to explore her feelings:

The staff who delivered this course were excellent, they made me feel safe and secure which allowed me to explore my feelings then not being judgemental – this goes a long way in making me feel a valued individual. The staff were empathetic, supportive, acknowledging when things were tough. Both [names practitioners] are a credit to Geese Theatre.

Any other comments?

The majority of participants ($n = 19$) chose to make additional comments all of which were positive. Seven women took the opportunity to thank GT practitioners for delivering the programme and five mentioned that they felt the programme should be made available to others. More specifically, based on individual experiences, it was commented that that the programme may be particularly good for women who lack confidence or who have mental health issues. One participant went further to suggest it would also be beneficial for those who are not in prison: *'This group needs to be available in all prisons and all types of people whatever problems they have. Everybody should have a chance to do the course whether they are in prison or not.'*

Lastly, one participant commented that the course is particularly useful for people in prison as it will improve relationships in the prison environment: *'I believe the project should be done as part of a regime for also making others aware that everyone has a better understanding in getting along with others in prison life.'*

5.5 Conclusions

Results of Likert scale question scores, and responses provided to open-ended questions provide support for findings of the pre/post psychometric test analysis and the feedback from participants in semi-structured interviews. In short, Likert scale responses display self-reported increases in self-esteem, confidence, and communication (e.g. opening up to others). Participants also commented that they would recommend it to others, that it was fun and memorable, and that practitioners were skilled actors and were (amongst other positive comments) supportive, respectful, and non-judgemental.

6 Prison staff feedback

Responses via an anonymised online questionnaire (see Appendix 3) yielded a range of feedback regarding their interactions with GT practitioners and their views on *Journey Man* and *Scratching the Surface* programmes. Themes and sub-themes derived from responses are displayed in table 3. Prior to open-ended questions, respondents ($N = 6$) were asked to rate their interactions with GT practitioners on a scale of 1 (poor) – 5 (excellent). Five individuals rated interactions as ‘excellent’ and one as ‘very good’.

Theme 1. Geese staff

1.1 Interactions

All staff felt commented that they were happy with the interactions they had had with GT practitioners. Comments were made regarding how friendly and professional the practitioners were. GT practitioners were also described as being able to build a quick rapport with prisoners, put offenders at ease, and as being respectful of prisoners. It was also felt that practitioners were appreciative of the restrictions of the prison environment and that they were knowledgeable and informative:

I found the staff were very friendly and appreciative of a prison environment and the restrictions this can bring. (P1)

Both [names practitioners] were excellent interacting with the prisoners. They were quick to build a rapport and a friendly atmosphere, which meant the ladies felt able to talk about their issues openly within the group. (P2)

They spoke to myself and prisoners on a professional but friendly level and were supportive on their needs. It also made me think about my issues and gave me ideas on how to deal with them. Really impressed!! (P4)

Table 3. Online questionnaire responses: Themes and sub-themes

Theme	1. Geese staff	2. How has it helped?	3. Perceptions of how it's received	4. Would you recommend it?	5. Suggestions
Sub-theme	1.1 Interactions and observations	2.1 Positive action	3.1 Completers	4.1 Support	5.1 Duration/availability
		2.2 Thought process change	3.2 Non-starters	4.2 How Geese differs	5.2 When?
			3.3 Drop outs	4.3 Insight	5.3 No change necessary

Theme 2. How has it helped?

2.1 Positive action

In response to survey questions regarding how it was felt the programme was received and whether any change had been noticed in prisoners, the majority of respondents made mention of some form of positive action having resulted from completing the programme. It was observed that change had been seen in some offenders in the weeks following the completion of the course:

Some offenders have seen a difference already within the prison i.e. walking away from potential conflicts and being less confrontational. However other ladies may be more likely to put the things they have learnt into practice when they are released and back in the community i.e. saying no to situations such as drug taking. (P2)

...offenders are clearly utilising some of the skills explored... (P1)

It was also commented that, from one group, two offenders were now working and another two had been observed to engage more with staff and had not self-harmed following the programme.

...two of the final four are more confident and are now working which they had initially refused to do due to confidence issues...The other 2 are more engaging with staff and have not self-harmed since completing the geese theatre course. (P4)

Examples were provided of where males who completed the programme were engaging with other programmes and with staff as a result of the GT programme:

...one has completed a level 1 mentoring course and is far more positive. One of the others who was negative towards authority and wouldn't engage with any offending programmes has been better behaved and is engaging more with the staff. (P5)

2.2 Thought process change

Respondents noted that prisoners had undergone a change in thought processes as a result of completing the programme. Most commonly, respondents noted an increase in levels of confidence and positivity:

I have seen a few of the prisoners since the end of the scheme and most have told me they are in a positive place and can see good things ahead of them. (P3)

One of the prisoners still talks about it now and how it has changed his thought processes and he wants to do more to help others...I is more confident has completed a level 1 mentoring course and is far more positive. (P5)

Some of the women appear to be more positive in their outlook and are clearly utilising some of the skills explored to try and approach their time in custody more positively. (P1)

...2 of the final 4 are more confident and are now working which they had initially refused to do due to confidence issues. (P4)

It was noted that confidence and positivity has led to prisoners using their time in prison more effectively (i.e. taking part in further programmes and work). In addition, one respondent went further to suggest that, for some women, the course had been life changing:

Many of the offenders have taken away things from the course, such as looking at their behaviour and the impact it has on others, an increase in their confidence and some have found it life changing and are using the lessons they learned on a daily basis. (P3)

Theme 3. Perceptions of how the course was received

3.1 Completers

All respondents felt that the prisoners who had completed the course had found it to be a positive experience and that they had all benefitted in various ways from taking part. It was observed that prisoners were recommending the course to others based on their positive experiences:

