"When people did sign up to it the first time they told other people and said you should be doing this, and people really responded well to the training and I just think there was a kind of explosion of people understanding what it was all about and I kept thinking why has this not been the case before and I guess it's just because we weren't doing those sorts of things."
Staff interview

EVALUATION REPORT

Embedding RESTORE into the fabric of YOI Ashfield
- Qualitative analysis of impact and effectiveness -

Christina Straub MA

RESTORE
Transforming the lives of offenders & victims

The Forgiveness PROJECT

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Biography

Christina Straub graduated from the European University Viadrina (Frankfurt Oder, Germany) with an MA in Cultural Sciences in 2009. Her focus throughout her studies had led her into the field of Social- and Cultural Anthropology with particular emphasis on qualitative social research methods (ethnography et al.). She left Germany to work for the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge (2009 until 2011). As Research Assistant she was part of an academic research team studying staff-prisoner-relationships in a high-security Cambridgeshire prison. She gained invaluable experience during this period by conducting extensive interviews with a diverse range of people.

Christina is currently involved in a book project with Cambridge University that is looking to publish the results of this study. Her passion revolves around hearing people´s stories, and qualitatively analysing them to discover the deeper meaning they hold. In this capacity she has been working for London based (qualitative) market research firm The Big Sofa since July 2012.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ashfield HMP & YOI is a managed Young Offenders Institution caring for 400 male juveniles aged 15-18 years. Interventions are designed around the needs of the individual, with an emphasis on drugs and alcohol as well as violence and anger management.

Over the last two years the most significant change in the make-up of the prisoner population at YOI Ashfield was the increase in offences of violent crime often involving weapons. Gang affiliation was closely related to this. Since previous work of the Forgiveness Project in the establishment had been very effective in the prevention of violence, further cooperation was sought by the prison. Funding granted through the Home Office's CAGGK (Communities Against Guns, Gangs & Knives Crime) Fund made this possible. As a result the RESTORE programme operated at Ashfield YOI for two years (July 2011 - March 2013) with support from the CAGGK fund.

Within this time frame the following outcomes were envisioned and delivered:

- Staff awareness training to recognise offenders' needs during and after participation in RESTORE residencies;
- Facilitator awareness training (delivered by Community Resolve)[1] in issues concerning gangs and knife/gun crime;
- Development of The Forgiveness Project Mentoring Programme (run by ex-offenders) supporting young offenders inside prison and upon release;
- Embedding RESTORE's resources into Ashfield's educational curriculum and linking with any existing violence prevention programmes;
- Supporting staff in education and other parts of the prison to develop innovative ways to work with young people (delivered by Visible Thinking).[2]

As well as working towards implementing the above named practical outcomes, the work also focused on developing an in-depth approach to further embed RESTORE in the fabric of the prison. Further funding was received in 2013 to undertake a qualitative evaluation looking at the impact and effectiveness of the RESTORE programme in a broader sense. Data gathered throughout the 2-year implementation period at YOI Ashfield has been analysed[3] to provide an in-depth insight into the way this intervention operated, how it affected participants, and where its key strengths lay.

1.1. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

[1] http://www.communityresolve.org.uk/
[2] http://www.visiblethinking.ltd.uk/
[3] I.e. 28 prisoner cell books, 4 in-depth specialist staff interviews (education and psychology), 23 staff training feedback forms, 20 (interim) reports and evaluations of the programme between July 2011 and March 2012, 5 case studies within the RESTORE mentoring programme

1.1.a. RESTORE's impact on offenders

- Open-mindedness: As the RESTORE programme was delivered by an outside agency, it was regarded by participants as largely independent from prison based interventions (e.g. the Psychology Department). This fact and the facilitators' delivery approach - based on mutual respect and trust - created a safe space where prisoners felt they could open up and show themselves as vulnerable and share thoughts, emotions and experiences.

- Connection & Empathy: Listening (deeply) to the victim's, ex-offender's and fellow inmates' life-stories created connections between participants and storytellers through identification with similar story-lines and experiences. The use of stories utilised participants' imaginative thinking skills, and enhanced their ability to empathise and see the world as others see it. Prisoners became aware of and thought about the bigger picture. This marked a movement from an insular subjectivity 'to a more consciously inter-subjective sense of self in relation to others' (Adler and Mir 2012:57). As a result, participants reported better relationships with peers, staff and family, as well as being able to deal better with conflict.

- Cognitive Effects: Being able to see the bigger picture and to develop empathy inspired a shift in participants' thought patterns from (mindless) low-level thinking (mainly preoccupied with the individual's own needs and their satisfaction) towards (mindful) high-level thinking (fostering problem-solving skills, self-reflection and self-awareness). A confrontation with (previously inhibited) emotions like guilt, shame, anger and fear led to a rethinking of certain events and experiences and once these thoughts were articulated, participants could understand these better.

- Accountability & Self-Agency: Inspired by the RESTORE programme, prisoners started to look at themselves and their actions more realistically without finding 'false' rectifications of their behaviour. Taking on responsibility led to self-empowerment. Participants had reached a position proactively where they could be held accountable for their actions without becoming defensive. Considering forgiveness as an alternative approach stopped them from getting stuck in blaming themselves and others for negative events and actions. This paved the way for taking constructive steps towards rebuilding relationships and lives.

- Motivation to Change: When participants talked about change, this was not necessarily related to wanting to change who they were, but rather, to change their approach. Participants realised that they were the ones able to choose to act or think differently in any given situation. RESTORE provided prisoners with effective tools for this kind of change through telling stories that provided insights into alternative attitudes and belief systems. Once the wish to change had manifested, participants were taking active steps towards its realisation, thus engaging more frequently in other courses and activities on offer in the prison.

1.1.b. RESTORE's impact on staff

- Cognitive Effects: The most frequently used wording in staff feedback about RESTORE was 'thought provoking'. This indicated how much of a cognitive effect the programme had not only on offenders, but also on staff. It opened the mind and inspired the development of alternative thought patterns by offering inspirational stories and an open thinking space.

- Empathy & Connection: After participating in RESTORE's awareness training and observing residencies, staff would express a better understanding of prisoners' backgrounds and needs. Some uttered the wish to help prisoners more in facilitating change and self-development, but they often felt this was not included in their 'job description'. Personal engagement with offenders on a one-on-one level was complicated further by low staffing levels on the wings. A discrepancy was felt on some occasions that pointed towards a clash of values between prison culture (promoting separation and risk-awareness) and interventions like RESTORE (promoting connection and mutual trust).

- Prison atmosphere & staff prisoner relationships: A number of staff members expressed the need for more training, follow-up schemes and embedding the programme into the fabric and ethos of the prison. According to them, RESTORE's values around promoting forgiveness as a real alternative to retaliation and dealing with conflict, could be conducive to safety on the wings by increasing understanding, empathy and awareness between prisoners, as well as between prisoners and staff.

1.1.c. Restore's effect on the fabric of the prison

- 'Forgiveness at the core of the prison': This wish was verbalised by a member of staff. Weaving the values of RESTORE into the fabric of the prison could possibly entail a reconsideration of the culture and purpose of prison and punishment on a deeper level. In this regard RESTORE represented a constructive step towards starting a dialogue between offenders, prison and society. It created a basis for open communication, and had the power to encourage real change.

1.1.d. Restore's mentoring programme

- Authenticity & Identification: The fact that all RESTORE mentors were ex-offenders proved to be highly beneficial in building trusted relationships with mentees. Relationships were developed on the basis of shared experiences, and both parties were able to identify with each other's strengths and struggles. Mentors conveyed authenticity to young offenders which could be conducive to openness and honesty on both sides.

- Impartiality & Trust: Through the mentors' impartiality and non-judgemental approach, mentees were likely to feel less ashamed of, or judged for the situation they were in. They were more likely to be honest with themselves and their mentors, thus acknowledging strengths and weaknesses equally. A basis of trust was created that proved important for avoiding denial and developing achievable and realistic goals for the future.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE RESTORE PROGRAMME

RESTORE is a victim empathy, preparatory restorative justice programme developed by the Forgiveness Project for prisons and non-custodial settings. Between November 2008 and March 2013, 125 workshop programmes have been delivered in 11 prisons in England and Wales. It is a group based intervention that encourages the sharing of experiences within a framework influenced by restorative justice principles. The course is intended to explore the role of forgiveness in the lives of prisoners and to enhance their victim awareness by looking at the consequences of actions on others and what can be done to repair the harm. It recognises that although convicted of offences, many prisoners are themselves victims of violence and abuse. The full programme consists of: a half-day induction, followed by a workshop for up to 22 prisoners running across three consecutive full days, completed by a half-day follow-up session. Some prisons with sufficient complimentary programmes run just the three-day workshop.

The Forgiveness Project's own evaluation of their work has consistently indicated a shift in offenders' motivation to change and this was borne out by independent research carried out by Middlesex University's Forensic Psychological Services (FPS) and published in 2012. A particularly encouraging result, using tools considered as the best proxy for measuring recidivism whilst offenders are still incarcerated, demonstrated a 'statistically significant difference'. This meant that, following the intervention, prisoners had 'improved general attitudes' to offending, were less likely to 'anticipate re-offending' and less likely to 'evaluate crime as worthwhile'.

RESTORE's objectives dovetail to a great extent with desistance theory:

Objective 1: To develop empathy by helping prisoners understand the impact of their actions on others.[4]
Objective 2: To improve emotional awareness and self-esteem which help prisoners engage with others in ways that are respectful and worthwhile.[5]
Objective 3: To open prisoners' minds to an alternative way of viewing themselves and the world, one that makes a crime-free life seem both achievable and attractive.[6]
Objective 4: To support ex-offenders in their move away from crime and their wish to make reparation.[7]

2.1. About The Forgiveness Project

The Forgiveness Project (TFP) is a UK based charity that uses storytelling to explore how ideas around forgiveness, reconciliation and conflict resolution can be used to impact positively on people's lives, through the personal testimonies of both victims and perpetrators of crime and violence. Their aim is to provide tools that facilitate conflict resolution and promote behavioural change on an individual and societal level.

2.2. Course facilitators

[4] 'People who feel and show concern and empathy for others are more likely to desist from crime' See: Maruna, S. (2010). Understanding Desistance from Crime [online]. UK: NOMS, Ministry of Justice. Available at: http://www.clinks.org/assets/files/PDFs/Desistance.pdf [Accessed 20/03/2013].
[5] ' It is notable that many desisters talk about the powerful effect of having someone believe in them' (ibid.)
[6] 'Research now suggests that individuals who desist from crime usually are very motivated to change their lives and feel confident that they can turn things around...The impact of these motivational factors can last for up to ten years after released from prison.' (ibid.)
[7] 'Offenders who find ways to contribute to soceity, their community, or their families, appear to be more successful at giving up crime.' (ibid.)

Each workshop requires three facilitators. The lead facilitators come from a range of backgrounds and have extensive experience of group work. In every workshop the team will include an ex-offender and a victim of crime. Most of the ex-offender facilitators will have taken part in the workshop prior to release. Some continue to become mentors to prisoners post release.

2.3. Use of victims' stories

The stories that are used could be best described as 'reconciling' stories - stories where the speaker/ facilitator has experienced crime or violence, but has reconciled with the event (though not necessarily with the perpetrator). The use of victims' stories provides the opportunity for prisoners to address the harm they have caused as well as explore the relationship between themselves as victims and the victims of their crimes. The Forgiveness Project and RESTORE recognise that the 'scare straight' approach to victim empathy does not work because if offenders become defensive then they close down to the idea of change.

3. DELIVERING AND ESTABLISHING THE RESTORE PROGRAMME IN YOI ASHFIELD

OVERVIEW OF PROJECTED OUTCOMES AND INTENDED REALISATION (JULY 2011 - MARCH 2013)

3.1. Embedding RESTORE into the prison

Staff training was key to the success of embedding the awareness of the RESTORE programme across different departments and supporting the strategic development of departments to join up in their planning around this programme. Members of staff have acknowledged the importance of actively promoting the programme and its contents for an enhanced understanding and response within the establishment, stating:

> 'When people did sign up to it the first time they told other people and said you should be doing this, and people really responded well to the training and I just think there was a kind of explosion of people understanding what it was all about and I kept thinking why has this not been the case before and I guess it's just because we weren't doing those sorts of things.' (Staff interview).

