Transformative justice, women with convictions and uniting communities

Prof Tirion Havard, Dr Sarah Bartley, Dr Ian Mahoney,
Dr Chris Magill, Prof Chris Flood

EST 1892 LSBU
ROYAL CENTRAL SCHOOL OF SPEECH & DRAMA UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
NTU Nottingham Trent University
University of Brighton

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4. Glossary of Terms

CJS	criminal justice system
CLS	Community Life Survey – a key evidence source used by the UK Government to understand community engagement, volunteering and social cohesion.
CSRI	Client Service Receipt Inventory – a survey used by economists to help understand the wider societal resources that individuals use and engage with, such as health and social care and contact with the criminal justice system.
FG	focus group
FOS	Female Offender Strategy for England and Wales
HJC	Hopeful Justice Collective – the self-applied name of the community participants in the workshops.
HMPPS	HM Prison and Probation Service
HMSO	HM Stationery Office
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
ONS	Office for National Statistics
P1	Phase 1
P2	Phase 2
RAR	Rehabilitation Activity Requirements – stipulations that can be included in a community or suspended sentence order.
SoT	Stoke-on-Trent
SCCJR	The Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research
SWA	Staffordshire Women's Aid
TJ	transformative justice
WSP	workshop
WwC	women with convictions and/or other lived experience of contact with the CJS

5. Executive Summary

5.1. Introduction

This research was funded by the Nuffield Foundation and the British Academy, as part of their Understanding Communities programme. The research involved collaboration between four higher-education institutions, namely London South Bank University, The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, Nottingham Trent University and the University of Brighton. Partnerships were also formed with local and national organisations, including Clean Break Theatre Company, Restoke and Staffordshire Women's Aid.

The research focused on two communities: women with convictions (WwC) in Staffordshire and residents of Stoke-on-Trent. It used a mixed-methodological approach that involved designing and delivering an arts-based transformative justice (TJ) intervention, undertaking ethnographic observations, running focus groups and conducting interviews with TJ experts.

The overarching aims of this project were to see:

- if TJ can effectively facilitate social cohesion and promote equality within local communities (for the purposes of this research, 'equality' is appraised by exploring strengths, assets, attributes, connectedness, enhanced individual welfare and social well-being);
- if TJ can effectively support WwC to reintegrate and resettle into their local communities.

To achieve these aims, we set out to explore and meet the following objectives:

i. Identify the needs of and barriers faced by WwC when they try to resettle/reintegrate into their local community.
ii. Identify and activate the strengths, assets and attributes that local communities can bring to the reintegration and engagement of WwC.
iii. Determine the suitability of an arts-based approach to TJ for improving community cohesion.
iv. Establish whether TJ can support the reintegration of WwC into their local community by making them feel stronger, more equal and more connected, and assess the broader impact this has on community cohesion.
v. Establish whether TJ can enhance individual welfare and social well-being for both WwC and local residents and measure the cost-effectiveness of the approach.
vi. Inform policy and practice about the needs of WwC and how best to meet them through community-led interventions.
vii. Contribute to the literature and knowledge base about using TJ to engage and integrate communities within a UK context.
viii. Promote the personal and professional development of all those involved in the project.

As a conceptual framework, TJ focuses on overcoming ingrained social and structural barriers to engagement and justice issues including the social, political and economic status of communities and the individuals within them. In focusing on community accountability for crime, victimisation and subsequent support for victims and people convicted of offences, TJ recognises that patriarchal social structures can legitimise violence, particularly towards women, and that the state, in this case the criminal justice system (CJS), perpetuates cycles of abuse and (re) traumatises people. TJ is vital for understanding and exploring societal attitudes to justice, and to engage with difficult conversations around the role that communities can play in addressing the harms associated with the actions of people within them.

5.2. Methodology

The research began by holding focus groups with women with lived experience of the CJS, namely survivors of domestic abuse who had sought justice (n = 11) and a prison-based focus group with women who had received custodial sentences (n = 12). Interviews were also held with TJ professionals from across the world (n = 6). These data were analysed using thematic analysis and used to inform arts-based workshops.

Creative workshops were delivered in two phases in partnership with Restoke, a Stoke-on-Trent-based creative arts organisation that produces performances, plans events and runs workshops enabling friendships, understanding and solidarity in the city (see Section 2.2.2). Phase 1 consisted of seven workshops that focused on community members with an interest in reimagining what justice could look like in Stoke-on-Trent. This phase culminated in the group establishing themselves as the Hopeful Justice Collective (HJC) and presenting a sound installation that captured some of the stories, ideas and creative work in which the group had been involved.

The original intention was to integrate WwC into Phase 2 of the project, which would consist of a further eight arts-based workshops aimed at developing community conversations around justice and building stronger relationships among and between those who had convictions and those who did not. Concerted efforts were made by the research team to proactively reach out across Stoke-on-Trent and visit community projects having contact with women involved in or at risk of involvement in the CJS. We also offered a 'taster' workshop and a women-only workshop to try and build engagement. However, recruitment proved difficult. Across the taster workshop, women-only workshop and the sessions at Fenton Town Hall, we worked with 13 women who had convictions; however, the engagement in the project of all but two of these women was limited to one or two sessions. We address this further below.

5.3. Findings

Through our focus groups, we heard how **opportunities to support women involved in the CJS had been missed.** For example, poor communication between agencies had resulted in men with injunctions against their former partners being housed nearby; the feelings of powerlessness this evoked led many women to seek retaliation, thereby perpetuating the cycle of violence and harm (punishment). Because of their shared experiences, women in both focus groups showed empathy and understanding towards each other, and this served to create a sense of solidarity and a desire to give and receive mutual support.

Our research indicates that **TJ does have the potential to facilitate social cohesion and promote equality within local communities;** among our workshop participants, it was also found to promote greater understanding of the wider social causes of criminalisation and reflection on the accountability of the wider community. Given the limited number of WwC who participated in the project, we are unable to confirm that TJ effectively supports them to reintegrate and resettle into their local communities; however, we are confident that there is a role for communities in supporting WwC as part of wider strategies.