Our women loved the programme and many still talk about it now. They very much support delivery of future programmes and I believe many women could benefit from this. (P1)

All feedback from the ladies who took part in the programme has been positive. A majority of the women have stated that they would like to see the programme being run again and have recommended it to other people. (P2)

Observations were made that prisoners had engaged with the course, learnt new skills, and had undergone change in thought processes which had led to changes in behaviour:

Many of the offenders have taken away things from the course, such as looking at their behaviour and the impact it has on others, an increase in their confidence and some have found it life changing and are using the lessons they learned on a daily basis. (P3)

I felt the final four really achieved something. One of the prisoners still talks about it now and how it has changed his thought processes and he wants to do more to help others. (P4)

3.2 Non-starters

Staff responses regarding the reasons why some prisoners may have opted not to begin the course included issues arising from a lack of awareness of what the course may involve and a resultant concern that they will be forced to act in front of others. In addition, it was commented that some prisoners may feel uncomfortable if they do not know other people in the group.

Some people may be reluctant to take part in group sessions if they do not know other people in the group or may not know much about what the programme involves. (P2)

I think when they hear the words Geese Theatre they automatically think it's going to involve acting which they put barriers up too. (P5)

In addition, it was felt that some prisoners may choose not to take part if they did not feel ready to engage:

...also I feel you have to be in the right frame of mind and willing to push your limits and boundaries and I felt that some of the prisoners were not at this point in their offending behaviour and sentence. (P4)

3.3 Drop outs

Reasons for prisoners starting the course but choosing to leave included a lack of awareness of what would be involved in the remaining days and group dynamics (i.e. issues with other group members). In addition, it was felt that not all prisoners would be in the right *mind-set* to continue.

Lack of awareness of the programme. Dynamics of the group and the other women partaking meant they weren't comfortable continuing. (P1)

Some individuals may not be in the right mind-set to take part in the programme at that particular time. Some may be struggling personally with issues which they may not feel comfortable talking about within a group. (P2)

Respondents from HMP Foston Hall commented that difficulties arose in ensuring women could take their medication at a time that would not interfere with the programme; in circumstances where women were in the group but having to wait to take their medication, it may have been difficult for them to concentrate. Finally, it was commented that one prisoner was taken off the course as they breached prison rules outside of the course.

Theme 4. Would you recommend it?

All respondents commented that they would recommend the GT programme to others. Justification for such recommendations was linked to comments made regarding ways in which the programme helped prisoners. These fell broadly into the categories of support, comments as to how the GT programme differs from other programmes known to them, and the level of insight gained by prisoners who completed the programme.

4.1 Support

Respondents commented that prisoners attending the sessions felt supported by GT practitioners and also that the prisoners felt supported by those in their group:

The programmes offer a different way to explore support needs which are more accessible to some of our women than they find other support options. (P1)

...they also find a support network within the group. (P3)

...support was there if it was needed. (P4)

4.2 How Geese differs

Respondents emphasised that the course was enjoyable but also a learning experience; prisoners had fun but also learnt new skills, formed bonds with group members and gained in confidence.

It was made fun and enjoyable even though the course matter was serious...It also helped people with less confidence talk and engage with others. It was such a positive course and I was proud to be a part of it. (P4)

In addition, one respondent implied that the course differed from others in that it encouraged prisoners to develop an understanding of their actions by themselves and that they were freer to express themselves. It was also felt that prisoners were given an insight into how other people in the group view their crimes:

Activities are enjoyable and offenders can be who they are, no need to try and say the right things as there is no right or wrong in these sessions, only their own reasoning for their actions. (P5)

I would encourage offenders to take part as I believe there are many positive aspects to the group. Not only do they get to look at themselves and their crime, they get to see how other prisoners feel about their own crimes... (P3)

Lastly, one respondent commented directly about the way that GT uses interactive methods to address prisoner issues and the use of acting (by both practitioners and prisoners) in the programme:

...the programmes help prisoners deal with their specific issues in an interactive and more artistic way than is seen in other programmes. The women enjoyed watching the geese staff acting scenes out and also acting themselves. (P2)

4.3 Insight

Respondents made comments regarding the way the programme afforded prisoners' insight into their issues. Two respondents went further to suggest that the course helped prisoners deal with issues.

...Not only do they get to look at themselves and their crime, they get to see how other prisoners feel about their own crimes... (P3)

It has helped the ladies deal with some hard issues. (P1)

...the programmes help prisoners deal with their specific issues... (P2)

Theme 5. Suggestions

Staff were asked if they had any suggestions for GT to help them improve their programme. No suggestions were made regarding a need for change of any course content, however,

comments were made regarding the length and availability of the programme as well as some issues related to delivery such as when prisoners should participate.

5.1 Duration/availability

In accordance with positive comments made by respondents about the programme, it was suggested that availability of the course is increased and that courses last longer.

More courses to be provided please. (P3)

I enjoyed it immensely but I do believe it could be longer to give the women more of a chance to explore themselves and their behaviours. (P1)

5.2 Delivery

One respondent felt that the programme would be most effective for women who have longer sentences. In addition, it was suggested that the programme becomes accredited as it was felt that this would lead to it being used in all prisons across the UK. Lastly, it was commented that it is necessary to apply careful consideration when choosing who to recruit for a particular group as this was thought to impact upon the effectiveness of the programme.