Departments involved included Education, Residential staff, Wing Staff, Youth Offending Team, Sentence Planning, Senior Management, and Psychology. This awareness led to staff referring those young offenders from their own departments that they felt were ready to receive the RESTORE programme. Support to embed this within Education was increased by the delivery of the 'pilot teachers resource' - films were given to staff in Education and used in lessons which focussed on speech and language, arts and music programmes as well as in induction sessions.

Once staff training began in the prison there were a large number of people who were keen to attend. In total four days of training took place and even as this report is being written staff are still requesting that it be run again. A total of 48 staff were trained across the prison. Staff described their experience and RESTORE in very positive terms:

> 'Heartfelt'; 'Very enjoyable'; 'Informative'; 'Very well explained'; 'Very good insight into a way of changing the attitudes of some YPs; 'Excellent'; 'Unique experience'; 'Brilliant'; 'Opened all sorts of different ways of thinking'; 'Thought provoking'; 'Makes you think about yourself and others'; 'Very interesting and powerful'; 'Makes me want to help young persons to carry on the process on the out'. (Staff feedback forms).

3.2. Community Resolve

Community Resolve is a charity and social enterprise that works alongside people to build skills to help them in managing their daily relationships, at home, at school, at work and on the street. A two day training programme took place with facilitators from TFP and Community Resolve which looked at joined up approaches to working and identified two key mentoring facilitators who will work within the

community to support the development of the mentoring programme. One facilitator from Community Resolve observed the RESTORE programme in Ashfield which impacted upon his own working practice.
A partnership funding bid with The Forgiveness Project, Community Resolve, Eden House, Visible Thinking and Colston Hall has resulted in further work taking place that focuses specifically on 'conflict and forgiveness, a musical conversation'. This funding aims to strengthen the partnership between the prison and the community, linking with men who are involved within gangs and women who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system. Identification of mentors and key individuals in the community will be enhanced through this programme of work and build upon what has already been achieved.

3.3. The Forgiveness Project's Teachers Resource

An opportunity was seen to pilot resources being developed for teachers in schools around London and Bristol, to be piloted in the Education department of Ashfield. This was viewed as a strategic opportunity to further embedding The Forgiveness Project within the fabric of Ashfield. On showing this resource to senior members of the Education team and teachers in Ashfield, there was an overwhelming feeling that this resource would be very powerful for young offenders. In discussions they revealed how few multi-media resources of high quality were available to them within the curriculum and there was a real need for this resource to be incorporated in their work.

A pilot programme was developed that allowed participants from RESTORE to be followed through and supported by the education department. Staff were made aware of those young offenders who had undertaken the RESTORE programme and afterwards supported them to discuss their thoughts and feelings, they would also work with them on the pilot resources. However the impact of this work was curtailed by the closure of the YOI unit and the associated staff redundancies. The education staff only had the capacity to deliver this pilot programme specifically tailored for young offenders who had attended RESTORE on an ad hoc basis in individual sessions and in induction.

The intention to deliver a full modular curriculum based around these resources was also again not possible due to staff redundancies and cuts. Where the films were used staff commented on how the material had influenced their own thinking and inspired them to begin discussions with the young men on these different topics.

3.4. Mentoring Programme

Meetings were held with key departments in Ashfield to look at how this new mentoring programme could be best developed in partnership with the existing mentoring programme that was being run by the chaplaincy. All mentors under the existing mentoring programme were faith based and this programme was offering an alternative to faith based practitioners. The mentors being used in Ashfield under the existing programme were volunteers, generally older and had not served in prison or been involved in the criminal justice system. What became apparent was that only two of these mentors were reliable and formed effective relationships with their mentees. The majority of the other mentors did not show full commitment and were not motivated to attend all sessions. The Chaplaincy is currently investigating these outcomes further and discussed with RESTORE facilitators their 'motivation' and passion for their work. It

became clear that one indicator of this motivation was related to the fact that RESTORE were using ex-offenders as mentors and as Peter Miles (speaker and mentor) pointed out, ”I’ve walked in their shoes, I’ve been where they are now and I can see from both sides. I’m authentic, I’m transparent, I’m open and I speak truth.”
The young offenders are offered the option of being mentored after they complete the RESTORE programme and this brings clarity to their own motivations and expectations. A decision was taken to ensure follow-up sessions with speakers took place within two weeks after the RESTORE programme and mentoring was seen as a crucial step forward to support those who felt they needed further support.

Despite repeated efforts it was not possible to embed RESTORE in the Chaplaincy but details of the boys involved in the mentoring programme were communicated to the Chaplaincy so they were at least aware which boys were involved.

It took many meetings and much discussion to find the best system for mentoring and there were key issues around a confidential space and CRB checks. It was decided that mentoring sessions would take place in Legal Visits on a monthly or fortnightly basis, where sessions of 30 minutes to an hour could be achieved. Reports were written and sent to caseworkers and caseworkers and psychology staff were kept informed of all mentees attending sessions and their outcomes were discussed where appropriate.

Mentoring sessions were established through the year and between October 2012 and March 2013 occurred fortnightly. In this period twelve prisoners were mentored, three were released and the others transferred to other prisons. Changes in the prison and the closure taking place only allowed for one more RESTORE programme to take place in January.

- July – mentees identified = 4
- September – identified = 5
- November – identified = 3
- January – identified = 1

Mentoring has also supported a greater level of family contact to take place. Contact was established by mentors with the families of mentees, both by post and over the phone. Families indicated that they were grateful for being supported in this way.

3.5. Participants Engaged In Other Courses and Activities

Specific participants asked to return to do the RESTORE programme again, with one young man undertaking the programme three times. These repeat participants spoke to their peers to recommend the programme and education and psychology staff noted increased confidence in these participants, all of whom had previously not been confident enough to attend any other programmes.

The Forgiveness Project was invited to run four extra workshops at the Ashfield Literacy Festival in September by Simon Emmett, Deputy Head of Learning and Skills. There was high engagement in all four programmes by young offenders who were vulnerable and who usually did not engage in programmes. Ashfield staff were amazed by the engagement of 12 vulnerable young offenders who took part in these

sessions stating they had never witnessed this level of focus and motivation before within this group. A specific RESTORE programme for these young offenders was looked at being developed but due to the announcement of closure to the prison from December 2012 this has been impossible to achieve.

3.6. Better Relationships with Peers and Family

During the RESTORE programmes participants frequently spoke of how they contacted their mothers or girlfriends to discuss the issues coming up in the course. Some participants engaged in re-connecting with a family member and spoke of writing letters to their mothers. For example, one participant rang his mother to say that, "out of all the things he had done in prison he had learnt so much from [RESTORE] and had never felt so connected like he did in this programme". His mother said, "she had never seen him so enthused and interested in something like this". This participant requested further support and was accepted on to the mentoring programme.

The development of peer relationships in RESTORE is also unique; prisoners constantly say they have never heard the stories of their peers and as their understanding of the motivations of their peers grows so to does their relationship with them. Relationships change into 'being with' rather than 'being indifferent.'

3.7. Better able to deal with conflict

This was demonstrated throughout the mentoring reports where the desire to get into conflicts with officers was diminished and participants had turned around their thinking. It was reported that prisoners were talking about and living forgiveness on the wings and with each other.

In the RESTORE residencies prisoners very rarely demonstrated conflict, rather they discussed the conflict in their lives and were encouraged to think further on the matter privately.

4. IMPACT OF RESTORE

The specific impact of the RESTORE programme has been evaluated predominantly via qualitative data analysis of the following sources: 28 prisoner cell books, four in-depth specialist staff interviews (education and psychology), 23 staff training feedback forms, participant observation of a three-day residency at HMP Parc (12th - 14th February 2013), twenty (interim) reports and evaluations of the programme between July 2011 and March 2013 and five case studies from the RESTORE mentoring programme. The methodology used was mainly qualitative social research strategies such as fieldwork, coding and ethnographic formatting (where applicable). Furthermore, we drew on the outcomes of a recent study compiled by Joanna R. Adler and Mansoor Mir (2012) of Middlesex University's Forensic Psychological Services that evaluated The Forgiveness Project within prisons.[8]

Throughout interviews, in cell books, during residencies and in staff feedback forms, participants and observers of RESTORE have been asked to describe the programme in their own terms. Even though there were a variety of perceptions, certain descriptions kept recurring persistently. The most commonly used words to describe the RESTORE programme and its effects all related to its intellectually powerful and potentially life-changing qualities:

1. **Open-mindedness**
2. **Empathy**
3. **Connection**
4. **Reflection**
5. **Inspiration**
6. **Insight**
7. **Accountability**
8. **Self-Agency**
9. **Motivation to Change**

The following sections will identify, summarise and analyse the most prominent threads that emerged, when RESTORE's impact on offenders, staff and the prison was examined.

[8] Adler, J. R.; Mir, M., 2012. Evaluation of The Forgiveness Project within prisons. Middlesex University's Research Repository. London.

4.1. RESTORE's impact on offenders

4.1.a. Open-mindedness

> R[9]: 'Our 'manualised' programmes and the way we do programmes here is just so restrictive that you have an end point to get to, a time frame ... How you get there is very scripted and it doesn't matter who you have in the group and you just go down the same path and if you lose people on the way, you do. ... we still don't have the opportunity to [be adaptive] which is frustrating, but we do in individual work and I guess that's where it comes in. ... At the end of the day we are prison staff and are expected to act and be a certain way which can conflict sometimes with who you would like to be just focussed on the interventions.'
>
> I: 'What does the script do and not do?'
>
> R: 'It's less genuine.' (Staff interview)
>
> R: 'If you are clearly coming in with something that you are going to say whatever the rest of the group is doing, all because you have got it on your piece of paper and that's what you have to say you just lose people because people can tell this programme isn't to do with them'. (Staff interview)

These excerpts highlight the level of frustration among staff about not being able to respond to and deal with offenders on an individual and adaptive basis during accredited and 'manualised' interventions. Failing to recognise participants on an individual level and delivering a course according to a rigid script contributed to a fake environment where people did not feel able to be authentic. Participants could not identify with the content of certain scripted courses, since it had no relevance to their own lives. This lack of genuineness led to disengagement. Whenever participants felt they could not show their true selves, they were likely to put up a front, thus upholding a distance between themselves and others.

The RESTORE programme did not work rigidly along an unchangeable list of desired goals and outcomes. Rather it deployed flexible building blocks that could be (re-)arranged according to the specific needs and dynamics of groups and individuals. Regular check-ins and debriefing sessions between facilitators and storytellers throughout a RESTORE residency provided for a highly adaptive and organic delivery style. The recognition of individuality and an openness toward outcomes held the power to change the way in which participants engaged and interacted:

> R: 'They definitely respond differently to you guys than they do to us.'
>
> I: 'What is the difference, the impact of us coming in?'
>
> R: 'Because you are external ... well when they see us it's still ok they have to pull the line ... the discipline side of it. Whereas they see you as trying to help them. Often I've had lads say to me 'you're not here to help' and I say that's why I'm doing the job, but they see it much clearer with you and are more eager to engage with you and often for Psychology, lads know they need to engage with us for

[9] Interview passages and quotes will be marked throughout the report with R = Respondent and I = Interviewer to clarify the source of respective verbal contributions.

> their parole or early release but they don't really want to ... you go and talk to them, they either do or they don't and that makes a difference as well ... so the lads are much more open with you guys and accepting.' (Staff interview)

A willingness to engage made a significant difference when it came to the successful delivery (i.e. not 'losing people along the way') of an intervention. The level of voluntariness of engagement in a programme could be crucial for its efficiency, since feeling 'coerced' to take part was met with resistance or reservation from the participant's side. The awareness of an underlying 'agenda' or being part of a trade off (i.e. being considered for parole or early release) significantly affected the openness of participants and their willingness to genuinely engage in an intervention. If participants felt that what they said could negatively reflect back on them, thus influencing their progress through their sentence, they held back and censored themselves.