Engaging, hearing and responding to the voices of those with lived experience was fundamental in this research. Women with lived experience as victims of crime (including domestic abuse), with criminal convictions, or both felt let down by the CJS, reporting that their voices were unheard and their experiences were dismissed. These shared frustrations were exacerbated by what they perceived to be a sexist system that treats men and women differently based on gendered expectations. Workshop activities with the HJC identified the stigmatisation and stereotyping of those involved in offending. Rather than working to address crime, participants expressed the view

that these attitudes make it more difficult for people to change their behaviour and exit negative peer groups and/or situations.

While there remains a strong sense of identity and pride within the city of Stoke-on-Trent, **common experiences of adversity, most notably trauma and loss, emerged as a key theme from our workshops.** These shared challenges appear to help galvanise communities. We used the term 'brave spaces' (Arao & Clemens, 2013) to acknowledge participants' strength and courage in entering an unknown space and being willing to share their stories and vulnerabilities with unknown others.

Locally rooted arts approaches enabled our workshop participants to explore justice issues collectively and in depth, giving space for the emergence of a range of different views, experiences and questions. **We identified four valuable contributions of deploying creative approaches:**

Engaging communities through creative workshops offered people **an artistic language for personal experiences with justice (both within the CJS and beyond it to wider experiences of fairness and equality)**, enabling people to express, acknowledge and understand encounters with harm that are present within their local areas.

We used arts practice to enable people to **imagine, experiment and rehearse alternatives to the state-sanctioned CJS**, both on an everyday level (e.g. practising accountability in their own relationships) and at a structural level (reimagining systemic responses to violence).

By using **a multi-artform approach (creative writing, performance, visual art, sound) we required people to interrogate ideas through different forms of expression**, which necessitated a layered evaluation of one's own position. For example, engagement with the idea of accountability will necessarily be different in a written poem, an embodied movement piece and a visual collage.

Examining and sharing our experiences of justice can be challenging; **creative practice offers a space for dissensus and different positions on justice**. Divergent views can be collectively explored in accessible, less exposing and more expansive ways. More resources – in the form of training and sustainable financial support – are needed to leverage the valuable contributions community arts organisations can make to building the capacity of communities to engage with questions of justice, accountability and harm.

We found **a desire from communities for spaces to discuss and reflect on justice collectively**, with participants noting that the HJC was, in their experience, a rare dedicated opportunity to work through issues related to harm and accountability.

Attitudes to justice within the HJC were diverse and appeared on a spectrum. Some participants believed in the idea of being 'tough on crime', while others were committed to an abolitionist perspective and ethos.[1] Despite the significant variation in attitudes, community members were united by an underlying desire to change the system, improve opportunities for rehabilitation, reintegration and resettlement, and to reduce the stigma of criminalisation. One of the big challenges for TJ projects is the need to overcome an ingrained reliance upon statutory groups and organisations to intervene and provide support.

Time was also a central theme in the discussions, including the necessity of allowing time to bring about change. 'Quick fix' approaches to community involvement and problem-solving often do not allow sufficient time for people to develop bonds and create the sense of community required to make meaningful change.

A shared sense of history can be a powerful tool for helping to build empathy and belonging; it provides a 'safe' focus for participants' conversations, in which they share aspects of their geographical and social identities, e.g. memories of the area and bygone times. A shared communal space for people to meet is also an important factor in enabling and empowering them to bond and develop community cohesion. The provision of community meeting places is currently in sharp decline, and **there needs to be greater recognition of the important role of hubs and communal spaces within communities.** The transfer of such meeting places as assets to communities opens up opportunities, particularly in low-income areas, for them to develop their own facilities, uses and

programmes of activities within such spaces, providing capacity for enhanced self-efficacy. The intention of the research team was to gradually hand over leadership roles to HJC participants so that the workshops would continue beyond the scope of the research. We had hoped that the trust that was building within the community and the location of the work on their own doorstep would ease the transition of ownership; however, as the end of the project neared, we saw that workshop participants had limited willingness to take on leadership roles. The reasons for this appeared to be a lack of confidence in their leadership skills combined with feeling overburdened with other life/work commitments. **It is important to recognise that taking on a community leadership role entails a significant commitment, and this may be too much for many people and pose a barrier to future engagement.** At the end of the research, participants agreed to share their mobile numbers with a view to setting up a WhatsApp group. Beyond this, it was unclear how – or indeed if – the project would continue in any form.

5.4. Cost-effectiveness

HJC members were asked to complete two online surveys, one prior to the start of the workshops and one after project completion. While caution is required due to small numbers of participant and limited comparability between the two samples, there was some evidence of reduced use of healthcare resources and reduced contact with the CJS at follow-up. This, combined with the relatively low cost per participant of the intervention and further evidence from the surveys of benefits related to community engagement and cohesion, suggests that similar approaches are likely to represent good value for money.

5.5. Recommendations

5.5.1. For policymakers

Recommendation: Community responses have been identified as the most effective way to address the causes of offending by women (Corston, 2007; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2021), and these require physical communal spaces for meeting. We recommend that these sites be supported through local and national infrastructure schemes, including community asset transfer, to enable strong, cohesive communities to form and reform.

Recommendation: Lived experience of trauma, crime and harm is embedded throughout communities. It is important to engage sensitively with the voices of communities, especially those with lived experience of hardship and exclusion, as part of the policy-development process, to ensure that policy reflects the realities of people's lives.

Recommendation: Locally rooted arts organisations are particularly well placed to facilitate spaces for communities to come together and creatively explore justice/harm in complex and process-focused ways. There is a need for increased resourcing and recognition from local and national government to allow arts organisations to undertake this nuanced work around justice in our communities.

Recommendation: When building community groups, it is important to engage with relevant existing groups and embedded organisations to build on their (local) knowledge and skills.