...do feel it is not right for women who have just come into prison, I believe women who have longer sentences and are more settled would benefit from it most. (P2)

Our courses were very close together which made recruitment hard. Foston Hall is a small environment so there is a need to carefully consider the make-up of any group to ensure those attending get the most from the opportunity. (P1)

5.3 It's just right

All respondents were in agreement that they felt the course was well received by prisoners and staff alike:

I think overall the programme worked really well within the establishment... The geese staff were excellent! (P1)

Excellent program, I have enjoyed being involved with the Geese Theatre. (P4)

6.1 Conclusions

Feedback regarding interactions that staff had had with GT practitioners was very positive. Broadly speaking, staff felt practitioners were friendly, professional and that they interacted well with prisoners. With reference to how it was felt the programmes were received by prisoners, it was noted that they felt the programme had been well received and that prisoners had benefitted in a variety of ways, i.e. changes in thought processes (e.g. confidence, positivity and perspective taking) and behaviour (e.g. less confrontational and more motivated to take action to change).

Staff were asked for their views on why individuals may choose not to start the programme and why they may opt to leave the programme after they have started. It was felt that prisoners

may be reluctant to take part if they do not know others in the group, if they feel that the programme will involve them acting, and/or if they are not at a point where they feel 'ready' to take part in any programme. Regarding reasons behind prisoners dropping out of the programme, it was suggested that this may be due to a lack of awareness as to what the programme involves, struggles with personal issues making it difficult to share with others or reflect on themselves, and group dynamics. External issues which led to drop outs included a prisoner being taken off the programme after breaching prison rules and two prisoners not feeling able to continue due to issues in accessing medication.

Staff recognised that prisoners felt supported by practitioners (as also noted by participants) and that the programme differed from other programmes the prisoners would have participated in in the past. All feedback about the programmes was positive. Suggestions included making the programme longer and providing more GT programmes.

7 Geese Theatre Company focus group

All GT practitioners who had facilitated programmes in HMP Foston Hall and/or HMP Hewell ($N = 6$) took part in a focus group to provide feedback on their experiences. A range of issues were discussed (see Appendix 4 for prompt questions). Themes and sub-themes derived from analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Geese practitioner Focus Group – Summary of Themes and Sub-themes*

Theme	1. Programme elements	2. Group work	3. Responsivity	4. Practicalities
Sub-theme	1.1 Creating a story	2.1 'A safe space'	3.1 Prisoner needs and characteristics	4.1 Facilities
	1.2 A process	2.2 Forming bonds	3.2 Personalised approach	4.2 In an ideal world
	1.3 Personal level work	2.3 Group support	3.3 Timing	4.3 Medication
	1.4 Masks	2.4 Prison staff involvement		4.4 Referrals
	1.5 Practical skills	2.5 A mixture		4.5 Staff attitudes
	1.6 Realistic role play	2.6 Practitioner skills and characteristics		4.6 Staff availability
	1.7 Theory			4.7 Readiness to change
	1.8 Outcomes			
	1.9 Well established content and delivery			

Theme 1. Programme elements

During the focus group, practitioners were asked to comment on specific elements within the programme in terms of how effective and/or well received they were felt to be. Practitioners commented on some specific elements and also discussed the process of change that occurs due to the sequence in which different elements are presented. Practitioners also commented on the overall outcome of participants having developed throughout the duration of the programme. It was further noted that the elements of the programme are well-established through previous use with forensic populations over the last few decades by GT throughout the UK. As such, positive feedback from prisoners regarding all elements of the programme was, to an extent, expected.

1.1 Creating a story

The element of the programme which GT refers to as the 'facilitator enacted scene' was found to be beneficial. The group are invited to interpret and analyse the character and story for

themselves (often based on their own characteristics and past experiences), and have a greater investment in the story and are more likely to be able to identify with the character than if the GT practitioners are imposing a particular interpretation.

GT practitioners refer to working at ‘one-step removed’, using the fictional characters to create a safe distance and enabling participants to refer to the character rather than themselves if they did not want everyone to know about their specific issues. However, it was further noted that by the end of the week people felt more able to talk about themselves rather than using the guise of the fictional character:

I think some people really like the idea of having a character that we can refer back to throughout the week - they can talk about the character rather than themselves which feels a bit safer. But some of our groups, as the week progressed, left the character behind and said they were talking about me...

1.2 A process

As mentioned, the sequence of programme exercises and elements is important to enable the participants to progress in terms of level of self-discovery, confidence and skills practice. The final exercise is a personal level piece of work for each participant which is tailored to their needs and experiences. It was felt that participants will only be ready for this after having participated in previous exercises:

each one is created for each individual differently, and my inclination is that ...they can only come after the other pieces of work. They can only come on the last couple of days because all the ground work has been done with them.

The metaphor of mask is a key component to the GT methodology and it was mentioned that having the masks exercises at the beginning of the programme was beneficial, for example:

I think the masks act as a stimulus... and because they are presented at the start of the process participants are able to identify with them...

1.3 Personal level work

The impact of the personal level piece of work was noted by practitioners at both HMP Hewell and HMP Foston Hall. It was felt that this was beneficial as it was specific to the individual’s needs (i.e. it was based on what the practitioners had observed and learnt about the individual during previous sessions) and was something that therefore challenged them.

...each of the people we work with, we created, what we call, a “personal level” piece of work... Each one is created for each individual differently and is designed to be quite challenging, to test people, to push them into different roles...

In addition, it was commented that participants feel valued from having a whole piece of work created specifically for them and that positive feedback/support from staff and group members further increases the benefit of the exercise.

...the feedback afterwards always seems to be very positive or quite reflective like 'I've seen things that I need to start looking at in my life' or 'I'd really like to go on to do things in a different way'.