The fact that RESTORE was not an accredited programme and the team were seen as an independent outside agency coming in to help offenders, created openness and acceptance with participants. No expectations were put on prisoners from the course facilitators as to what had to be achieved over the course of the residency. Therefore, prisoners were more likely to express thoughts and feelings freely, instead of inhibiting themselves for fear of judgement:

> 'Sometimes seeing some of those people who you've worked with one-to-one who are normally really closed and not particularly wanting to engage do in that sort of context, do engage with it. I think the level of engagement and the opening up, some people talking about things that they wouldn't talk about otherwise in other situations and also when the boys are listening and responding to other people's stories, you don't often get to see them responding and expressing empathy like that, they don't do it very often and there is not an opportunity to do it.' (Staff interview).

Open-mindedness from facilitators stimulated openness with participants, whereas expectations seemed to get in the way of it, inhibiting genuine and authentic expression of the self.

The notion of guardedness, suspicion and distance was inherent to both prisoner and staff accounts of prison-life:

> 'Distance is like a piece of string that the staff control. It's a game played where distance changes all the time, it's inconsistent and very difficult for the YOs as they haven't had strong relationships. It's a complex part of the prison system ... There is always an element of distrust, for staff a sense of never trusting what the YOs are presenting, it's part of the prison culture and evident to me, it's drummed into us ... they are wary of working with offenders, it goes through everything ... we create a society where we live in fear and mistrust.' (Staff interview).

This made it difficult to build trusted relationships between staff and prisoners in order to create an environment where it was safe to open up about yourself. Contrary to that prisoners would repeatedly note that the RESTORE programme provided one of the few (safe) places where it was okay to let your guard down.

4.1.b. A safe place: vulnerability and opening up

> 'People are most likely to disclose their deepest secrets if they perceive that their potential listeners will accept them no matter what they say. ... Confession to one's peers may be a particularly powerful bonding experience because, when it happens, the group norm is that people will not criticize the individuals who confess.' (Pennebaker 1990:178 f.).

One of the preconditions set out by facilitators before the start of each RESTORE residency was the assurance of confidentiality. Participants were made aware that their words would not 'travel', i.e. were not going to be forwarded to other agencies, for example, to compile risk-assessments et al.[10]. In this regard, participants could feel free from recrimination.

Another essential part of the programme comprised the joint formulation of a 'code of conduct' for everyone involved. Facilitators and participants established rules that made disrespectful behaviour, ridiculing each other or bullying unacceptable, and at the same time strengthened notions of mutual respect and solidarity. This in turn helped to define the RESTORE group as a sanctuary that would protect and respect the individual's expressions of thoughts and emotions. A space was created where it was safe to share and show vulnerability which could be daunting for prisoners, since they did not want to lose face:

> 'Prisoners often highlighted the emotional impact of The Forgiveness Project (TFP), some of them noting that it was unusual for them to display strong emotion in prison as it didn't fit with the image that people typically maintain whilst in prison. ... Staff echoed and corroborated the idea that TFP can emotionally affect those prisoners who ordinarily present an image of strong, invulnerable masculinity.' (Adler and Mir, 2012:36).

Men could find themselves 'under tremendous pressure to appear tough, strong, stoic, powerful, successful, fearless, in-control and able ... [with] any demonstration of vulnerability or emotion (especially fear, grief and sadness) [being labelled] as weakness' (Brown 2007:281). Participants of the RESTORE programme had to be sure they were safe in order to show vulnerability and emotions. There was a lot at stake for them:

> 'If individuals honestly disclose their feelings about something, their feelings are real. To deny their feelings and perceptions is to deny the person. Several studies have found that when people are punished for disclosing their ... experiences, their psychological and physical health suffers.' (Pennebaker 1990:111).

Acceptance and a non-judgemental attitude created an atmosphere of trust that encouraged prisoners to be honest and authentic. The group became a circle of confidants. Additionally, connections were forged between facilitators and participants during breaks between sessions. Providing hot drinks and biscuits created a frame for open encounters. Sharing food or a cup of tea held symbolic value, and was

[10] This did not neglect general safeguards around the participant's personal safety though. Cases where prisoners would disclose information about an imminent threat to their own or others' health and safety (e.g. expressing suicidal thoughts) still had to be made known to the relevant department.

synonymous with engaging in private conversation, and sharing common ground. Relationships were strengthened this way. Individuals met on a non hierarchical level and this contributed to a deeper sense of community. These unique settings were important in making 'individuals feel less tied to their day-to-day worlds' (Pennebaker 1990:179). As stepping out of the physical space of prison was not possible, it was crucial to create a space that bore as little resemblance to and was as far removed from life on the residential wings as possible. This was something the RESTORE residencies continuously managed to achieve, as noted by a member of staff stating, 'It was really good. It's been my eighth or ninth RESTORE and it never ceases to amaze me, when you get to the point when it does not feel as if you're in prison'. (Fieldwork notes).

Participants would also report how the group, the safe environment 'provided a rare opportunity for 'pause', 'calm' and 'reflection'. (Adler and Mir, 2012:25).

Perhaps the most important precondition that helped to set the scene for RESTORE as a place where you do not hurt each other by being disrespectful was the fact that at the start of the programme a complete stranger had stepped forward and exposed their rawest inner self. The person telling the first story (usually the victim) had already demonstrated what courage looks like. They would share highly sensitive and private experiences and emotions with the group - heartfelt empathy, connection and relationships could then be established on this basis.

4.1.c. The art of storytelling

> 'A story told at the right time in someone's life can shine a light sufficiently bright to illuminate the way ahead on the map of life.' (Harper and Gray, 1997:51).
>
> 'It's the story that they will remember, not the 'hard' but the 'soft' teaching.' (Staff member - Fieldwork notes).

Time and again participants of RESTORE (offenders as well as staff) mentioned the powerful victim- or ex-offender story when asked which part of the programme had the biggest impact on them. Participants who might generally find it difficult to focus in teaching sessions sat in absolute silence for between 45 minutes to an hour for each of the two stories told during a residency. Staff reported that this was unprecedented. The stories left a profound imprint, they stayed with the listeners.

But what exactly constitutes a powerful story? What effects does it have, when we listen to, or when we tell a story?

When we look at how one victim (a mother) told her story of pain and forgiveness around the murder of her son, the great skill behind it became evident. She began by describing her own upbringing, visions and expectations of life, including many vivid details. She was painting a picture with words, allowing each word and sentence to be heard clearly. She paused regularly to allow space for each person to try and comprehend the story as it unfolded. Whilst listening to her, the boys were fixed, staring as if shocked but also listening intently to every word spoken. Not a movement was made. The journey with her son showed a consistent story-line, finally arriving at a place where only a profound silence was left in the room. Her

story was one that on the surface did not seem to directly relate to the boys' experience but very quickly they found other ways of connecting.

> 'Stories are how we are wired. ... To the human brain, imagined experiences are processed the same as real experiences. Stories create genuine emotions, presence (the sense of being somewhere), and behavioural responses. Stories are the pathway to engaging our right brain and triggering our imagination. By engaging our imagination, we become participants in the narrative. We can step out of our own shoes, see differently, and increase our empathy for others. Through imagination, we tap into creativity that is the foundation of innovation, self-discovery and change.'[11]

Life-stories were real and authentic, they represented first-hand experiences. The listener could believe in them and trust the storyteller to tell him the truth. Stories were like an organic part of his/her own personality shared with the audience. Hearing these personal accounts, people would tell facilitators, 'how listening to the real story added a layer of humanity and feeling that I can't achieve through using reports relating to similar situations' (Staff feedback). Live speakers literally filled their stories with life, thus animating them and in turn animating the audience.[12] 'The most powerful mechanism at work here [might] be that of identification' (Bhattacharyya 1997:9). Ultimately, stories could 'teach us new attitudes and belief systems' (Dwidevi and Gardner, 1997:29) which then functioned similarly to the main modus operandi of cognitive therapy, namely 'to change one's belief systems in order to change one's reality' (ibid. p. 29). What this process of change could look like will be discussed later in this report.

Another essential part of the RESTORE programme that had a great impact on participants was sharing their life-stories on the basis of self-made lifelines.

> 'Life is a continuous process of organising or structuring of experience. We have a strong longing for order and sense, but we live in a world that may not have any. As we do not have a direct knowledge of the world, our knowing requires that we interpret or ascribe meaning to our experiences, which become intelligible or comprehensible when seen in a historical sequence of beginning, middle and end. Thus, the lived experiences and events get turned into 'stories'.' (Dwidevi and Gardner, 1997:19).

Creating a Lifeline entails putting lived experience into words and illustration, into a tangible and visually graspable form. The lifeline helps prisoners to get an overview and to make sense of a life that seemed chaotic and unstructured. A blurred perception of their past, present and future was partly elucidated through arranging life into a coherent chain of events.

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[11] Brown Rutledge, P. (2011) The Psychological Power of Storytelling [online]. New York: Psychology Today. Available at: http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/positively-media/201101/the-psychological-power-storytelling [Accessed 16/02/2013].

[12] Given the fact that the term **animate** derives from the Latin word **anima** ('a current of air, wind, breath, the vital principle, life, soul' - see also: Wiktionary by Wikipedia (2013). Anima [online]. Available at: http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/anima [Accessed 20/03/2013] we could infer that stories can have the potential to affect our mind and soul in a way that breathes new life into our thoughts and perceptions.

> 'In articulating their story [people] will often themselves discover meaningful sequences and gain insights and coherence. To put this another way, when we lose something (like an object) we retrace our steps to find it. The same goes for when we lose our sense of self or have become unsure how to move forward in time. In order to know where we are we need to review how we got there.' (Dwidevi and Gardner, 1997:23).

Participants would look at their lifelines and suddenly realise that it was a specific event (e.g. losing a family member or a close friend) that triggered a whole chain of events (increased drug use or getting involved with the 'wrong crowd', for example). Being able to single out an event that might have been particularly painful, also allowed prisoners to revisit this event and talk about their experiences (either sharing it with the group or on a one-on-one basis with facilitators). Confronting a painful memory was hard and painful for everyone, but it also held huge benefits:

> 'The opposite pole of active inhibition is confrontation ... [i.e.] individuals' actively thinking and/or talking about significant experiences as well as acknowledging their emotions... Confrontation forces a rethinking of events ... By talking or writing about previously inhibited experiences, individuals translate the event into language. Once it is language-based, people can better understand the experience and ultimately put it behind them.' (Pennebaker 1990:10).

When people were able to share, it had a profound effect on the rest of the group, especially on prisoners who had previously taken a defensive stance towards sharing their lifelines (believing no one would be interested or able to understand). The more stories were openly shared in the group, the more similarities and recurring themes were identified. As soon as the realisation sank in that other people had similarly painful or 'un-sharable' life-stories, participants became more willing to share theirs.

> 'Perhaps the most significant part a story ... plays ... is that it universalises the dilemmas facing the [story-teller], so that he does not feel alone any more. This phenomenon has been well recognised in a different context in group work, where the sharing of problems and their universality have been seen as important healing factors. A story tells the patient that he is not the only one to feel like this: others have done so before. This realisation often brings relief and hope that he may find a solution to his problem as others have done.' (Bhattacharyya 1997:11).

Often this part of RESTORE, i.e. individuals sharing their stories would lead into a general discussion of connections to one another. It encouraged authentic debate amongst the participants, enabled them to be reflective about their own lives and behaviour, and transformed the way they saw each other, their victims and themselves.

When asked afterwards how they felt when sharing their lifelines, participants were quoted saying: 'it felt more open'; 'we all have got a lot in common'; 'really happy that others got to hear my story' (Fieldwork notes). The realisation that they were not alone in experiencing painful events created a feeling of relief and positivity. Participants would express feelings of gratitude and respect for the courage everyone had

shown in sharing, thus showing themselves as they truly were. Participants expressed their admiration[13] for everyone who shared his story honestly and courageously.