Recommendation: When setting up a community group comprising members of the wider local community, there need to be clear leaders; these may be volunteers or paid staff, but sufficient funding for resources needs to be allocated to support anyone who takes on coordination and administrative roles, including the interpersonal and organisational work of facilitating a group. Support should also be provided to build capacity

within communities for members to develop the skills to take on these key roles.

Recommendation: While communities play important roles in (re)integration, (re)settlement and (re)habilitation, their capacity is limited, and community provision for WwC is inconsistent, limiting their ability to seek support to address their needs and prevent further offending (Ministry of Justice [MoJ], 2018a). We echo Hall et al. (2018) in calling for the state to maintain support for people exiting the CJS rather than withdrawing and leaving communities to fill a void in service provision.

Recommendation: TJ and community building are slow, and change takes time. The true impacts of this project are unlikely to be realised until long after the research element has ended. While we recognise how integral feedback on progress, demonstrating impact and value for money, are to all funding, we recommend that policy changes should include extending timescales to better understand the impact of long-term projects and research, particularly those focused on creating and building communities.

Recommendation: There needs to be a clear communication system/pathway between agencies when women (and men) are involved in the CJS. Decisions made because of criminal behaviour must be adhered to by all organisations to increase the safety of victims of crime, reduce the likelihood of further offending and help restore faith in the CJS. The need to address the latter has been identified by the UK Government (HM Government, 2021).

Recommendation: In line with The Corston Report (Corston, 2007) and current MoJ priorities, we recommend a rapid reduction in the use of prison sentences for women. Our findings support the idea that these sentences are frequently harmful and compound the vulnerability of an already at-risk group. Existing policy recognises that many women could be more effectively supported in their communities (MoJ 2018a, 2018b, 2023b), through innovative 'residential women's centres' rather than prisons. The fact that Corston's recommendations have not been fully implemented 17 years after their publication means that these changes need to be expedited within the new parliament.

Recommendation: We echo Rogers et al.'s (2022) recommendation for a mapping exercise to establish and evaluate the extent to which trauma-informed approaches have been implemented, both within the prison estate and in relation to community sentences.

Recommendation: Women-only spaces are important, especially to those who have experienced abuse or exploitation from men; however, men are present as members of any community, and it is important to empower women to live in mixed communities for meaningful resettlement and (re)integration to occur. We recommend that policies and projects focused on the transition from women-only spaces into society include a stage during which women are invited into a trauma-informed mixed-gender brave community space. These distinct phases would prepare vulnerable women for reintegration into wider communities at a pace suitable to them. To achieve this, trauma-informed mixed-gender community spaces need to be created and resourced.

5.5.2. For community practitioners/researchers

Recommendation: Our findings indicate that TJ can offer opportunities to promote understanding of social issues, including offending; it should therefore be considered as an underpinning theory for future interventions that address sensitive issues and seek to promote equality and social cohesion.

Recommendation: Projects that aim to integrate vulnerable communities must spend time considering and overcoming the hidden and visible barriers to integration and ensuring that the space feels safe and brave for them. Reflecting on our experiences on this project, we recommend that when different groups are to be integrated, significant time is first spent supporting and preparing each group separately.

Recommendation: Arts organisations working in criminal justice contexts should explore new models that bring together people with lived experience of justice and community members without direct experience to address local justice issues and expand their provision.

Recommendation: When building or integrating community groups, it is important to focus on shared experience from the start and revisit it at pertinent moments (e.g. when new members join).

Recommendation: Further research is required to understand the extent and impact of trauma within communities.

Recommendation: Those leading community groups should always assume that their members have experienced trauma. This is consistent with TJ, which states that we have all experienced harm. Adopting a trauma-informed approach will reduce the risk of reproducing harm and help to create brave spaces from the start. Recognising shared or resonant traumatic experiences can also help to build strong relationships within and across communities.

Recommendation: Those building community groups may be reticent to share individuals' contact information. We recommend – with members' permission – facilitating a sharing of contact details to enable groups to be in regular communication outside and beyond the framework of organised sessions.

Recommendation: Further research is required to understand the needs of WwC as they try to (re) integrate into communities following contact with the CJS, and the role that TJ and other forms of community participation might play in supporting them to do this.

Recommendation: TJ advocates are encouraged to explore the utility and unique possibilities of using a multi-arts model when exploring harm and accountability in their work with communities.

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Questions of Justice

Composed by the Hopeful Justice Collective

Have you ever questioned the criminal justice system?
What do people think justice looks like?
Do you think it's fair? Do you think the system is fair?
Can we agree somehow address the crime of poverty?
Who would be the person responsible, who would decide on remodelling the law?
What's the difference between justice and punishment?
What experience have you got of crime and justice?
Is the criminal justice system outdated?
Do you feel more safe with armed police around?
If we defunded the police or abolished prison, where would we like the money to be spent?
Do we need to defund and eliminate the police?
Or do we just need to change their remit in what they are actually there for?
Do we feel that our police are worse than most Western European police forces?
Who does the justice work system work for and when?
What is your earliest experience of justice?
Have you ever experienced injustice?
Can we object to the grotesque numbers of people in prison inappropriately?
What can we do?
Rather than saying we need state interventions, what can we do to empower ourselves and empower other people in the community?
Has anyone in this room committed a crime?
Which country in the world then has a system which you think is much improved on ours?
Are you prepared to lose some of your privilege to support somebody else, to gain access to a more just world?
What can we do to change attitudes towards and build support for people who have done something that offends or upsets our sensibilities, not just us as individuals, but as a society?
Have you ever a questioned the criminal justice system?

7. Introduction

This research is one of six projects funded by the Nuffield Foundation in collaboration with the British Academy as part of their Understanding Communities programme, which aims to explore how local communities function and can improve people's lives. With a focus on producing tangible, evidence-based policy and practice recommendations, this research aimed to establish the effectiveness of transformative justice (TJ) in creating social cohesion between two distinct yet inter-related communities: women with convictions (WwC) in Staffordshire and residents of Stoke-on-Trent (SoT). Taking a mixed-methodological approach, the research examined whether an arts-based TJ approach could support increased cohesion within and between these two communities.