1.4 Masks

As mentioned, it was noted that the masks were a good exercise to have near the beginning of the programme. It was felt that the masks are an effective way to get participants to start reflecting on themselves and to encourage them to be open and honest during the remainder of the programme. It was also noted that the masks exercise is an element which has always been successful in programmes delivered by Geese Theatre Company:

I think for the men, the masks can act as a gateway into talking about vulnerability because as soon as you get them to buy into the concept of the mask as a 'front', it's not a very hard jump to talking about what sits underneath that front. Then you can start exploring 'what purpose is the mask serving and what am I trying to keep hidden?'

It was further commented that the fact that the masks serve as a visual representation rather than purely verbal discussion creates more of an impact and means they are more likely to remember what they have learnt about themselves.

1.5 Practical skills

Where relevant to an individual, practical skills such as relaxation techniques were taught. It was felt that such skills would benefit the participants after the programme had ended.

I think some of them also benefited from some of the practical skillsbased exercises. For instance, at Hewell, we had a guy who talked about getting wound up - so we created a guided imagery exercise which really seemed to benefit him. It was also something he could take away and practice, sometimes practicing practical skills seemed important for people.

1.6 Realistic role play

As mentioned by group participants in interviews, the role play exercises were very real/accurate. GT practitioners also commented that participants find the role play real and therefore challenging and memorable.

...when they get involved in role plays they surprise themselves that it seems real and difficult. Initially they might say 'well it's a scene so I'm not going to feel anything' and then it surprises them that it does feel so real. I think that makes it memorable which is of course more than you get from just talking through an experience.

1.7 Theory

Although the programme largely consists of practical exercises, where it is felt to be relevant to the needs of the group, theory will also be presented to participants and has been found to be beneficial:

...we'd introduce theoretical models which illustrated particular issues. On a couple of projects we looked at a model for anger, aggression and violence. In Foston Hall with the women we often introduced the Duluth Power and Control Wheel if participants disclosed experiences of domestic abuse. With women who had been victims of domestic violence rather than perpetrators of it just having an understanding and seeing it...that there is a model to describe their experience, means that it's not just their experience but it's things that other people can recognise and you can call it something, you can call it domestic violence, you can call it emotional abuse...

By presenting and initiating discussion regarding theoretical models it was noted that women recognised that they had similar experiences to others in the group which would help form bonds.

... as they explored the theoretical model... they felt their experience was validated and they were able to then go 'oh, we all have that experience' which creates different kinds of bonds between them with people they may have never spoken to before.

1.8 Outcomes

Geese Theatre practitioners noted a number of positive outcomes from the culmination of the elements within the programme. In addition, examples were mentioned where they had been informed by participants or staff of subsequent changes or actions. Firstly, practitioners commented that the programme led to participants feeling more motivated to sign up for and participate in other programmes (where before they had refused to do so):

Most of the guys at Hewell would finish and then say 'what's next?' These would be guys who would generally be going 'I'm not getting involved with anything, I'm not doing education or any other courses' but then they'd be asking [names prison staff member] 'what's the next course that's happening?

...a young guy who'd been doing nothing prior to the course was ready to do something else by the time it finished. [names prison staff member] got him on to a bike work shop and then he went to train as a mentor so, suddenly his journey has just exploded for him from this one week.

It was also commented that they had feedback from staff that there were changes in the men and women who had taken part in the programme and that word had spread among prisoners that it was a good programme to do, so there were requests being made for spaces on the next programme, for example, *'they are back on the wing talking about it. Staff on the wing are noticing changes in them, and others are asking, 'how do I get on the next one mate?'*

As also noted by participants, practitioners commented on the increase in levels of hope for the future following the programme:

...you saw the investment they had in their own futures...steadily he was thinking about how actions were going to affect his journey and where he was going to go ultimately...he was able to think past the short-term things

... a guy who had been in a long time, he was able to reflect and think about where he is now. He was thinking about how he could make his prison sentence better...

Staff spoke of the journey that participants go on throughout the programme and how they changed as individuals, for example, *'it was a great experience to meet people who went on massive journeys. We could see them grow. It was very powerful, seeing the work working.'*

One example given of a participant who changed, was where a prisoner had a negative opinion of those with drug issues but he changed his views during the programme and became more empathetic and communicative. The prisoner went on to do a sponsored run to raise money for Geese Theatre Company:

...our guy who ended up running a 20 mile run for charity on a treadmill. He started off the week saying 'I'm a veteran, I don't know what I'm doing here with all you junkies' and by the end of it he was saying 'I'd never be sitting here next to this guy shaking his hand. He's just a junkie, that's what I said about this last week, but he's a mate now and I'd chat to him on the wing, and you lot, you've really opened my eyes to the fact that people, civilians, can be okay'. That felt like quite a profound journey for him...and then he went on to do the 20-mile sponsored run. It clearly had a longer impact on him...'

1.9 Well established content and delivery

With reference to the effectiveness/impact of all the elements of the programme, it was noted by the Director of Geese Theatre Company that all exercises are well-established in that they have been used with success over the last three decades:

...it's not like we're experimenting in this programme, this is a culmination of everything we do brought together around this particular theme. The methodology has developed over the last 29 years that's why we have confidence in it working...

Theme 2. Group work

A number of issues relating to the group environment were remarked upon by GT practitioners. It was felt that participants had benefitted from forming bonds with other group members and that participants were supportive of each other. The importance of creating a 'safe space' was highlighted as was the need for practitioners to form good relations with participants. Mention was also made of the involvement of prison staff within the group.

2.1 A safe space

It was felt that participants would feel better able to explore their feelings, open up about issues and practice new skills if they viewed the group environment as a 'safe space' in which to do so. For example, that they felt they would be listened to and supported by practitioners and other group members.

Some participants would say 'oh, I could never do that, I could never walk away from somebody calling me this, that or the other' but practising it in the safe space gave them more confidence to think that they might be able to do it somewhere else.