COURAGE is a heart word. The root of the word courage is *cor* - the Latin word for heart. In one of its earliest forms, the word courage meant 'To speak one's mind by telling all one's heart'. Over time, this definition has changed, and today, we typically associate courage with heroic and brave deeds. But ... this definition fails to recognise the inner strength and level of commitment required for us to actually speak honestly and openly about who we are and about our experiences - good and bad. Speaking from our hearts is what I think of as 'ordinary courage' (Brown 2007:xxiii f.).

'Without courage, we cannot tell our stories. When we don't tell our stories, we miss the opportunity to experience empathy' (Brown 2007:44) and to find out what we all have in common rather than what separates us.

Sharing the 'whole story' with the group could be very powerful for prisoners. Sometimes this led to spontaneous bonds of empathy springing up between individuals, as experienced during one particular RESTORE residency at YOI Ashfield. One participant had shared openly painful aspects of his life talking the group through his lifeline. At the end of the programme he showed recognition to another group member who had written and spoken a poem to the whole group about forgiveness and the painful emotions the victim's story had evoked in him. He spontaneously crossed the room and hugged the other boy to show respect for his courage. The hug was returned instantly.

The most crucial prerequisite for the practice of storytelling is reaching the recipient. A story must be heard. To fully grasp a story, we need to focus our attention on the storyteller. He in turn needs mindful and attentive listeners to give meaning to his words. In this regard, good listening is as important as the story told. The deeper it is, the greater the impact it can have on both sides.

When we observed participants' body-language, facial expressions and behaviour during the ex-offender's story each one of them gave the impression that his words were really being heard at a deeper level:

> 'Good listening ... means giving open-minded, genuinely interested attention to others, allowing yourself the time and space to fully absorb what they say. It seeks not just the surface meaning but where the speaker is 'coming from' — what purpose, interest, or need is motivating their speech. Good listening encourages others to feel heard and to speak more openly and honestly ... Deep Listening involves listening from a deep, receptive, and caring place in oneself, to deeper and often subtler levels of meaning and intention in the other person. It is listening that is generous, empathic ... and trusting. Trust here does not imply agreement, but the trust that whatever others say, regardless of how well or poorly it is said, comes from something true in their experience. Deep Listening is

[13] Looking at the Latin root of **admiration** we see that it derives from ad-miro, meaning 'I look at'. When we admire someone, we truly see him, we realise him in the completeness and presence of his being.

> an ongoing practice of suspending self-oriented, reactive thinking and opening one's awareness to the unknown and unexpected.'[14]

The process of listening without prejudice, and tuning in to the speaker, could create a shared space of resonance. Being with each other and thinking together established important and powerful connections.

4.1.d. Connection - Resonance – Empathy

> 'We are wired for connection. It's in our biology. As infants, our need for connection is about survival. As we grow older, connection means thriving - emotionally, physically, spiritually and intellectually. Connection is critical because we all have the basic need to feel accepted and to believe that we belong and are valued for who we are.' (Brown 2007:285).

When we looked back at prisoners' and staff's accounts of prison life it became apparent how much - by its very nature - prison was a place of disconnection and separation (from loved ones on the outside, as well as from each other on the inside), thus denying staff and inmates this very basic human need of connection. Distance (predominantly between staff and inmates, but also between the inside and the outside) was created by establishing categories of 'otherness'. Those that have deviated from social and legal norms had to be re-categorised in different terms. They were now perceived as a risk to social order and security - the dangerous 'other'. Hence psychological risk-assessments were necessary to award risk-scores and categories to prisoners, reinforcing their position within the prison system (and outside society). Through this and similar other processes of alienation and categorisation, 'the 'otherness' of those who deviate' (Drake 2012:140) was established. It was deemed as an appropriate and necessary measure in order to maintain security and to protect the public from harm. But what did it do to the subject on the receiving end of the 'othering process'? In her study of dispersal prisons Drake (2012) has suggested that:

> 'the disregard for prisoners' humanity in the implementation of security measures made them feel worthless and valueless. In another sense it made them feel as though the only value they held was a negative one. They felt that the prison authorities saw them as embodiments of threat and risk that needed to be managed, anticipated and controlled. They were the enemy, an ... outsider - 'others.' (Drake 2012:90).

Perceiving and labelling individuals as different from and potentially dangerous for us created disconnection and distance. Inside prison this was illustrated, for example, by several policies revolving around the restriction of (physical) human contact. One staff member gave us an example of how she had to maintain boundaries within her work practice:

> 'You are not allowed to hug or anything like that, there is a general rule around hugging and you have to have personal safety. [But] I shake everybody's hands now, I know that seems a small thing but when lads come into our groups it's just 'Hi, alright, how are you?' And they sit down, but I noticed that you guys shake

[14] Martin, H., Rome, D. (2012). Deep Listening [online]. Halifax: Foundation for a Mindful Society. Available at: http://www.mindful.org/in-love-and-relationships/relating-to-others/deep-listening [Accessed 15/03/2013].

> everybody's hands as they walk in, as an introduction and I feel it's a good way of showing them respect so they automatically know, ok this person is acknowledging me, they are respecting me, let's do this differently. So I take that on now because I definitely think that's a good way of starting a group.' (Staff interview).

She had adopted the RESTORE facilitators' practice of shaking every participant's hand, on entering the room at the beginning of each day during a residency. This gesture of shaking hands held symbolic value because it created physical connection. It temporarily offset categorical thinking, it was a leveller and a gesture of partnership. It signalled the willingness to work together on a mutual, respectful and acknowledging basis: on eye-level. Shaking someone's hand created connection on a visible, physical level, emphasising the personalisation of a relationship. As suggested in the above interview excerpt, this gesture was deemed the maximum of physical connection inside prison.

When speaking of connection, we are also referring to a different, 'intangible' kind. The like that is established out of sight, inside individuals' minds, on a deeper, neuronal, emotional, or spiritual level. How is this kind of connection established, how do we experience it, and how does it affect our sense of self and identity? And, most importantly, what role did it play when looking at the impact the RESTORE programme had on offenders and staff?

On one occasion, for example, a (prisoner) participant let the facilitators know that he had never felt so connected like he did in this programme, his mother adding that she had never seen him so enthused and interested in something like this. In another instance, a member of staff reported that listening to the stories had a huge impact on him 'bringing up my childhood memories, my personal thoughts and emotions. It is a heartfelt project' (Staff interview). A strong sense of identification evoked feelings and memories in the listener. This was seen as one of the RESTORE programme's key strengths setting it apart from other interventions:

> 'It's huge and other programmes don't do that but you guys you do it in a compassionate and safe way, it touches everyone. It resonates with everyone whatever your background, it echoes on. I use it with that meaning even now when I think back of the film clips, I can still feel now the impact and talking to colleagues. It's as if it's echoing, I passed it on to others, it's echoed down to others. It really touches people in a really raw way. Levi is very powerful in how he communicates and it touches home with you.' (Staff interview).

The story tellers were able to reach out and touch their audience by reminding them of their own stories. They struck a chord, their stories resonated (from the Latin root *re-sono* = to resound back) with participants, and echoed on. The stories reverberated, they found their way into the memory of the listeners, they stayed with them, got ingrained, thus having a lasting impact (from Latin *impactus*, perfect passive participle of *impingo* = impinge). They had the potential to open the recipients' minds towards a heightened receptiveness for shared experiences and feelings. Sharing a true story with someone who was deeply listening established an immediate and intimate connection between the people involved. During this process, they created and maintained eye contact, they focussed on each other, they literally thought together. According to Barbara Fredrickson (2013) this state of 'being-with' could be best described as love, since:

> '[l]ove is primarily about connection ... and affecting our brains and bodies at the cellular level. Research has shown that when we feel connection with another person, our brains tend to 'synch up' with each other, not just metaphorically, but physically. ... the brains of people thus engaged are actually firing in the same patterns, in the same parts of the brain, almost simultaneously. This kind of mirroring is likely what creates ... resonance - a shared emotion that can make you feel invigorated and alive.'[15]

Following Barbara Fredrickson (2013) we are not talking about love here as 'the cultural assumptions of a romantic relationship or familial love or even love between best friends.' We rather want to adopt her definition of a 'moment-to-moment experience of mutual caring that we can feel with any person - even strangers - in everyday interactions', something she also refers to as 'shared positivity'.[16]

One can assume that this may well have been on the mind of one prisoner who expressed his 'respect for the love the boys have shown each other' after the second day of a RESTORE residency which had focussed on sharing lifelines.

One of the reasons why the programme 'resonates with everyone whatever your background' (Staff interview) therefore might be that the content addresses universal human values like connection and love. In its universality love also has the potential to influence the way we think. According to recent brain research findings (Huether 2006), feeling loved and connected is one of the preconditions for successful (re-)creation of synapses in the brain, thus broadening our (neuronal) horizon:

> 'Love creates a feeling of connectedness and solidarity that ... keeps spreading outward until in the end it includes everything that brought us ... into the world and holds us there. ... A person who wishes to use his brain in the most comprehensive manner must learn to love.' (Huether 2006:128 f.)

Love can flick the proverbial switch, it can help rewiring and restoring pathways in the brain that were not there before or that had been negatively affected by stress or other unfavourable factors:

> 'What becomes of ... a flexible, learning-capable brain and whether or not its inherent potential to form complex neuronal circuitry can be utilised depend on the conditions into which people are born and in which they have to lead their lives. In places where there is not enough to eat, where one's life and family are in constant danger, exchanges with other human beings are reduced to whatever might help to overcome these problems. Where jealousy and mistrust rule and everybody is everybody's enemy, it is impossible to develop a sense of solidarity. Under such circumstances, exchanges with other human beings are determined purely by the need to assert and promote oneself.' (Huether 2006:63).

When the team looked at the social and familial backgrounds of prisoners, it became apparent that a considerable number of them had experienced some form of hardship, violence, and/or deprivation early

[15] Suttie, J. (2013) The Love Upgrade [online]. Berkeley :The Greater Good Science Center. Available at: http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_love_upgrade [Accessed 05/02/2013].
[16] ibid.

on in their lives. If we wanted to follow Huether's theory outlined above, this could mean that those prisoners showing a lack of concern for their victims and people around them were first and foremost displaying the ways in which their brains had been predominantly formed in the past. In order for them to acquire new thought- and consequently behavioural patterns, they had to shift perspectives. To be able to look at things from a different angle, someone had to show them an alternative, so they could learn and ideally adopt this (new) way of thinking:

> 'They must not be dogmatically taught, but rather encouraged ... they must be provided with an opportunity to acquire knowledge that helps them see behind the surface of things ... and in this way to get better at dealing with the world than they have been up to now.' (Huether 2006:87 f.).

This shift could be suddenly initiated by the impact of one particular story or encounter that an individual felt personally touched by, and which made him 'feel a sense of deep personal concern' (Huether 2006:134). Or as one participant recounted in his cell book: 'Today has been a day not to forget in the sense of me meeting with a mother who lost her son who she really loved and for her to forgive and consume all the pain and suffering she has felt in these past few years, it has matured me very quickly and has changed my view of life.' Another prisoner noted: 'I feel different. I feel like I don't wanna re-offend again. ... When Sandra was talking about empathy I thought 'Could I do that?' To be honest I don't think I could. When [the victim story teller] cried it made me want to cry, it really did. I would like to thank her, she's got some guts.'

> **'**Empathy is something that can be learned. Teresa Wiseman identifies four defining attributes of empathy. They are: (1) to be able to see the world as others see it; (2) to be nonjudgmental; (3) to understand another person's feelings; and (4) to communicate your understanding of that person's feelings.' (Wiseman 1996 cited in Brown 2007:37).

And 'it is this capacity that sets the human brain apart from all other nervous systems' (Huether 2006:114).