Community cohesion has been identified as a strategic priority area within SoT, with two key priority areas mapping directly onto our own project aims. These are:

Priority 1: creating more safe space opportunities; and

Priority 4: developing a shared sense of belonging (Stoke-on-Trent City Council, 2020a).

A TJ approach was chosen due to its stance that criminal justice agencies fail to advance justice and therefore perpetuate cycles of abuse, suffering and harm. Instead, TJ seeks to develop community accountability and engagement to challenge unequal and intersecting power relationships, and it promotes a bottom-up understanding of the lives and needs of populations (Gready & Robins, 2019; Worldwide Universities Network, 2021).

In focusing on community accountability, TJ centres discussions around crime, harm and justice, requiring diverse communities to come together and consider the most appropriate course of action for the whole of the community. We view this as vital at a time when local involvement in justice is declining for many communities, e.g. due to the closure of magistrates' courts (including the one in Fenton Town Hall, where our community workshops were based).

7.1. Language

Language is powerful, particularly within crime and justice contexts. Stigmatising labels, such as 'criminal', 'prisoner' and 'offender', are frequently used within general conversation and can be particularly damaging to a person's well-being (Blagden et al., 2014; Winder et al., 2021). The hurt caused by derogatory terms is replicated by others throughout society (Winder et al., 2021) and has become embedded in policy and practice debates and heavily politicised in a populist landscape (Mahoney et al., 2022). Thus, this symbolic violence can sustain and nurture inequalities and acts as a barrier to empathy and understanding (ibid.). This remains evident in the experiences of women who have had contact with the CJS, as they are subject to doubly discriminating stigmatising portrayals (Havard et al., 2023). In recognition of this, in the context of the research presented here, we have deliberately chosen to identify women who have come into contact with the CJS as 'women with convictions' (WwC). This terminology prioritises their identity as women, placing emphasis on the impact of the conviction rather than focusing on criminalisation first, as terms like 'criminalised women' do. The abbreviation WwC is therefore used throughout this report.

Similarly, we were mindful that almost one in three women who have been in a relationship have experienced abuse from a partner (World Health Organization, 2017), and the language used can also influence how they are perceived. For example, the term 'victim' implies that women are passive, naïve and potentially irresponsible (Meyer, 2012); it overlooks the possibility that women might be strong and resourceful, and able to actively respond to adversity in ways that are designed to minimise the harm to themselves and relevant others (Cavanagh, 2003; Zosky, 2011). Conversely, the term 'survivor' adopts a 'depathologising' (Zosky, 2011, p. 202) approach and helps reconstruct an image in which women are seen as strong and psychologically

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stable (Hayes, 2013; Neustifter & Powell, 2015; Papendick & Bohner, 2017). We therefore use 'survivor' in this report.

In line with principles embedded within social-justice discourse (Vera & Speight, 2003), we have actively worked with our community members to reflect on issues related to power, including the importance of language, how we can take small steps towards meaningful change in our own lives and how we can support those within our wider communities. To this end, we have prioritised treating everyone as an individual, for example, by addressing them with their chosen pronouns. Such actions seek to avoid 'othering' people around us, which frequently acts as a barrier to desistance efforts and the (re)integration, (re) settlement and (re)habilitation of people with lived experience of crime and justice (Teague, 2024). Instead, we have sought to promote inclusion, respect and belonging, which are key components of any community (Teague, 2024). This approach also extended into our community group, with members choosing to identify themselves as the Hopeful Justice Collective (HJC).

7.2. Research aims and objectives

The overarching aims of this project were to see:

- if TJ can effectively facilitate social cohesion and promote equality within local communities (for the purposes of this research, 'equality' is appraised by exploring strengths, assets, attributes, connectedness, enhanced individual welfare and social well-being);
- if TJ can effectively support WwC to reintegrate and resettle into their local communities.

To achieve these aims, we set out to explore and meet the following objectives:

i. Identify the needs of and barriers faced by WwC when they try to resettle/reintegrate into their local community.
ii. Identify and activate the strengths, assets and attributes that local communities can bring to the reintegration and engagement of WwC.
iii. Determine the suitability of an arts-based approach to TJ for improving community cohesion.
iv. Establish whether TJ can support the reintegration of WwC into their local community by making them feel stronger, more equal and more connected, and assess the broader impact this has on community cohesion.
v. Establish whether TJ can enhance individual welfare and social well-being for both WwC and local residents and measure the cost-effectiveness of the approach.
vi. Inform policy and practice about the needs of WwC and how best to meet them through community-led interventions.
vii. Contribute to the literature and knowledge base about using TJ to engage and integrate communities within a UK context.
viii. Promote the personal and professional development of all those involved in the project.

7.2.1. Transformative Justice

Justice in England and Wales has historically been centred in communities. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, magistrates were recruited from the local populace to arbitrate on cases from their own localities, with juries chosen from the electoral roll to enable communities to exercise engagement with the justice system and hold members of the community to account. More recently, community involvement in justice has been in significant decline, with over half of magistrates' courts closing in England and Wales since 2010 (The Law Society, 2024a). Over and above this decline in community engagement with justice, one of the key critiques posited through TJ is that the state – in this case the CJS – fails to advance individual and collective justice, instead perpetuating cycles of abuse and (re)traumatising people (Transform Harm, 2018). Moreover, the CJS in England and Wales frequently fails to support the (re)habilitation, (re)settlement and (re) integration of people with criminal convictions (Mahoney & Chowdhury, 2024).

As a conceptual framework, TJ focuses on overcoming ingrained social and structural barriers to engagement and justice issues, including the social, political and economic status of communities and of the individuals within them (Gready & Robins, 2019); it recognises that patriarchal social structures can legitimise violence, particularly towards women (Ní Aoláin, 2019; Kodikara, 2019; LaVarco, 2023). As will be outlined in Section 1.3.1, women may experience secondary victimisation through revisiting experiences of harm, violence or abuse, or through stigmatisation as a result of breaking the law and not conforming to gender roles – and these effects may be further compounded for women from a minoritised ethnicity (Crenshaw, 1991).