In addition, it was mentioned that smaller group sizes mean that women were able to have the time to go into more depth about their lives/issues.

We're not asking women to tell us their life stories and the trauma they might have experienced, but some of them do and we needed to manage that level of emotional outpouring, which would have been hard in a bigger group.

2.2 Forming bonds

It was observed that bonds formed between participants over the course of the programme. For example, women were found to bond over the discovery that they have similar past experiences. It was highlighted that, in some cases, women felt isolated when on the wing but that through becoming part of the group, they were able to form bonds that continued outside of the programme. Furthermore, these bonds were thought to lead to participants developing an investment in each other for both males and females:

...that's what often happens in these groups – people develop an investment in each other which I think has longer lasting effects beyond the lifespan of the week, they start to care about each other... (re: HMP Hewell)

they start to care about their futures for each other, they start to care that somebody gets to go to college or whatever the goal is... (re: HMP Foston Hall)

2.3 Group support

Linked to the two sub-themes above is the topic of group support. It was noted that group members supported each other through encouragement:

...you're asking them to do something incredibly challenging for them and to do it in front of the rest of the group. But because the support's been created in the group, even though they may be shaking doing it, they will still persist with the encouragement of everybody around...

It was also noted by a practitioner who had worked with both the male and female groups, that, at times, group members would challenge each other in such a way that they help the person recognise something about themselves whilst not feeling judged or targeted:

...one of the other things that I think is very powerful, and they might not notice it, when it's happening, is that the power of the group is that the challenge comes from them.

2.4 Prison staff involvement

Geese practitioners praised the prison staff who assisted on the programmes in both HMP Hewell and HMP Foston Hall. Prison staff assisting in the women's programme were based in administration rather than having had experience in being with prisoners on the wing. These staff members worked well within the group and it was felt that there was, in fact, a potential benefit from them not being prison officers: *'there was something about the fact that they were admin staff so they weren't seen in the same way as officers might be - they weren't seen so much as authority figures ...'*

In HMP Hewell practitioners were mostly assisted by the Healthy Living Instructor; given that he was not a prison officer, had a good manner with the prisoners and was respected by them,

it was felt that he was a good member of staff to be involved with the group: ‘...lots of respect and a he has a very nice manner with them and he’s very down to earth....’

2.5 A mixture

Regarding the participants in the group, it was felt that it is beneficial to have participants who vary in the length of sentence they are serving. It was commented that participants could look at those with longer sentences and realise that that could be them if they do not address their issues. For example:

...it’s also useful to have a mix of people doing long sentences and short sentences... When people with longer sentences say to people who are in and out ‘one more thing you do and you could end up like me’, like the people on IPP going ‘look, I can’t afford to put a foot wrong’, that’s quite powerful...

2.6 Practitioner skills and characteristics

Geese practitioners were aware of the positive feedback they had from participants for these programmes and for previous programmes. They commented on the importance of creating good relationships with participants in order to make participants feel at ease and able to open up (see sub-theme 2.1):

I think one of the biggest things from our point of view in terms of why it might work is to do with the fact that we build safe relationships with the participants very quickly and that’s probably unusual in a prison; we can create a safe space and within that space the practitioners create relationships that are very different: we talk to them on a level, we treat them like people not like offenders...I think that is at the core of why people go on these journeys in a short space of time because they find a way of connecting with people.

As evidence that GT practitioners had developed good relationships with participants, it was mentioned by those in both HMP Hewell and HMP Foston Hall that prisoners would come and see them after the programme had ended, for example:

...some of them came back to see us which was really nice, it was just nice that they cared and found their way to coming back to us to just say hello, it was quite nice for us to get that sort of instant feedback.

Theme 3. Responsivity

Throughout the focus group the issue of responsivity to the needs of individuals was highlighted. GT practitioners commented on their ability to tailor the exercises to the needs of the particular group; differences in prisoner needs and characteristics were mentioned with reference to the ability of practitioners to match the exercise to the needs and abilities of the group. In addition, responsivity to the needs of the individual was mentioned with reference to the creation of a personalised piece of work for each person on the programme.

3.1 Prisoner needs and characteristics

It was noted that GT practitioners were able to choose which exercises to use at any given time

based on their view of how participants would respond, i.e. whether participants would engage with the exercise and find it beneficial. Comments were made regarding differences between groups and differences between individuals within each group:

Different groups connected to different things. We had some groups that would prefer to 'do' and were less keen on talking, so we tried to keep them occupied, and then other groups who wanted to talk...because all groups are different...

The benefits of not being restricted to a rigid structure were mentioned with reference to responsiveness to both individual and group needs and the overall effectiveness of the programme:

...basically we don't do it if it's not working – we're not stuck to a manual – we quite quickly get to know who the group are and between us discuss what direction we should go in – that's the beauty of not being an accredited programme we're not driven by a text book...

3.2 Personalised approach

As noted above, staff made reference to the benefits of the personalised piece of work designed specifically to address the issues of each individual. Staff made comments regarding the piece of work tailored specifically to individuals, for example, they say *'these people have created something and it is about me'*.

Geese Theatre Company commented that they take a personalised approach to their programmes and appreciate that each individual will have different needs and that a key issue is matching the programme content and delivery to meet said needs. There was recognition that each individual will go on a different journey throughout the course of the programme: *'... whatever journey they go on is the right journey for them.'*

3.3 Timing

In response to a question regarding place in sentence and programme delivery, practitioners remarked that it may be beneficial for prisoners to participate when they are near the end of their sentence or where they feel settled. It was further commented that it is possible to tailor the topics covered in the group to where people are in their sentence. In addition, the difficulties of having lifers and those with very short sentences who would be released soon were noted. However, it was concluded among staff that the programme can be beneficial to prisoners at any stage of their sentence and that having prisoners with a range of sentence lengths in a group can be beneficial.