'The 'real' accounts of 'ordinary people' ... assisted in creating empathic connections' (Adler and Mir, 2012:57) with empathy being defined as 'the skill or ability to tap into our own experiences in order to connect with an experience someone is relating to us' (Brown 2007:35). 'Prisoners reported being able to 'think about the wider picture' in terms of the impact of their actions' (Adler and Mir, 2012:57) with one of them stating, 'I'm looking at all sides now. It has opened my eyes for the bigger picture. It's been a realisation' (Fieldwork notes). 'This marked a movement from an insular ... and defensive subjectivity to a more consciously inter-subjective sense of self in relation to others' (Adler and Mir 2012:57) - a movement towards empathy.

According to Brown (2010, p. 106) we do not give up responsibility, when we strive to understand the context or the big picture. On the contrary, we increase it. 'When we identify a personal struggle that is rooted in larger issues, we should take responsibility for both ... Context is not the enemy of personal responsibility. Individualism is the enemy of personal responsibility' (ibid., 106).

Through identification and resonance with others' stories, prisoners had begun to see these in relation to themselves. They were ready to take on responsibility for their own stories now, their past, present and future. They had not been judged when sharing their lifelines, but had been shown that they were not alone, and that other people had gone through similar events and experiences. Feelings of connection arose, often accompanied by the realisation that we were all very similar (and only human). This in turn created empathy and encouraged participants to see interconnections: the bigger picture. The experiential learning experience of relating to and feeling for one individual (i.e. the story teller or other members of the group) could be expanded and translated onto the whole, i.e. society, thus leading to a willingness to adopt alternative, more pro-social thought and behavioural patterns.

4.1.e. Cognitive Effects - Insight - Change

'Change begins when we practice ordinary courage' (Brown 2007:59).

> 'I enjoyed it. I first wanted to stay on the wing. I am still at rage, but it's made me for once question which I usually don't. It's opened a few doors. For the boys to share their stories has immensely opened my eyes. ... I am looking at both sides now, and I have questions.' (Prisoner - fieldwork notes)

> 'I enjoyed the course. I've been listening to stories, and it has made my mind more open to think about certain things more which will bring about change eventually'. (Prisoner - fieldwork notes)

These participants of the RESTORE residency described a mind- and eye-opening experience ('it's opened a few doors'; 'opened my eyes'; 'has made my mind more open'), brought about by listening and relating to each others' stories. They had gained insight into other people's inner worlds which in turn provided them with a profound insight into their own mindsets. The experience had broadened their horizon enabling them to see the bigger picture. Confronting and reflecting on their own actions, experiences and thoughts was widening up their tunnel vision, what had been a certain narrow-mindedness. This freed up the energy and prepared the participants to take on board alternative views ('I am looking at both sides now'), and to question the status quo.

Shifting from narrow- to open-mindedness could be seen as a shift in cognitive patterns, or as Pennebaker (1990) defined it - a shift in the level of thinking from low- to high-level thinking (or alternatively from mindless to mindful).

According to his theory 'high-level thinking is characterised by a broad perspective, self-reflection, and the awareness of emotion. Low-level thinking is the relative absence of these attributes' (Pennebaker 1990:61 f.). Both ways of thinking serve their own specific purpose: 'During [uncontrollable] stress, low-level thinking serves as a method by which people distract themselves from the cause and emotional consequences of the stressor' (Pennebaker 1990:64).

When stress is perceived as uncontrollable, our brain reduces its activity and enters into low-level thinking as a protective measure. 'The low-level thinking work points to inherent problems of distracting ourselves

from unpleasant thoughts and emotions. Mindlessness, compulsive and addictive behaviours, and other forms of low-level thinking dull our pain by making us less thoughtful and aware' (Pennebaker 1990:66). Hence 'alcohol and many psychoactive drugs are abused because they are quick and efficient in transporting the consumer to a lower level of thinking' (ibid. p. 68). This might explain to a certain extent the persistently high rates of drug (ab)use inside prisons and YOIs, and it may also explain why inmates might decide to disengage with their environment and the people around them: 'When we are mindless or thinking on a low level, we don't feel much pain, nor do we feel much happiness. We don't feel much at all' (Pennebaker 1990: 66 f.). High-level thinking, on the other hand, is 'associated with the awareness of feelings of irritation, anger, or anxiety that the [stressor] caused' (ibid. p. 64). Although resorting to low-level thinking might appear as beneficial to the individual wanting to protect himself from experiencing painful thoughts and emotions, it comes at a cost: 'When people are mindless, they are rigid in their thinking and cannot appreciate novel approaches to problems. When mindful, people are active problem solvers, looking at the world from a variety of perspectives' (Pennebaker 1990:66). If we therefore want to learn, progress and constructively solve problems, we have to face pain, fear, and other unpleasant or frightening emotions and memories:

> 'Psychologically confronting upsetting experiences produces long-term benefits in psychological and physical health ... However ... confronting our unwanted thoughts can be painful and anxiety producing. Fortunately, the pain is usually temporary ... [but] acknowledging and disclosing our thoughts and feelings can make us smart again' (Pennebaker 1990:69)

Sometimes prisoners would note in their cell books that they felt upset hearing (the victim's) stories revolving around painful experiences and emotions like loss, fear, grief, or anger and rage. They often reminded them of their own stories (as victims) of hardship in life. One member of the group, for example, recalled how he felt 'really upset because when [the victim] started telling her story about her son I was surprised that she didn't cry. I also felt heartbroken and didn't know what to say, I feel depressed remembering all of this.' On the other hand they would also state how it made them feel calmer and happier to hear that even the most painful story could have a 'happy ending' with people finding peace and redemption through forgiveness ('I feel happy that I've done this project; I feel that before I judge someone for what they did to me or have done I can look on two different angles and see their point of view, so I can forgive them').

Inspired by story tellers and prisoners who courageously shared narratives of pain and vulnerability, participants gained trust to tap into their own complex world of emotions. This 'increased thoughtfulness ... brought ... a common sense of feeling calmer, more relaxed, and engaging in more critical and searching self-reflection' (Adler and Mir, 2012:30). Studying the benefits of confronting and opening up about inhibited thoughts, emotions and trauma, Pennebaker (1990) has found that confronting and expressing trauma and pain can lead to improved self-awareness with respondents noting 'how they understood themselves better' (Pennebaker 1990:37). Confronting emotions in a prison environment where this was predominantly seen as a sign of weakness (and therefore suppressed) proved to be difficult, but key for inspiring constructive change.

During the coding process of prisoners' cell books[17] a phenomenological thread emerged pointing towards an important cognitive effect of the RESTORE programme. Parallels were found in the sections entitled **I FEEL** and **I THINK**. These related to participants' accounts of effects the programme had on their reflective processes regarding behaviour and life-style change, and to how they had been given the right tools to translate the wish to change into practice. Some examples from young offenders' cell books might illustrate this theory:

I THINK	I FEEL
[the victim] coming in has done me good	[the victim] is a really strong woman
forgiving someone for taking a family's members life they have to have a lot of courage and strength	that before I judge someone for what they did to me or have done I can look on two different angles and see their point of view, so I can forgive them
knowing what I had been told today, I can learn from and reflect back on in the future	like this is helping me to mature

Participants described cognitive processes as well as emotions regarding constructive change. They pointed out how they had been given practical advice for self-improvement by developing empathy for the victim and seeing the bigger picture. This provided them with constructive alternatives to replace (past) destructive patterns of action.

The analysis at hand led us to the assumption that the two areas of thought and emotion might be interdependent to an extent. Deductively reasoning we arrived at the conclusion that true insight - one that holds the potential for lasting change - could only happen when **reason** and **emotion** (as binary opposites) were addressed simultaneously. The active expression of inner processes (i.e. sharing lifelines with the group or facilitators) was crucial for a realisation to happen. Brain research findings relating to active trauma confrontation through verbal or written expression underpinned this thesis:

> 'The most dramatic division in the brain is between the left and right hemispheres. Although there is some variation from person to person, the parts

[17] These are workbooks given out to RESTORE participants at the beginning of the programme. With written cell-work to be completed (on a voluntary basis) cell books form an important part of the course.
They provide space for written reflections about the following topics:

- What today has made you feel different about your own life and the choices you have made? (Day 1)
- The 'I AM' exercise encouraging free association around identity and emotion related topics:
- I am... / I believe... / I love... / I cry... / I hate... / I want... / I regret... / I feel... / I forgive... / I think... (Day 1)
- Who would you like to forgive and are you having a hard time doing it? (Day 2)
- What would you like to say to someone you have harmed or hurt? (Day 2)

> of the brain governing speech and language are usually on the left side of the brain ... A number of brain researchers have provided evidence that consciousness or, at least, our conscious thought is highly dependent on the language capabilities provided in the left brain. The parts of the brain that control negative emotions tend to be localised on the right side of the brain.' (Pennebaker 1990:53)

> 'What must happen in the brain when people are dealing with a trauma that they are either inhibiting or disclosing? A trauma includes major emotions, vivid images, and conscious thoughts. In other words, an overwhelming psychological experience demands that information be compiled and integrated throughout the brain on a very sophisticated level. When inhibition is involved, a new level of complexity and conflict will be added.' (Pennebaker 1990:54)

In compiling and sharing their lifelines, it became apparent that the majority of prisoners had suffered some kind of major trauma at one point in their lives. Additionally, coming to prison - thus being separated from loved ones, and facing uncertainty and fear - had left many of them shell-shocked. They were unable to deal with these highly painful emotions and experiences of the past and present. Furthermore, prison did not seem to provide any opportunities (except from one-on-one sessions with psychologists, chaplains or listeners) to confront and express trauma. According to Pennebaker (1990) this could lead to low-level thinking and create disconnection and incongruence between the right and the left hemisphere of the brain. This would result in deficient and fragmentary thinking processes, preventing the individual from gaining self-awareness and grasping the 'bigger picture'. During extensive clinical psychological research he formulated the following hypothesis:

> 'Before confessing [and confronting], there should be very little congruence in brain-wave activity between the left and right hemispheres, if information was being processed independently. However, in the midst of a letting-go experience (and possibly thereafter), emotional and linguistic types of information should be processed together. In short, confession should lead to greater congruence in brain-wave activity between the left and right hemispheres.' (Pennebaker 1990:54)

> 'It worked. When people confronted traumas, the brain-wave activity on the left and right sides of the head was much more highly correlated than during periods of thinking about trivial topics [i.e. inhibiting]. Confession brought about brain-wave congruence'. (Pennebaker 1990:55)

This congruence helped individuals to use their brains more effectively and even to their highest potentials, thus becoming more mindful. It evoked a sensation of 'acute' awareness and presence - things became more integrated and were starting to make sense. This may be a reason why participants also repeatedly described feelings of joy connected to gaining insight and engaging in a self-reflective thinking process whilst taking part in the RESTORE programme. They wanted more of it:

> 'I have started to think a lot. I want to continue this'. (Prisoner - Fieldwork notes)
>
> 'I would do this programme again and again and again as it just makes me think'. .(Prisoner - Fieldwork notes)

When staff were asked how they perceived the impact of the RESTORE programme, they described it as 'very powerful' because it 'delivered a strong message gently.' Powerful in this regard meant having the potential to make people comprehend an abstract and huge topic (forgiveness) as well as to critically question their own behaviour ('a strong message') in order to change it. This was done on an individual level, on participants' own terms, and in a nonjudgmental way, without making anyone feel bad or hurt ('gently').