TJ seeks to fill a void in other justice models, which have historically focused on macro-level policy changes and failed to address the community-level impacts of physical, structural, symbolic and sexual violence (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015). Believing that individual justice and collective liberation are equally important and fundamentally intertwined, TJ seeks to develop community accountability and engagement to challenge unequal and intersecting power relationships. TJ speaks to calls for justice to take a participatory approach (Lundy & McGovern, 2008), promoting a bottom-up understanding of the lives and needs of populations through engaging the voices of those who are traditionally oppressed (Gready & Robins, 2019; Rhot-Arriaza, 2019; Worldwide Universities Network, 2021). Across the literature, it is apparent that TJ is important for generating change (Cahill-Ripley & Graham, 2021), developing genuine participation in democratic structures and decision-making processes (Waisbich & Coelho, 2019; Brown, 2020), and offering up space for healing and reparation of harm (Reading, 2019). TJ looks to understand the processes of change rather than the outcomes (Gready, 2019; Gready & Robins, 2019; Waldorf, 2019) and it "can be applied anywhere and at any time to address concerns, such as structural and everyday violence." (Gready, 2019, p. 2).

TJ is vital for understanding and exploring societal attitudes to justice and for engaging with difficult conversations around the role that communities can play in addressing the harms associated with the actions of people within them. To achieve this, TJ programmes typically occur outside the remit of the state; by cultivating accountability, healing, resilience and safety for all, they have been successful in transforming the conditions that enable harm (Transform Harm, 2018). TJ has provided the foundations for Poverty Truth Commissions, which seek to enfranchise people who are directly impacted by poverty by engaging them in decision-making processes (Cahill-Ripley & Graham, 2021, Poverty Truth Network, n.d.).

Our interviews with TJ practitioners underscored the importance of an expanded understanding of accountability within justice processes and highlighted the need for communities to take on a role within these processes. While the current CJS foregrounds a punitive response to harm that holds an individual accountable, one practitioner noted that in a TJ model:

> "There is accountability, but some of that is about building self-accountability and mutual accountability rather than a constant othering of people, which often feels as if it's accountability but in fact is about blaming others rather than dealing with the issue." (TJ expert interviewee 1)

7.2.2. Arts Approach

This project has designed and delivered an arts-based TJ intervention with communities in SoT. The arts are distinctive in their capacity for enabling us to think, feel and communicate in different ways, promoting deep engagement and new perspectives. Creativity enables people to unfix themselves from existing narratives about the justice system and so offers significant potential for delivering TJ interventions. There is an existing body of scholarship (for example Applied Theatre, Community Arts, Socially Engaged Arts scholarship) that underscores the power of creative practice in community building, conflict resolution and developing stronger interpersonal relationships. We do not seek to rehearse the significant discussions of arts practice and community within those fields here, but rather to affirm the potential of creative practice specifically within TJ processes.

Locally rooted arts practices offer capacity for communities to experiment with ideas through non-hierarchical modes of making and creating, generating spaces for groups to re-envision our collective future together (Bartley, 2022). In line with the bottom-up approaches of TJ, we have used a community arts approach to foreground a deep participatory process that seeks to produce democratic space, co-ownership, agency, self-organisation and collective action (Afolabi, 2017; Bartley, 2021). Further, in a period during which communities are increasingly distanced from justice processes, arts practices have consistently been recognised as an important strategy to amplify communities voicing their ideas and experiences to new and different audiences (Busby, 2022). Beyond this, such work has the capacity to illuminate the politics and systems that govern who gets to speak and how their voices are valued (Freebody & Goodwin, 2018; McAvinchey, 2020; Walsh & Burnett, 2021). The capacity of arts practice to foster spaces of collective reimagining, amplify community voices and facilitate rich participatory processes positions this approach as a powerful tool for exploring TJ, both in research and practice.

Using arts-based strategies is a "transdisciplinary approach to knowledge building that combines the tenets of the creative arts in research contexts" (Leavy, 2018, p. 4). Our work has deployed arts practice to generate new insights, to explore and problem solve, to forge relationships between the micro and macro levels, to provoke critical consciousness and challenge dominant ideologies and practices, to create non-hierarchical spaces, and to co-produce knowledge (Leavy, 2018). Central to our approach was a collaborative workshop practice that promoted co-production and collective exploration of justice. Using an arts-based research processes means that "what counts as knowledge is opened up, and the relationship between 'knowledge' and 'sociality' is more clearly foregrounded." (Graham et al., 2015, p. 406). In using creative processes throughout, we put non-hierarchical and collaborative forms of knowledge production at the centre of this project.

7.3. Political Context

The CJS in the UK is in crisis. With huge backlogs in the court system, it is failing victims and defendants alike (The Law Society, 2024b). In 2023, the prison population was greater than it has ever been (Ministry of Justice [MoJ], 2023a), with the MoJ anticipating a longer-term increase by March 2027 (Beard, 2023). The overuse of custody for petty offences, longer periods in jail and a decline in community sentencing have all contributed to this increase (Prison Reform Trust, 2022).

Corresponding increasing levels of violence, self-harm and suicide across the prison estate (Ismail, 2020) and poor access to healthcare (McFadzean et al., 2023) led Charlie Taylor, the Chief Inspector of Prisons, to express his concern about "more deprivation, squalor and the risk of further violence" (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2021). In the year 2022/2023, urgent notifications had been issued for six adult prisons (MoJ, 2023b). In addition, the number of prisoners completing rehabilitation programmes in England and Wales has fallen by 74% since 2010 (Syal, 2024).

The relevance of this research to local and national policy is clear. There has long been a drive to reduce reoffending and the prison population, along with a desire to address the challenges of resettlement, reintegration and rehabilitation for those who have come into contact with the CJS (MoJ, 2021a). These are reflected in the MoJ's Areas of Research Interest (ARIs), particularly ARI 6, which aims to engage wider and more holistic ways to understand reoffending and improve life chances through deepening understanding of the needs of individuals (MoJ, 2020). There are several innovative approaches to supporting the development of desistant lifestyles and meaningful reductions in reoffending, including through effective resettlement, rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives, many of which focus on the need for greater involvement of communities as part of the rehabilitation, resettlement and reintegration processes (Mahoney & Chowdhury, 2024). Our project, incorporating an arts-based TJ approach, builds on this wider evidence base.