...some of the courses we do are very focused on things like resettlement where you need participants to be toward the end of their sentence. If you had a group of life sentenced prisoners there's probably no point doing it right at the beginning of their sentence because they'll be so unsettled I think if you've got a very long time to do and in the group you've got a lot of people that are going out next week, that's quite tough as well, I'm not saying you shouldn't do it but it's just a dynamic that is tough.

Theme 4. Practicalities

A number of issues were highlighted in the focus group as having had an impact on the delivery of the programme. Staff commented that, although, on the whole their experience of working in Foston and Hewell was positive, there were issues which were perhaps indicative of a lack of awareness of the programme in the prison leading to difficulties in accommodating the programme. Broadly speaking, these issues were thought to be linked to a lack of available resources. Suggestions were made by staff regarding changes that could be made to better support the team within each prison.

4.1 Facilities

It was acknowledged that some prisons struggle for suitable space to accommodate group work programmes. It was commented that the room used at HMP Foston Hall was a bit small for the purpose. However, the room at HMP Hewell had the necessary space for the various exercises. As the course involves activities and exercises which require participants to be moving around the room, having space to do so is beneficial to the group: *'...The space that we used was actually quite small, we made it work but it would have been nice to have more space...'*

4.2 In an ideal world...

In response to a question regarding thoughts on 'the ideal' in terms of running programmes in prisons, practitioners made a number of suggestions. In short, it was felt that it would be beneficial to have support from senior management and to ensure that this support of the programme was communicated to all prison staff. More specifically, it was commented that it is necessary to have a member of the Safer Custody team who is provided with the time in which to be allocated to help in the selection of suitable prisoners (e.g. through access to/knowledge of level of risk of suicide and/or self-harm), recruitment of prisoners and ensuring the general smooth running of the programme (i.e. addressing some of the practical issues highlighted). For example, one practitioner commented, *'...our course works best when it is embedded as a proper part of the regime over a three to five-year period because then the whole prison gets to know about it.'*

Other comments included:

Ideally, we would have had funding to backfill an officer post so a Safer Custody staff member could be allocated to the project from the outset. That Safer Custody officer would have freedom to sort out referrals from the outset so that they would benefit from the programme.

In addition, based on feedback from participants, it was suggested that there should be some form of follow-up support available, or that courses could potentially be longer. It was felt that practical issues (e.g. recruitment) could be addressed if the courses were established in the regime of the prison over a longer period of time.

We did get people, saying we wish this could go on longer. Now I'm not saying that that's necessarily right, although I think it would be interesting to do it for two weeks, but I think there is something about the intensity of that 1 week that works. It would be nice if there was some kind of package that the prison could offer as a follow up.

It was also felt that, by being an established programme, issues such as arrangements being made for prisoners to have their medication prior to the programme each day would be able to be addressed.

4.3 Medication

The issue as to when drug dependant women were able to get their medication has an impact on the individuals themselves, in that they would be suffering withdrawal symptoms whilst in the room waiting for medication (and therefore having difficulty in participating in activities) and then would have to leave the group when they were called out to take their medication. This may have also led to general disruption in the group.

We had a lot of issues with medication - the main thing was if the women didn't know when they were getting their meds that would cause a real issue in terms of how they worked in the group because they would be unwell.

4.4 Referrals

Although the course was intended to be delivered to prisoners who were identified as being at risk of suicide or acts of deliberate self-harm, issues with the referral process meant that prisoners who were recruited were not always necessarily those who would be considered vulnerable in these areas. One issue was around how to 'sell' the course to vulnerable prisoners; it was felt that it may be more appropriate to advertise the course as being focused on increasing well-being and confidence.

There is an issue about how we pitch the project to potential participants. We decided to go down the route of talking about the project as one which develops confidence and well-being rather than selling it as a, "are you at risk of suicide or self-harm"

Having spoken to prison staff and Listeners prior to advertising the course, it was suggested that prisoners who self-harm differ from those who are likely to attempt suicide; those who wish to commit suicide are potentially unlikely to admit this. However, among female prisoners on the course, there were those who discussed self-harm and, in each group there were a large proportion who could be considered vulnerable.

So, although some of the people we spoke to will have mentioned suicidal ideation at some point, there were lots of people talking about self-harm so it was more focussed towards that.

I think it was easier to recruit women because, I just think that most of the women in Foston could be considered in one of those categories and they just tend towards more self-harm. So you probably know that the women were appropriate referrals whereas, I think with Hewell, that was slightly different.

In HMP Hewell it was felt that the nature of the recruitment and referral process meant that the second and third groups included prisoners who were not considered to be in a high risk category for suicide and self-harm. It was felt that access to accurate assessments of risk of suicide and self-harm by those who are involved in making referrals is key to identifying those who are in need. For example:

The second group was a mix. Some of those guys were definitely the right people but not all. Maybe 60-70% were the right people...so for me it's more centred around having proper analysis which then allows you to do a proper recruitment and referral process.

4.5 Staff attitudes

Related to the issue of the programme needing to be more embedded within the prison was the issue of staff attitudes and knowledge of what GT do. It was commented that there was a general lack of awareness across the prison as to what their aims were, what they could achieve and what the programme involved. As such, it was suggested that staff may be a bit wary and not value the programme:

...I think that's symptomatic of the fact that we were doing a programme in a corner of the prison and of course not all the prison officer staff knew what it was, and it was something new, and it was something from outside.