Hearing about others' vulnerabilities, and especially about the victim's struggle and how she/he had come through the experience somehow 'purified', making participants aware of the cathartic effects of forgiveness. It conveyed the powerful message that an adverse situation could be turned around - that it was about finding the good (the lesson) in the bad. Through changing perspectives, resilience could be developed. Participants considered how they could succeed in not getting drawn into destructive behaviour, but take a step back instead. What once was regarded as strong and brave (i.e. retaliation, fighting back to not lose face) was now seen as the weaker choice. Finding strength in an adverse situation included **not** getting involved, being 'the bigger man' (Prisoner cell book) by considering the other person's situation and practicing forgiveness. Getting in touch with your higher self, and being true to yourself was now seen as courageous. Prisoners started to look at themselves and their actions more realistically without finding 'false' justifications for their behaviour. Taking responsibility led to self-empowerment. They had proactively found their own way to a point where they could be held accountable for their actions without becoming defensive. Considering forgiveness as an alternative stopped them from blaming themselves and others for negative events and actions. This paved the way for taking constructive steps towards rebuilding relationships and lives:

> 'Accountability is most often motivated by the desire to repair and renew - it is holding someone responsible for his actions and the consequences of his actions. On the other hand, we often use blame to discharge overwhelming feelings of fear and shame. ... Like shame, blame shuts us down and is not an effective tool for change'. (Brown 2007:212)

After taking part in the RESTORE programme, both psychology and education noted shifts in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals. Participants displayed deeper levels of thinking and reflections on their crimes, their victims, the nature of revenge and the concept of forgiveness. They were seen to discuss these with other inmates and to present their thoughts within other sessions in education. They would sometimes describe a slow, but lasting realisation:

> 'It's come slowly from The Forgiveness Project. You know, obviously you don't wake up. You don't do a course Friday, wake up Monday morning and, everything's changed ... it seeps in, without even realising, it seeps into you.' (Prisoner interview)

Change happened, when people were ready for it. Reaching this point depended first and foremost on the individual and his stage in life. One specific event illustrating this process took place, when a young offender requested Restorative Justice with the mother of his victim following the victim's story in the RESTORE programme. This Restorative Justice session was seen as extremely empowering for both victim and the offender with forgiveness playing a key role in it. Staff commented on how the YO was able to begin accepting his life sentence, once he had been forgiven in this process.

Looking back at prisoner and staff accounts of the perceived artificiality of accredited programmes that were supposed to bring about change, it became evident that one of the biggest strengths of the RESTORE programme was its openness and flexibility. Meeting people on their own terms was crucial in making them feel accepted and safe enough to show vulnerability and a side of themselves they might perceive as 'bad' or flawed. It was also crucial to lead them through this process towards discovering the 'good' sides of themselves. In a prison environment mainly preoccupied with risk, i.e. the 'bad' sides of the self, this was often seen as difficult. This became apparent in an interview with a member of staff who expressed one of her moments of insight during a RESTORE residency stating 'it made me remember to think there is the bad stuff but don't forget the good stuff and that coming out was moving.' Due to a preoccupation with risk, it seemed that staff's focus sometimes got fixated on addressing, changing, and avoiding negative behaviour, thus losing sight of and omitting the 'good stuff'. Prisoners themselves though were still in touch with the positive and constructive sides of their identity. When asked to write a few words into their cell books under the heading of 'I AM', participants' accounts were persistently positive. They described themselves as 'one of a kind'; 'great'; 'a good person deep down'; 'intelligent'; 'loving'; 'good spirited'; 'a good person'; 'open minded'; 'motivated'; 'friendly'; 'polite and respectful'; 'well loving and caring to people who are the same to me'; 'a very happy guy even now I'm in jail' (Prisoner cell books). The notion of being 'a good person' was used by several people. Prisoners were aware and confident about their positive character traits, and did not subscribe to what was asked of them by certain departments or courses, namely changing who they were.

> 'Refusing to take on an identity defined by one's worst deeds is a healthy act of resistance. If [someone's] identity as a person is equated with his violent acts, he won't accept responsibility or access genuine feelings of sorrow and remorse, because to do so would threaten him with feelings of worthlessness ... We cannot survive when our identity is defined by or limited to our worst behaviour. Every human must be able to view the self as complex and multidimensional. When this fact is obscured, people will wrap themselves in layers of denial in order to survive. How can we apologise for something we are, rather than something we did?'. (Lerner 2001 cited in Brown 2007:66)

Adler and Mir (2012) also stated that when participants talked about change, 'this was not necessarily about wanting to change who they were, but rather, to change their approach' (ibid. p. 59).

Providing prisoners with effective tools for this kind of change was another key strength of the RESTORE programme. Being accepted as already whole, a complete human being, and not being labelled as someone broken who had to be fixed, allowed prisoners to (re-)gain confidence in their ability to change themselves. They realised that they were the ones able to choose to act or think differently in any given situation. This seemed more achievable than changing who they were. It also alleviated potential feelings of not being a good (enough) person which could undermine self-esteem and trust in one's own potential.

(Re-)Claiming individual ownership and self-agency empowered prisoners. Change did not occur as something put onto them from top down (by psychology or other agencies within the prison system), but it worked from the ground up. Ultimately it inspired participants to find their own solutions which made them proud, as they achieved them on their own terms.

In this regard, the RESTORE programme has adopted certain features of 'Solution Focused Practice' (SFP)[18]:

> 'In the same way that forgiveness is a process which requires a shift of perspective away from the story of hurt feelings, SFP is a process which reframes the narrative of the past away from debilitating thoughts and emotions. ... perspective change is not about being coerced into a different mindset but about discovering 'the gift in the wound.' ... Essentially it's a tool with which to ask questions and help people find their own answers. ... In other words it's not about fixing people but about searching out and creating an alternative narrative. SFP recognises the corrosive power of regret. ... It is an invitation to think in terms of aspiration. [It] focuses on strengths not risks, and fits in neatly with desistance theory. Criminologist, Professor Shadd Maruna[19] states: 'Focusing on strengths rather than over-emphasising risks is probably a better way to help someone desist' ... Problem focused therapy makes people defensive and encourages them to go to the blame default position. People in this state of mind will even blame their victims ... Evidence has shown that maximising solution talk and inviting people to have different perspectives is likely to be associated with change.'

The concept of Forgiveness and Restorative Justice was explored extensively during every RESTORE residency. One way that participants had come to view it, was as redemption, as an opportunity to start afresh, to reinvent yourself. Forgiving yourself meant freeing yourself from old and destructive thinking patterns or opinions about yourself that no longer served you. It opened up space for something new, an alternative outlook, a new beginning. This in turn could affect future desistance and reoffending significantly, as prisoners were now more resourceful and had a vision for their future which did not involve crime. At this point, offering a follow-up measure to offenders (following them through the rest of their sentence and upon release) was crucial and most promising. This was the point where RESTORE's mentoring scheme came into play (see chapter V. of this evaluation).

[18] Cantacuzino, M. (2012). Forgiveness and Solution Focused Practise [online]. London: The Forgiveness Project. Available at: http://theforgivenessproject.com/directorsblog/forgiveness-and-solution-focused-practice/ [Accessed 10/03/2013].

[19] Maruna, S. (2010). Understanding Desistance from Crime [online]. UK: NOMS, Ministry of Justice. Available at: http://www.clinks.org/assets/files/PDFs/Desistance.pdf [Accessed 20/03/2013].

4.2. RESTORE's impact on staff

The involvement of staff in the delivery of RESTORE at YOI Ashfield ranged from being integrated marginally (i.e. witnessing prisoners experiences without own participation) and observing (parts of) the programme to receiving specifically tailored training sessions. In total four days of training took place and a total of 48 staff were trained. The demand for training and requests to witness and learn more about the programme had risen continuously. The evaluation of staff feedback forms (handed out after training sessions) has unearthed a very positive story line, with staff describing the training as 'absolutely brilliant', 'inspirational and amazing'. It was of major relevance to them, because 'often training washes over you but this one went straight in, it was so meaningful'. They particularly appreciated it being up-to-date, innovative and of high quality:

> 'To be frank sometimes I get really cynical about resources that are out of date and not of quality but this was the next level, very evocative, it's whole ambiance, so calmly delivered, every word well chosen.' (Staff feedback forms)

The most frequently used wording when giving feedback about RESTORE was 'thought provoking'. This indicated how much of a cognitive effect the programme had not only on offenders, but also on staff. It opened the mind and inspired the development of alternative thought patterns, by offering inspirational stories and an open thinking space.

Staff also described positive emotional effects, and how this programme was 'felt with the heart', as well as how interesting[20] and different it was compared to other interventions. It encouraged shifts in perspectives, and has raised many questions for staff around the concept of forgiveness, for themselves as well as for offenders. Many discussions led to finding ways in which staff could support prisoners better and how they, as officers, could engage in greater dialogue with them. A need for more training, follow-up schemes and further methods of embedding the programme into the fabric and ethos of the prison were expressed:

> 'Follow up with the lads is similar to what the staff need. Staff have to settle back into their roles, they put up barriers with the YOs, it's difficult to break these down, and needs continual follow up. Some of the ideas and emotions of TFP and its impact on the YOs is outside the comfort zone for what is seen as normal prison behaviour. Prison has its own established culture, and inbuilt habits. You need a sustained programme to shift and breathe life into the culture of prison.' (Staff interview)

A discrepancy was felt on some occasions that pointed towards a clash of values and beliefs between prison culture and interventions like RESTORE. It turned out that uniformed staff were the hardest members of the staff team to attract yet among the most important attendees:

> 'There is a 50-50 argument with uniform, it sets a boundary, but for real impact you have to get under the skin. X is one of the most influential [members of staff]

[20] The original meaning of the term 'interest' is to be amongst, to be engaged (derived from the Latin inter- (amongst) est (esse = to be). It means sharing a common focus.

> here. There is a fine line between security and he walks it sometimes but his impact on relationships to the YOs is incredible and positive but the risk is he can go beyond what is acceptable.' (Staff interview)

By putting the main focus on the implementation and maintenance of security measures for public protection and trying to ensure an ordered and controlled environment, prison, politics and the public have created a culture of separation. Concepts like conditioning are deemed necessary prerequisites to define personal and professional boundaries for staff. Whilst this is understandable from an organisational and disciplinarian point of view, it also involves maintaining distance from each other in both a physical and psychological sense. The fear of conditioning could predominantly be seen as fear of vulnerability. It implied the belief that an individual's openness could be exploited by others who would then use everything they knew about him against him. This presupposition often made it difficult to create trust between staff and prisoners. But trust was necessary to establish meaningful ways in working together towards constructive change. Depending on how strongly prisons and managers emphasised aspects of security over aspects of building relationships between staff and prisoners, the dynamics and atmosphere of an establishment could range from being perceived as liberal (with trusted and constructive staff-prisoner-relationships) to generating strong feelings of suspicion and mistrust (with a tendency towards an 'us and them' ethos).

An overemphasis on security could prevent (uniformed) staff from 'getting under the skin', i.e. getting to know prisoners on a more personal level. But digging deeper to discover underlying issues, beliefs and problems could offer crucial reference points to determine the best way forward for an offender towards rehabilitation ('for real impact'). Some staff expressed the wish to be able to work differently, but that this could be partly impeded by opposing values of the prison. They discussed how the system they were working in was not forgiving and that their main strategy for maintaining (personal) security was to keep the emotions of the YOs detached from their everyday contact with them. On the other hand, they felt there was a need to be 'empathetic and open' and recognised that RESTORE was doing exactly this. After taking part in training sessions, officers' feedback forms would contain statements related to incorporating the learnt into their work, and to building more meaningful relationships with YOs:

> 'It makes me want to help young persons to carry on the process on the out; Forgiveness is a very powerful intervention, I can appreciate how, if the YP is willing, forgiving could lead to more positive behaviour; It has made me more effective when discussing such issues with YPs; It has reinforced my belief that we need to make our YPs more aware of forgiveness; I see the stories written on paper but to hear the human perspective is what is missing – this is what you have given us today'. (Staff feedback forms)

It seemed difficult to bring back shared beliefs of human interconnection into prison because the idea of disconnection, mistrust and separation ('they put up barriers with the YOs') had been deeply ingrained into the culture. The comfort zone was (and still is) very much centred around maximising security and minimising risk (although this might not be true for all establishments). According to staff, RESTORE's values around looking at our mutual humanity, where we all connect, what unites rather than separates us, could play an important role in building better staff-prisoner-relationships that would ultimately promote enhanced levels of safety and order. In their evaluation of the RESTORE intervention, Adler and Mir

(2012:45) have also pointed out that 'staff and prisoners recognised that the workshops could change the dynamic between individual prisoners and officers and have a positive impact on the regime as a whole'.