7.3.1. Women in the CJS

It is widely recognised that conditions are worse in the female estate due, at least in part, to a double-standard patriarchal system in which women are judged more harshly than men (Prison Reform Trust, 2022; Weinburg, 2023). Indeed, women have long been marginalised in a system designed by men, for men (Corston, 2009), spurring an urgent need to address their (re)integration into their local communities. Black women have the highest rate of custodial sentences (Home Office, 2020) and at the outset of this project, the team anticipated hearing intersectional experiences of discrimination, diversity, disadvantage and inequalities (Crenshaw, 1991), something that we return to in Section 3.4.2. WwC have complex needs that differ to those of men (National Health Service, 2023), and existing criminal justice strategies largely fail to address the root causes of female offending or the needs of women, especially those with convictions. The MoJ (2018a) identified women in prison in England and Wales as being more likely to have: experienced trauma throughout their lifetime; experienced physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse as children; been accommodated through state or public care arrangements as children; and witnessed violence in the home. It is, therefore, unsurprising that WwC have particularly high rates of interpersonal trauma (Karatzias et al., 2018).

It is estimated that between 70% and 90% of women in the prison estate have experienced domestic abuse (Radatz & Wright, 2017). Women's imprisonment can result from being forced by an abusive partner to either participate in an offence or to take responsibility for an offence that the abusive partner has committed (Jones, 2020); for example, women's property crime, drug offending and commercial sex work is often related to domestic abuse (DeHart et al., 2014). They may also engage in violent behaviour as a means of self-defence (Jones, 2020). Mental health has also been cited as a driving force behind women's criminalisation. For example, section 135/6 of the Mental Health Act 1983 allows for a person to be referred to prison as a "place of safety", and there is a documented case in which a woman with significant mental health needs was incarcerated because of a lack of medication and insufficient mental health provision in the community (Independent Monitoring Board, 2023; Epstein, 2023). Women are also particularly at risk of being imprisoned for their "own protection" under the Bail Act 1976, even when they have not been convicted of an offence (Howard League for Penal Reform, 2020). Despite constituting only 4% of the prison population (Prison Reform Trust, 2022), there has been a 38% increase in the number of deaths (HM Prison and Probation Service, 2024) and a 37% increase in self-harm incidents in the female estate (Howard League for Penal Reform, 2020; MoJ, 2021b). The latter account for 29% of all recorded self-harm incidents, which are currently at their highest level since records began (Howard League for Penal Reform, 2023; Prison Reform Trust, 2022).

In her seminal report, Baroness Corston (2009, p. 5) called for:

> "a radical change in the way we treat women throughout the whole of the criminal justice system, and this must

include not just those who offend but also those at risk of offending. This will require a radical new approach, treating women both holistically and individually."

The Corston Report, which reviewed the needs and experiences of vulnerable women in the CJS, found that "there are many women in prison, either on remand or serving sentences for minor, non-violent offences, for whom prison is both disproportionate and inappropriate" (Corston, 2007, p. i), and subsequent reports have indicated that at least 60% of women in prison in England and Wales have experienced domestic violence and abuse (MoJ, 2018a). Despite the time that has elapsed since The Corston Report, the overarching learning from this research is that there remains a need for radical change across the CJS. Policing, sentencing, imprisonment and the services available to WwC must recognise that the needs of women are different from those of men. Approaches and responses to (alleged) criminality should be designed to respond to the individual and collective needs of women. TJ's departure from traditional forms of intervention speaks directly to these ideas, which we unpack throughout this report.

In response to these challenges and calls for change, the Female Offender Strategy (FOS) for England and Wales (MoJ, 2018b) outlines the UK Government's agenda for working with women in contact with the CJS across England and Wales. Although the strategy has largely been welcomed – particularly for its focus on reducing the use of custody for women and improved use of community solutions – multiple limitations have been highlighted (Women in Prison, 2018). These include a lack of concrete proposals to respond to the multiple and complex needs of women and a lack of meaningful investment, which is essential to affect real and lasting change.

The small number of women's prisons and their geographical locations mean that women are consistently incarcerated far from home, making resettlement and maintaining family ties difficult (Corston, 2007; MoJ, 2018a),

A reduction in the use of incarceration would have a special impact on women convicted of crimes. The Farmer Review for Women (Farmer, 2019), commissioned as part of the FOS, highlighted the ongoing challenges for mothers in prison and recognised that strengthening female prisoners' family relationships, particularly with their children, was key to supporting better outcomes. Such relationships were framed by Lord Farmer as a "rehabilitation asset". Indeed, family and friends play a crucial role in supporting the reintegration and resettlement of people with convictions (Mahoney & Chowdhury, 2024). More recently, the Sentencing Council (2023) called for a consultation relating to community and custodial sentences for women, and subsequent guidelines identified pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal care as mitigating factors in sentencing (Sentencing Council, 2024).

Community responses have been identified as the most effective approach to addressing the causes of offending by women (Corston, 2007; HMIP, 2021), yet community provision for WwC is currently inconsistent, limiting their ability to seek support to address their needs and prevent further offending (MoJ, 2018b). The need to develop effective (and cost-effective) forms of community support for WwC was a key motivator for the project described in this report.

7.3.2. Local Context

SoT is made up of six towns in the Midlands that together form a single city; it is notorious for the decline of its once world-famous pottery industry (Mahoney, 2015; Mahoney & Kearon, 2017, 2018; Etherington et al., 2022). With a population of 258,400 (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2022a), SoT has seen a reduction in opportunities and has "almost become shorthand for a post-industrial Brexit-voting white working-class city with no future" (Pile, 2023, p. 149). Despite having a strong spiritualist tradition (Pile, 2023), regularly featuring on TV as part of The Great Pottery Throwdown and having a burgeoning arts and creative scene embedded across the city, it has been hard for SoT to shake off its image as a city lacking work, culture and a future. Indeed, the fact that SoT is still referred to as 'The Potteries' (used affectionately throughout the project by the

research team) highlights a melancholic longing for that which is no longer there (Pile, 2023).