However, it was also commented that staff attitudes became more positive as they saw the impact the programme was having on the behaviour of individuals. In addition, practitioners remarked upon feeling supported by the prison staff they had contact with:

But I think the more we did it, the more staff got to know about the project and the impact it was having on the women, so I think the more positive they were...I think overall the message that we want to be clear about is that the staff of both Hewell and Foston were generally incredibly supportive of the whole process.

4.6 Staff availability

Prison staff were involved in both the programme at HMP Hewell and HMP Foston Hall. GT practitioners were very impressed with the prison staff who assisted in their groups, however, it was felt that staff may not have been given additional time in which to carry out their other work. With reference to assistance in HMP Hewell, it was commented:

...it did feel like [name of prison staff member] was doing it as an addition to his core work rather than having his core work suspended for the duration of the project so he could concentrate fully on it.

Regarding assistance at HMP Foston Hall:

The two members of staff that we had permanently, they were admin staff from Safer Custody. They did two projects each but they had lots of other duties and I'm not quite sure how they got everything done because they were having to do so much, it was like they were doing the job of two.

4.7 'Readiness' to change

Closely linked to the issue of referrals is that of prisoner suitability for the programme. A small number of prisoners started the programme but chose not to continue. Broadly speaking, it was commented that, in such instances, prisoners were not *ready* for the course at the time due to

personal issues which meant they would struggle to engage with the programme (e.g. find it upsetting to discuss and/or explore their emotions):

...I think some of the questions on the pre-course questionnaires might have brought stuff up for him and I think it might have suddenly dawned on him what he was getting himself into. He also expressed that he had a situation with his little girl going into hospital so he had stuff going on outside and he thought, you know what, I can't deal with thinking about this, I need to spend my time thinking about my little girl.

Furthermore, it was felt that if prisoners had not been made aware of what the programme involved then they may struggle when they first start. For example:

...we had one participant who hadn't been told that this was something that he was going to come along to, so he came without any information and then obviously he was off.

...because they hadn't had the chance to think about what they'd signed up for, whereas the others had gone, 'okay, this is for a week so I'll have to think about the other things that I'm not doing during that week and get organised and get my head in the right space'.

Although the decision had been made to not include women whose crimes were against children and of a sexual nature due to the need for the women to talk about their offending lifestyle in the group, it was felt that there was a definite need for that group of prisoners to take part in this kind of programme due to the high level of risk (i.e. vulnerability to self-harm and suicide) of such offenders. It was felt that the programme would be suitable for them, however, that it is problematic to include them in a group with women who have not committed crimes against children.

I [HMP Foston Hall practitioner] think the other thing was that we said this course wasn't suitable for people whose offence was against children or of a sexual nature. Because offending is so enmeshed in other parts of their lives, we need them to be able to talk about their offending lifestyle...not details of the offence at all but just offending lifestyle...

7.1 Conclusions

The focus group feedback covered a number of topics that support the findings of evaluation projects with prisoners and prison staff. Namely, that prisoners engaged with programmes and benefitted from participating, through changes to thought processes and behaviours. In discussing specific elements of the programmes, practitioners made references to exercises and activities which prisoners had commented upon. Geese Theatre practitioners were able to offer details as to the intended purpose of each element (e.g. prisoners being able to refer to a fictional character they create to provide them with a 'safe distance' when they do not want to refer to themselves). Furthermore, practitioners highlighted the consideration they give to the process of change that occurs in individuals and how this relates to the sequencing of programme elements.

Concurrent with feedback from prisoners, practitioners noted the importance of factors such as creating a 'safe space' where prisoners feel they can express themselves. It was felt that

building a healthy relationship with each prisoner was key to creating this environment; as noted by prisoners, practitioners aim to treat each participant as a person rather than an offender. In addition to noting that prisoners were supportive of each other, practitioners opined that prisoners had developed an investment in each other to the extent where they wanted that person to succeed.

The issue of responsivity (Andrews & Bonta, 2010) was described as being integral in the design and delivery of the GT programmes. Geese Theatre's ethos of ensuring they are responsive to the needs of the group and of individuals within the group was discussed with reference to their ability to be flexible in tailoring the choice of exercises to the group and the creation of personalised pieces of work.

Practical issues were discussed with consideration being given to those issues which could be addressed in the future to improve programme facilitation (e.g. recruitment, referrals, prison staff availability, and staff being provided with information about the programme). Overall, GT practitioners felt that the programmes had been well received by prisoners and prison staff and that positive outcomes had been consistent with that of other programmes that they have run.

8 Evaluation conclusions

The results of all evaluative projects within the service evaluation highlight the benefits derived by prisoners from participation in *Journey Man* and *Scratching the Surface*. Although methodological considerations must be taken into account, through combining findings and conclusions of each evaluative project the following tentative conclusions can be drawn:

- Concurrent with previous studies looking at drama based interventions and GT programmes (Blacker et al., 2008; Chapman, 2014; Hamamci, 2006; Harkins et al., 2009; Harkins et al., 2011; Pendzik, 2008), findings of the current evaluation indicate that GT programmes had a positive impact on participants in areas such as hope, mental well-being, confidence, self-efficacy, self-esteem, positivity, anger reduction and control, decreasing depression, and reduction in the risk of attempted suicide and DSH.
- In addition to outlining how they felt they had benefitted from the GT programme, findings (e.g. comments from participants and prison staff) suggest that the programme had a tangible impact on the day to day lives of participants. For example, going on to be a mentor for others, motivation to sign up for further programmes in the prison, changes in behaviour on the wing (e.g. controlling their temper when in the past the situation would have resulted in violence), being able to ask staff for help and being better able to communicate with peers in prison. In addition, prisoners noted having made achievable plans for their future as a result of the GT programme.
- Qualitative studies with participants, prison staff and GT practitioners revealed a number of factors which were felt to be key themes in the perceived effectiveness of the programme. Factors highlighted are concurrent with a range of previous literature regarding ‘what works’ in offender rehabilitation, such as:
 - Creating a ‘safe space’ and a supportive group environment (Yalom, 2005).
 - Achieving a good therapeutic relationship between participants and practitioners (Kozar & Day, 2012).
 - Guiding participants through a coherent sequence of elements which map on to the process of behavioural change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Stephenson, Harkins, & Woodhams, 2013).
 - Considering the issue of responsivity to the needs of offenders (Andrews & Bonta, 2010), i.e. GT programmes tailor content to the needs of the individual through the provision of individualised pieces of work (Baim et al., 2002).
 - Considering the issue of readiness to change (Ward et al., 2004) and, within this, the issue of motivation to change (McMurran & Ward, 2010).
 - Addressing internal and external ‘barriers to change’ in individuals (Burrowes & Needs, 2009) through the use of applied theatre techniques.
 - Adhering to GLM principles (Ward & Stewart, 2003) by placing an emphasis on positive factors and attainable future goals.
 - The use of role play (Hudson, 2005).
 - The use of key GT applied theatre techniques and exercises (Baim, 2007; Baim et al., 2002; Blacker et al., 2008; Harkins et al., 2009; Harkins et al., 2011; Watson, 2009).

It is evident that the programme was well received by prisoners who all felt that they had benefitted from taking part. Feedback from prison staff and practitioners offered support for claims made by prisoners that the programme had instigated positive change. Methodological limitations notwithstanding, findings and previous literature suggest that the programme would benefit other prisoners in the UK.

9 Recommendations

In addition to recommendations regarding further research (See section 2.6.2), it is suggested that prisoners would benefit from GT programmes being made available as an optional treatment programme in more prisons across the UK. In addition, it would be beneficial for GT to become more embedded within individual prisons in order to address logistical issues involved with programme recruitment and delivery.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Geese Theatre Company questionnaire

Geese Theatre Company Evaluation Form

Name of Organisation /Establishment:

Project:

Date:

Thank you for taking part in this project. We hope you found it enjoyable. We would be very grateful if you could tick the boxes below to show how much you agree or disagree with the statements and then answer the questions which follow. Please feel free to say what you think as your name is not on the form.

Please make up a code of numbers and/or letter (e.g. 12AB) which you can remember so that we can find your questionnaire if you want to withdraw your questionnaire in the future.

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As a result of this project:	Strongly disagree 	Disagree 	Neither agree nor disagree 	Agree 	Strongly agree 
I have more confidence					
I have done something I am proud of					
I am better at opening up to other people					
I have learnt new skills					
I feel better about myself					
I enjoyed the project					
Using theatre and drama made the project more memorable					
I would recommend the project to someone else					

Which elements of the project did you find most useful / memorable?

Which elements did you find least useful / memorable?

What impact do you think the project might have on you?

How did you feel about the way Geese staff interacted with you?

Do you have any other comments?

Thank you very much for your participation and for taking the time to give us your feedback. Occasionally, we use direct quotes from participants as part of our publicity material. If you would be happy for us to use your comments anonymously, please could you tick the box below.

☐

Appendix 2 – Interview schedule – semi-structured interviews with participants

1. What parts of the programme do you remember participating in? Can you describe them?
2. What did you feel about each of these parts? (I.e. what do you think about the parts you remember?)
3. Why do you think you felt that way about that particular part of the programme?
4. Are there any parts that you didn't find helpful? (If yes, then which parts and why?)
5. What do you feel you have learnt from the course? (If anything? i.e. about yourself, about others, coping strategies etc...)
6. Do you think the programme has changed you? (If yes, then in what ways?)
7. Are you glad you did the programme? (If yes, why are you glad that you took part in the programme? If no, why aren't you glad you took part?)
8. Where you keen to take part before you started?
9. Did other people take things away from the programme? (If so then what?)
10. Are there any changes you think they should make to the programme?
11. Is there anything else you'd like to say about the programme?

Appendix 3 – Online questionnaire with prison staff (using Survey Monkey)

1. If you have had contact with Geese staff, how would you rate these interactions? (1 = poor; 2 = satisfactory; 3 = good; 4 = very good; 5 = excellent)
2. Any comments on this rating? (E.g. staff friendliness, professionalism, etc...)
3. How do you feel the programme was received by participants? (I.e. are you aware of offender's views about the programme?)
4. Have you noticed any change in offenders who have taken part in the programme?
5. What reasons do you feel offenders may have had for choosing not to participate in the programme?
6. If applicable, what are your views on reasons that offenders may have started the programme but dropped out?
7. Would you encourage offenders to take part in Geese programmes, and if so, why?
8. Do you have any suggestions for Geese staff to help improve their programmes?
9. Any other comments?

Appendix 4 – Focus group topics (GT practitioners)

1. Practical issues in the delivery of the programme (e.g. people needing to leave the session for meds etc..., recruitment issues (infrastructure), drug misuse, differences between participants in each group, interaction with prison staff, facilities etc...)
2. Views on the impact of particular elements of the programme (I.e. how did participants respond?; how do people feel participants may have benefitted?; did participants get involved? etc...)
3. Why do certain elements 'work'? (E.g. the impact of the masks?; role play of a fictional character; games etc...) – any examples of particular people?
4. Were there any elements that weren't well received?/weren't felt to have had a beneficial impact?
5. Relationship with participants (E.g. was there any resistance?; How was this addressed?; Was it felt that participants felt able to 'open up'?)
6. Is it felt that any changes are necessary?
7. In an ideal world what would happen now in terms of programme delivery?
8. Any other comments?