'Staff ... clearly felt both that prisoners were changed and that this change could be carried forward into other domains within the regime, beyond RESTORE' (Adler and Mir, 2012:37). What this could potentially look like will be examined in the following section.

4.3. RESTORE's impact on the fabric of the prison

Staff often commented on the prisoners' focus and engagement in this programme which they saw as highly unusual. Offenders had started to debate the issues of forgiveness, revenge and justice in other programmes as a direct consequence of attending the RESTORE programme. Its impact was rippling out, and thus could be used constructively when embedding prisoners into additional rehabilitative measures offered by education, outside agencies, or psychology. Prisoners' engagement in and effects of RESTORE would also be recognised by offender managers and sentence planning boards. Participants in the programme were often eager to get involved in additional ways of self-development and were open to engage on a wider scale.

As mentioned previously, it was not only the offenders' involvement, but also staff training that was key to the success of raising awareness of the RESTORE programme across different parts of the prison and supporting the strategic development of departments to join up in their planning around it. A more general preparedness towards considering forgiveness as a response when dealing with conflict, and an openness towards new ways of thinking could benefit the atmosphere on the wings and staff-prisoner relationships. Promoting forgiveness as a real alternative to retaliation could be conducive to overall safety by increasing understanding, empathy and awareness between prisoners as a group, as well as between prisoners and staff.

Furthermore, by offering forgiveness as an alternative outlook on themselves and their identity as offenders, RESTORE could also profoundly contribute to lessening the weight of the (psychological) pains of imprisonment, the feelings of guilt, fear, anger, and self-doubt of the YOs. Members of staff expressed, how they felt the 'unburdening' for the boys was so essential at such an early stage in their sentence. Prisoners experienced the feeling of shame as being particularly heavy on their minds:

> 'Understand – My actions do not define me however they bring me severe punishment, I didn't mean to hurt you, I know I brought you pain, I ask you to forgive me, as I hang my head in shame.' (Prisoner cell book)

Other participants would tell facilitators during residencies how they felt that all the losses, pain, trials and tribulations they had experienced in life were their deserved punishment for being an inherently bad person. This illustrated the negative power of shame as 'the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging' (Brown 2007:30).

As discussed previously, prisoners often could not find safe places or trust their peers enough to offload and communicate their feelings around shame and other unsettling emotions for fear of being negatively

judged. Staff and prisoners felt that prison predominantly (with some exceptions) was an unforgiving environment due to its very set-up and culture:

> 'Prisons deliver punishment. In this way they serve some purposes particularly well. That is, they are places that deliver retribution and vengeance. ... There is much evidence to suggest that retributive justice (and the use of punishment as a way of encouraging better human behaviour) is ... ineffective.' (Drake 2012:107)

Since its establishment, the effectiveness and purpose of prison (i.e. 'what works?') has been debated continuously. When considering the question of punishment being 'the most effective means for helping someone to understand the extent and depth of the harm they have caused', Drake (2012:155) also elaborated on the connexion between punishment and violence. In doing so she drew on research findings by James Gilligan (2000), a psychiatrist who had written extensively on the subject of violence, stating that 'history is the ultimate refutation of the theory that punishment will prevent or deter violence. On the contrary, punishment is the most powerful stimulus of violence that we have yet discovered' (ibid. 745).

According to Drake

> '[t]his is a sobering revelation. It is contrary to intuition. It is contrary to what common-sense ideologies argue will be achieved by pursuing vengeance. That is: if only the person who has perpetrated this terrible act of violence could himself experience the suffering he has caused then we could ensure he would never do such a terrible thing again. Despite how obvious such an assumption may seem, its practical application has shown that punishment does not have the desired effect. As Gilligan (2000, p. 749) notes: In short what we have learned from decades of clinical experience with the most violent people our society produces is that many of those who murder others are survivors of their own attempted murder, or of the murders of their closest relatives; ... if punishment did inhibit or prevent violence, then these men would not have become violent in the first place, for they already experienced the most severe punishment that it is possible to inflict on people without actually killing them'. (Drake 2012:156)

His observations and conclusions deriving from his clinical work (Gilligan, 2000) suggest that the emotion that is necessary (though not sufficient) for the development of violence is shame and/or humiliation. He argues (ibid., p. 763) that 'being treated as if one were insignificant, unimportant or worthless ... leads to rage and potential violence' (Drake 2012:157). This highlights one of many reasons why violent offences might be committed in the first place on the outside, but also how experiencing shame inside prison can result in anger and violence as a reaction to defend oneself from the pain it causes:

> '[T]he relationship between shame and anger is about using blame and anger to protect us from the pain caused by shame. ... Because anger is an emotion of potency and authority, being angry can help us regain a sense of control.' (Brown 2007:214)

Accordingly, facilitators would sometimes become witnesses to stories told by offenders who had consciously decided to hold on to feelings of anger and hate to avoid confronting painful (and potentially shameful) truths about their own actions:

> 'The hate keeps me going through my sentence. But this course has made me question some things. Is it my fault or his fault? When I came to his house, I told him I've got a drug habit and I'm a drug dealer. Is it my fault he got hooked on drugs and got paranoid and grassed me up? You know, people would talk about the light at the end of the tunnel to motivate you. But for me there is none. IPP leaves me in darkness ... There's no light at the end of the tunnel. I need that raging hate to keep me going. It's the only way I know how to do my time. But I am looking at both sides now, and I have questions'. (Prisoner - fieldwork notes)

Participants sometimes expressed how they felt about there being no (independent) support on offer to help them deal with painful emotions like doubt, shame, anger or depression other than faith based interventions (e.g. courses offered by the chaplaincy), listeners (recruited from a prisoner base) or psychology. It is important though to point out at this stage, that these represented subjective accounts, 'snapshots' of a specific perception related to time and place, and therefore we should and cannot infer any generalisations regarding the whole of the prison system from them. Nevertheless, there was a recurring theme in both staff and prisoners' accounts of prison often not being able to provide positive alternative outlooks for an individual. The RESTORE programme on the other hand was offering ways of helping participants to let go of self-debilitating thought-patterns and to develop much needed (shame) resilience:

> 'It's resilience, they lose it so much in here, they don't have the resilience to sustain their hope and motivation, to believe and trust that something positive will happen ... It's on hope, they lose sight so quickly, one little criticism they lose all hope and motivation. That's another word for this programme, resilience and hope – they are intrinsic in this programme and the story tellers are explaining this to them, showing them and proving it's possible.' (Staff interview).

RESTORE played an important role in shifting participants' focus away from blaming themselves by demonstrating how it was possible to forgive yourself and others. As a consequence their focus could shift away from experiencing shame ('I am bad') towards experiencing guilt ('I did something bad'). This proved crucial for ultimately offering offenders the possibility to take responsibility for their actions ('This course has made me question some things. Is it my fault or his fault?' - Prisoner, fieldwork notes). Actions could be altered and amended by choosing to react differently in the future, whereas it might have seemed difficult or even unattainable to change one's very being, as this contradicted the longing for being accepted exactly as you were. In this sense, shame was debilitating, but forgiveness and self-awareness were empowering.

By raising self-awareness, the RESTORE programme incorporated one of the key factors Brown (2010) considered as essential in building shame resilience. According to her, practicing critical- and self-awareness meant:

'linking our personal experiences to

- Contextualizing (I see the big picture)
- Normalizing (I'm not the only one)
- Demystifying (I'll share what I know with others)

When we fail to make the[se] connections, we increase ... shame by:

- Individualizing (I am the only one)
- Pathologizing (something is wrong with me)
- Reinforcing (I should be ashamed)' (ibid, p. 99)

In a similar vein some members of staff expressed their wish (and the need) for RESTORE and its emphasis on forgiveness to become a core value of prison culture:

> R.: '[I]t links with so many other parts of the prison … I think the prison structure should be built around the core of this and structures to stem from it ... To embed it … The concept of forgiveness at the core is what I believe should happen.'
>
> I.: 'What would it look like? To have forgiveness at the core of the prison structure?'
>
> R.: 'I think it would bring such a positive emotional culture to the prison, it would bring a compassion to everything, positive outcomes, the prison occupies its time looking at functional outcomes rather than being built on emotion. Essentially we would be looking at a compassionate model which would be very interesting to see what can happen ... It would be fascinating to see how we would all bond together too, if forgiveness was at the core'. (Staff interview)

By using the word 'compassion', our respondent advocated a more person-centred and generally more empathic approach of how prisoners should or could be treated whilst in the system. In his opinion, prison should adopt a holistic approach when working with offenders, thus looking at both the state of mind ('being built on emotion') and body ('looking at functional outcomes'). This would ultimately deliver rehabilitation in its original sense, i.e. 'to **restore** to useful life, ... to **restore** to good condition ... or capacity'.[21]

Compassion, forgiveness, and empathy represented the antipodes (and perhaps antidotes) of punishment and separation which is what prison predominantly still stands for at present. Weaving the values of RESTORE into the fabric of the prison could possibly entail a reconsideration of the culture and purpose of prison and punishment something criminology scholars like Drake (2012:165) have considered as timely and necessary:

> '[I]t might be suggested that in our contemplation of the problems of crime, justice and punishment we consider aiming for one simple goal: the overall

[21] Wikipedia (2013) Rehabilitation (penology) [online]. Wikimedia. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rehabilitation_(penology) [Accessed 20/03/2013].

> reduction in the coefficient of harm. ... One of the rules would then be: If in doubt, do not pain. ... Look for alternatives to punishments, not only alternative punishments. It is often not necessary to react; the offender as well as the surroundings know it was wrong. Much deviance is expressive, a clumsy attempt to say something. Let the crime then become a starting point for a real dialogue '.(ibid. p. 165)

If we wanted to carry this thought further, then RESTORE represents a constructive step towards starting the dialogue between offender, prison and society. It creats a basis for open communication, and has the power to encourage real change. In order to export these positive impacts from the inside into outside society, a follow-up was needed to bridge the gap and facilitate the transition. In RESTORE's case this was accomplished by its very own mentoring scheme which will be discussed in the next chapter.

5. IMPACT OF THE RESTORE MENTORING SCHEME ON OFFENDERS - CASE STUDIES

The following case study summaries have been compiled by one of RESTORE's very own facilitators/story-tellers, Peter Miles who also works for the project as a part-time mentor inside several prisons and YOIs across England. Mentees for the follow-up one-on-one mentoring scheme are normally recruited from the respective group of prisoners who have participated in a RESTORE residency and who have put themselves forward to be mentored on a voluntary basis.

5.1. Case Study I

5.1.a. CASE STUDY I - RESTORE programme report (attended July 2012)

X was a very sensitive member of the group who clearly showed great depth of thinking and reflections throughout the whole programme. He worked for a long time on his life line looking and describing the complications of his family life and how he wants to study and support his family in Pakistan on release. He presented himself as a very careful listener to others and was deeply moved by all the stories told. He was affected particularly by Peter's story where his connection to domestic violence in his own life was expressed to Psychology following this telling. At the end of the programme he stated, 'I've learnt more about forgiveness and how you can take other emotions and then turn them into forgiveness.'

5.1.b. CASE STUDY I - Mentoring summary (started October 2012)

X and I had already made a strong connection within the RESTORE programme he attended (as above). During the RESTORE programme he had specifically come up to me and said 'I want to speak to you more because my dad used to hit my mum too.'

I started mentoring X from the very start of the mentoring program and I can say that he has come a long way. He started off as a young man with so many uncertainties about a lot of things. He did not know what group of guys he wanted to be part of, what he wanted to do, once he was released, how he was going to keep up communication with his father while in prison and were he stood with his step mother. Life was hard for him due to his birth-mother not being in his life for a good part of it and her living in another country. He was and still is very close to his birth-mother and if he had it his way he would go and live with her. For his relationship with his father there is a language barrier so that makes it very hard for them to communicate clearly. X asked a lot of questions in our sessions. Questions to do with a variety of things from working, paying taxes, getting his own apartment, to how to deal with an officer that he believes has been unfair to him, what to do about certain issues in the prison regarding peer pressure. He is a really good listener and takes a lot of information on board when he asks a question, and if he does not understand the answer that I give him he will ask me to explain it deeper.