Believed to be one of the hardest-hit localities following the 2008/2009 financial crash and subsequent recession (Larkin, 2010), SoT has significant and ongoing challenges with deprivation and lack of opportunities. These challenges manifest both in its struggles to reinvent itself as a vibrant city, and in a variety of challenges for its population. The city is the 12th most deprived local authority in the country, with low levels of income and educational achievement and high levels of geographical immobility (ONS, 2019). While the national population grew by 6.6% on average between the 2011 and 2021 census dates, SoT grew by just 3.8%, seeing it move from being the 63rd to the 69th largest local authority in England over this period (ONS, 2022a). This reinforces the idea that SoT is being 'left behind', struggling to attract and keep skills and talent despite two large student populations living in and around the city and attending Staffordshire and Keele universities (Mahoney, 2015).

Like other conurbations in England's industrial heartlands, there are high levels of income deprivation in SoT (ONS, 2021). The population's life expectancy is three years short of the national average (Public Health England, 2019); this is due in part to the city's industrial legacies and the health impacts of working in heavy industry (ONS, 2023). There are low rates of literacy and level 3 (i.e. A-level or equivalent) or above educational attainment, reinforcing a sense of impoverishment (ONS, 2023), and high proportions of children grow up in relative poverty (Child Poverty Action Group, 2023). The city's overall employment rate of 73.8% is also below the national average, which sits at 76.9% (ONS, 2021).

Despite poor resources, there remains a strong sense of identity and pride within the city, as documented throughout our findings. Historical academic neglect and a general lack of interest in theoretical observation of the city (Edensor, 2000; Pile, 2023) made SoT the ideal location for this research project. Moreover, the fact that two women's prisons, HMP Drake Hall and HMP Foston Hall, are both within 30 miles of SoT, while HMP Styal is approximately 40 miles away, made it an appealing location, given the policy focus on keeping women in prison closer to home. The area has also prioritised the need to reduce reoffending among women, including through providing greater support for women on probation (Staffordshire PCC, 2015; Stoke-on-Trent City Council, 2020b), and it has a strategic focus upon building community cohesion (Stoke-on-Trent City Council, 2020a).

Figure 1. Left: Fenton Town Hall today (photo credit: Ian Mahoney); right: The Ballroom today (previously the site of Fenton Magistrates Court).

Our work was centred in and around Fenton Town Hall (Figure 1), a former magistrates' court in Fenton, one of the six towns that form SoT. Following its closure by the MoJ in 2012 as part of cost-cutting moves aimed at 'streamlining' the justice system, a public campaign and sit-in was waged with a view to enabling community ownership of the site (BBC, 2014), indicating a strong sense of wider community and belonging in Fenton.

Figure 2. Collection of images. Clockwise from top left: the view as you walk into Fenton Town Hall; top middle: signage remains next to the old Magistrates' Entrance; top right: a community noticeboard advertising events within the town hall, next to a sign reminding the community that this was once a 'Court House'; bottom right: the view down to the imposing entrance from midway up the main flight of stairs; bottom middle: graffiti on the inside of one of the old police cell doors; bottom right: an old police cell, subsequently used as a shower room for a now defunct gym, now serving as a storage space for old equipment. All photographs taken by Ian Mahoney and used with permission.

Fenton Town Hall is a particularly large Victorian Gothic-style building that now acts as an important community hub, welcoming a diverse range of groups to the space (Baker, 2024). The Ballroom, which formerly housed a magistrates' court and where the workshops for our project were held, retains several features that serve as reminders to the public of its former role. There is also signage outside the building (Figure 2) and police cells which, while normally locked away from wider public access, we were to be able to visit, and which still retain markings made by those held awaiting trial (also shown in Figure 2). Each cell now has a shower, and some are currently used to store exercise equipment – part of the space was subsequently occupied by a gym, itself a very different community asset. Indeed, as noted in a public-facing spoken-word event that we held to bring the research element of the project to a close, some people still sometimes visit the building thinking that it is a still court, including someone who had recently come to petition for a divorce.

The graffiti and names carved into the cell door by occupants awaiting trial create a strange juxtaposition with the gym equipment, telling the story of the building as a former court and police station – a site of justice – now transformed into a site of self-development and self-care. It maintains a strong physical presence in the area and has now become a site of community,

something welcomed by our participants. There was a recognition among members of the HJC of the need for such spaces within communities to enable people to come together; our ethnographic notes (P1/WSP4) recorded their desire to set up new charities, spaces and places for justice, working for rehabilitation and change in the city. The significance of spaces and the power that comes with the ownership of shared places was also recognised in a focus group we held with HJC members at the end of Phase 1:

"On a really practical level there are spaces for the community that are sort of available at the minute and there's obviously a lot comes through community centres and churches but a lot of groups have lost that space so now most of these spaces are rooted in the council and through government funding that gets given to private organisations, and my personal goal with that stuff is to kind of take that power away from them so that the community gets those spaces back, they own spaces that they can control who comes and goes from there. There is not a hierarchy in that way and it's not just the people coming to use the spaces, it is people who own them that are benefiting, it's the people that are there." (HJC member, focus group participant 1)

8. Methodology

Methodologically, TJ approaches focus upon the use of innovative and creative participatory approaches to provide space for those whose voices have historically been marginalised and suppressed (Lundy & McGovern, 2008; Reading, 2019; Sitrin, 2019; Brown, 2020; Cahill-Ripley & Graham, 2021). With this in mind, and in line with transformative gender-justice research conducted elsewhere (Ní Aoláin, 2019), the research team adopted a feminist epistemological approach. There were many elements to the methodology, and a timeline of these is provided in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Timeline of activities.