I believe that X really does not want to return to prison. He really wants to do well and make his parents proud of him. He is just trying to figure out how he can do that and with the help of a mentor he believes that it is possible.

5.2. Case Study II

5.2. a. CASE STUDY II - RESTORE programme report (attended July 2012)

Y was very engaged throughout this programme and it was clear that there were a lot of thoughts and reflections going on for him in this process. On sharing his story he revealed the points of difficulties in his life. He contributed well throughout and his reflections below clearly show the impact this programme has had upon him.

Y rang his mother to say that 'out of all the things he had done in prison he had learnt so much from RESTORE and had never felt so connected like he did in this programme'. His mother said 'she had never seen him so enthused about and interested in something like this'. This participant requested to continue with the programme and be mentored.

5.2. b. CASE STUDY II - Mentoring summary (started October 2012)

I started mentoring Y from the start of the mentoring program. Y is a very intelligent young man. He admits that he got caught up in the wrong crowd and that plays a big part in how he ended up in prison.

He really engaged with me in our mentoring sessions and had no problem with sharing what was going on with him in and out of prison. He has made up his mind about not wanting to hang around with those old acquaintances anymore. He wants to do something with his life. He spoke a lot about his parents, how he used to feel because they were not together and his relationship with his mother was not there and how it makes him feel now that he is building a relationship with her. Also his relationship with his father has got stronger. He also spoke about how he has had time to accept that his parents have got their new lives away from each other.

We also spoke about how he handles situations that come up for him while in prison with officers and other prisoners. He has been a positive mentee and when he had something going on or bothering him, he would share it and we would explore the different ways he could handle it. Once we had explored them I would ask him which one is he going to take and then we would explore his answer. I believe Y has come a long way from our first mentoring session and I could honestly say, he has done all the work to get there. He is a thinker and he really enjoyed figuring it out himself with a little help from me.

While in prison he has worked hard to get qualifications that he can use to get a job once he is released. He also plans to continue our mentoring sessions once he is out and believes that it will help to keep him on the straight and narrow.

> After Y and I had a few mentoring sessions I received a message from his mother saying 'thank you for supporting Y' and stating that he had spoken to her and he said that he really liked the mentoring and believes that it will help him.

The key focus of the RESTORE mentoring programme lay on fostering a strong and trusting relationship between the mentor and his mentee. The fact that all mentors were ex-offenders proved to be highly beneficial. Relationships developed on the basis of shared experience, and both parties were able to identify with each other's strengths and struggles. This created authenticity which could be conducive to openness and honesty. The mentee was likely to feel less alone, ashamed of, or judged for the situation he was in. The key to change for someone could sometimes simply be to find a role model he could truly identify with, someone who understood what he was going through, someone who could hear the story of his offending without judgment. This could be pivotal for the success or failure of mentoring schemes. One member of staff voiced his concerns about the latest government mentoring schemes, asking 'what relationships will the guys turn to, if the person hasn't walked in their shoes and understood from their side? Then trust can be difficult' (Staff interview).

Being honest and truthful with themselves and their mentors furthered an acknowledgment of strengths and weaknesses as equal and essential parts of an integrative identity. A basis of trust was important to avoid denial and to develop achievable and realistic goals for the future. One mentor would remind his mentee, for example, that 'he will have to be strong willed, stand in his power, work hard to keep his boundaries and speak his truth' (Mentoring report).

Whereas a mentee's relationships with family members and friends possibly might have been (highly) emotionally charged and 'contaminated' by past conflicts, the relationship to his mentor could develop afresh and on neutral ground. This could increase the mentee's willingness to take recommendations on board which he might have objected to otherwise:

> 'If you're being mentored it's about trust and who can provide it…Mentoring is going back to reflection, it's empowering and supports making the right choices. I've been a mentor outside to a lad who was in here but he is stable and I only contact him occasionally. The important thing is to support decision making, unpicking the reasons why they are here, their emotions and in a non-judgmental, non-directive way'. (Staff interview)

A mentor as a 'neutral' outsider who is not affiliated with the offender's family or circle of friends was also able to provide alternative and different views on life. He could offer additional perspectives on what was possible, thus furthering self-development. Connecting to a mentor who was also involved in other follow-on schemes in the prison, allowed inmates to cross reference the resources they needed and to become involved in programmes in other areas of the prison and in the community.

Offering non-judgmental support could (re-)install self-belief and -trust in the mentee ('I have awoken something in him so that he believes he can make it' - Mentoring report). A relationship built on mutual identification and acceptance could provide real stability in an uncertain life - or as one mentor put it:

‘I think it’s important they have someone there. When you are in prison people come and go in your life, even though family are always family, you have arguments and they don’t show up. So for you to know someone is coming to see you at a certain time and you know they will be there, it’s a good thing’. (Mentoring report)

6. CONCLUSIONS

Setting out to further explore the impact and effectiveness in violence prevention and (young) offender rehabilitation, the RESTORE programme has been continuously delivered at YOI Ashfield over a prolonged period of 2 years.[22] The main aim of this modified approach was designed around embedding the values and practical work strategies of RESTORE into the fabric of the prison, the work ethic of staff, the lives of offenders and their families and communities.

One of the key strategies therefore was to look at how everyone impacting upon the lives of those in the criminal justice system understood the work RESTORE (and The Forgiveness Project) was delivering. In doing so, it became apparent that the main areas the programme directly impacted upon and was most effective in were the following:

- Providing a safe-space for participants (offenders) to openly communicate and reflect on thoughts and emotions that were often inhibited and not dealt with inside for fear of being judged negatively on their basis.

- Creating connection between participants and facilitators as well as between members of the group by telling life-stories that offered ways of identification and insight. This in turn paved the way for building empathy based on participants' realisation that everyone shares (painful) experiences and is connected in some way. Better relationships with peers, staff and family were often reported consequently.

- Promoting participants' self-awareness, self-reflection and problem-solving skills by offering alternative thought processes of mindfulness, empathy, high-level and contextual thinking (considering the bigger picture). Participants were better able to deal with conflict and reflect on consequences their actions might likely have on others.

- Encouraging accountability and agency on the side of offenders by providing effective tools and pro-active approaches to solving problems. Considering forgiveness as an alternative way of looking at themselves and people around them provided a powerful alternative in dealing with feelings of shame, blame and anger.

- Supporting participants' wishes and efforts to change by offering further guidance through the RESTORE mentoring programme or by referring offenders to other agencies, courses and activities.

- Offering awareness training to staff and facilitators provided powerful tools to potentially trigger a reflective process about the impact, meaning and ethic of their work within the establishment. Considering (and witnessing) the effect RESTORE had on offenders (opening up, being motivated to change etc), some staff expressed a wish to engage on a more meaningful level with those they work with on a daily basis. They acknowledged the need for participants to be guided through this process of change. On some occasions staff would mention a discrepancy between prison culture (promoting separation and risk-awareness) and the values of interventions like RESTORE (promoting connection and mutual trust).

[22] Compared to considerably shorter periods at other establishments.

- Improving the overall atmosphere and safety on the wings as well as staff prisoner relationships. According to staff, prisoners began to consider forgiveness as a real alternative to retaliation which led to an increased sense of understanding, empathy and consideration between prisoners, as well as between prisoners and staff.

- Impacting on the fabric of the prison brought a unity of understanding and essentially maintained the safeguard to those going through the programme.

The above outlined findings represented some of the main effects RESTORE had on everyone involved that could be witnessed on a fairly immediate level. But there were ripple- and cumulative effects of the programme that would emerge over time. These could only be fully gauged and examined on a long-term basis (follow-up research is suggested at this point). They were related to lasting change on various levels:

1. Offending behaviour, desistance and victim awareness
2. Relationships with peers and family (inside and upon release)
3. Building and sustaining a stable and crime-free future on the outside
4. Translating forgiveness into community relationships, challenging gang-related values and behaviour, e.g. retaliation, pride, blame, anger, revenge
5. Staff prisoner relationships
6. Ethics and atmosphere of the prison
7. Incorporation of RESTORE's resources into existing educational and violence prevention schemes

Considering the strong need and also the difficulties inherent in ensuring the follow-up of the above mentioned factors, it became evident that for rehabilitative programmes to be effective, they need to look at sustaining connection and meaningful relationships with participants. To do justice to the literal meaning of the term rehabilitation[23], interventions have to look at 'restoring the person back to the person they were meant to be' (Mentoring case study).

One off programmes limit the possibility of young offenders realising that there is someone who understands, who will keep coming back to them and not let them down. When trust and belief is restored that way within a person he can begin to take challenges on in life that otherwise he would not be able to sustain as he would never trust the fundamental belief someone 'cares'.

Therefore a very important realisation transpiring from this evaluation is the fact that developing a long-term mentoring scheme is vital for lasting pro-active change to be firmly implemented in participants' future. Taking part in prison-based RESTORE residencies has the potential to 'open a door' (i.e. to inspire reflective thinking that considers effective change as achievable). It is crucial as preliminary measure. Once offenders have reached their own turning point though, it is of huge importance that someone offers guidance from this point onwards. It has turned out to be key that those providing this non-judgemental support to the young men have themselves been offenders. An ex-offender will understand the paths they have walked and he will be able to provide hope and motivation that there is another way, another choice to engage with life differently.

[23] i.e. 'to **restore** to useful life, ... to **restore** to good condition ... or capacity' (Wikipedia (2013) Rehabilitation (penology) [online]. Wikimedia. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rehabilitation_(penology) [Accessed 20/03/2013]).

The part of the mentor as a role-model in this regard is that of providing an example. Individuals are invited to compare and identify themselves with him. An effective way of learning and of creating a deeper understanding is to see someone doing something one might also aspire to do. By the act of seeing, an individual is able to begin a process of thinking and reflecting upon what place this has within his own life.

During the evaluation of RESTORE's work at YOI Ashfield over the last 2 years (and beyond) its multi-faceted, powerful effects came to the fore. On the one hand, it inspired, motivated and encouraged real change inside prison (with offenders and staff). On the other hand it offered alternative ways to communities and families on the outside to communicate and deal with gang-related violence and its roots. For forgiveness to ripple into the core of prisoners, prison, prison-staff, families, communities and society, it is crucial to take further steps to support and sustain the continuation of this work.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

> I.: 'How would you like to see the Forgiveness Project in the future?'
>
> R.: 'For me this project has an amazing impact with juveniles, especially as they are still constructing beliefs of the world and you can get under that. At the age of 15-18 it's a pivotal moment in their lives when you can effect change.' (Staff interview)

Staff and prisoners clearly articulated the need for the RESTORE programme to become an essential part of the prison's work related to victim awareness and re-offending. At the same time they saw the programme as unique, independent, and able to speak for itself and stand on its own. It became clear throughout the implementation of RESTORE at YOI Ashfield that the programme's potential could be used more comprehensively. Therefore we would like to suggest the following recommendations regarding RESTORE's future development:

- To share (research) findings with other YO prisons and develop RESTORE programmes going into other prisons.
- To disseminate the impact this programme has had upon young offenders as widely as possible and engage in dialogue with other providers on how this work can impact upon their own organisations, staff and young people.
- To research further the role for the 'teacher's resource' within the prison environment and create a modular resource for YO education departments to implement within curricular delivery.
- To develop a programme of RESTORE working closely with families of those YO who are being mentored long term.
- To engage the mentees within a community programme of mentoring supported by The Forgiveness Project and offer training for young offenders to become mentors to others in prison.
- To establish training for ex-offenders and gang members to become facilitators of RESTORE within their community. There is a need for community leaders to emerge who have been in prison and returned to the place of their home. This is important to illustrate that a positive return to the community and making a difference is possible.
- To engage further with faith based mentors and look at shared thinking and practice.
- To look at how training for resident staff (wing staff) can be greater impacted upon.

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