8.1. Contextual research around TJ

The research team was keen to understand what good practice already existed elsewhere that we could draw upon to develop and subsequently reinforce our own understanding of what could be done to explore key ideas and themes in relation to TJ and communities. To this end, supported by a research student from NTU, a systematic review of the existing literature on TJ practice was undertaken to identify the benefits and limitations of this approach.

We also conducted interviews with representatives of organisations that draw upon TJ principles within their own work (n = 6). Relevant organisations were identified through extensive web searches and through wider activities, including attendance at the US-based *Annual Transformative Justice and Abolition Criminology Conference* held by the charity Save the Kids. In total, 30 organisations were contacted, with six responding within the relevant timeframe. These interviews and the focus groups were thematically analysed, and they provided a rich body of evidence to complement the findings of the three systematic reviews. They also supplemented our existing understanding of TJ and reinforced our belief in the potential benefits of effective arts-based practice to explore transformative approaches to understanding and challenging existing conceptions of justice within communities.

8.2. Scoping work and WwC

Two further systematic reviews were undertaken by MA students at London South Bank University. The first explored what barriers and challenges women face in the prison system; the second examined suicide and harm in the female prison estate.

Focus groups were held with women with lived experience of harm, vulnerability and the justice system. These included survivors of domestic abuse who had been involved in the CJS as victims seeking justice (n = 11) and a prison-based focus group with women who had received custodial sentences (n = 12). The former happened organically; time was set aside to interview WwC who were identified by Staffordshire Women's Aid (SWA) and had thus experienced domestic abuse, but recruitment was difficult, and only one woman participated in an interview. Perceiving an opportunity to collect further relevant data, the Principal Investigator approached a group who had attended a coffee morning in the same building and sought the permission of female survivors of domestic abuse (and the staff who supported them) to conduct an impromptu focus group, adapting the questions originally designed for the interviews with WwC.

The second focus group was conducted within the women's prison estate. Following introductions by SWA, recruitment was led by a prison officer, who served as gatekeeper, avoiding women deemed to be particularly vulnerable and who may be triggered by participation in the focus groups. This prison officer also attended the focus group and followed up with all the participants a few days later to check in on their health and well-being.

8.2.1. An arts-based community TJ intervention

Creative and arts-based practices are frequently drawn upon in TJ practice to engage communities and address issues of trauma and harm in sensitive ways. For example, Sitrin (2019) documented the use of emancipatory and participatory artistic activities as a tool for expression; in this case, they were used as a form of radical action, seeking to educate and reveal what is hidden and suppressed in post-junta Argentina, to educate people on the horrors of abuse, murder, torture and rape, and to name and shame those who perpetrated it. Participants in our expert interviews elaborated on the tools that they use to explore challenging and potentially traumatising experiences in creative ways:

> "One of our flagship programmes is … an open space where the participant writes about their trauma, because sometimes when we are traumatised it's hard for us to verbalise it, so I wanted them to put it on paper, to document it, to journal it, and to put it together." (TJ expert interviewee 5)

Elsewhere, physical and visual representations have been used to engage with the public and reach out beyond the immediate group to develop wider conversations around the harms of traditional justice systems, emphasising lived experience:

> "We call it 'Prison Museum' for lack of a better name, at the moment and, basically, with the help of a curator and things, we are trying to get people who were formally incarcerated to develop an exhibition about their own experiences in prison."
> (TJ expert interviewee 3)

Hearing about these experiences strengthened our conviction that participatory, arts-based methodologies can provide important tools for bringing communities together to explore complex, challenging and at times difficult topics in safe, empathic ways. Our findings here and across the wider project show that arts-based TJ initiatives can provide opportunities for bringing diverse groups of people together. Through this, communities can create space, drawing on the experiences and networks of people who are already embedded in places and spaces, to create and maintain vibrant communities. This can provide challenges both in developing the necessary skills to lead projects and in balancing these roles with already busy lives. Indeed, our interviews found that while some people have

turned their desire for change into a profession, many involved in TJ organisations and activism are volunteers with competing demands on their time. By way of an example, shortly after the interview, TJ expert interviewee 4 had to step back from their role within the organisation because of commitments in their personal and work life elsewhere.

8.2.2. Community workshops

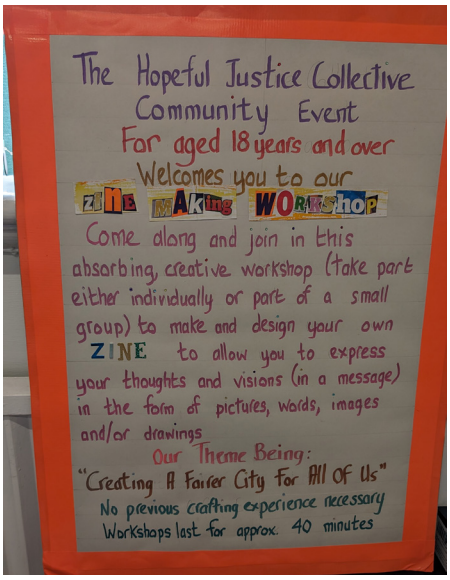
With this in mind, the research team delivered an arts-based TJ intervention to measure the effectiveness of the approach for improving cohesion and equality within a community and specifically for reintegrating WwC into their local community. The intervention took the form of 15 half-day workshops designed and facilitated by the research team and two co-facilitators from Clean Break who were artists with lived experience of the CJS. Sessions ran between January 2023 and July 2024 and took place at Fenton Town Hall in SoT. They were delivered in two phases: the first from January to July 2023, and the second from January to June 2024.

The work was delivered in partnership with Restoke, an arts organisation based at Fenton Town Hall (Figure 1) that has played a pivotal role in the regeneration of the space through leading the redevelopment of the former magistrates' courts into The Ballroom, a community arts and performance space.

Restoke (2024) has a strong history in bringing diverse groups of people together to address difficult and challenging topics – including men's mental health, homelessness, migration/belonging and motherhood – and the organisation has demonstrated an ability to sustain networks both during and beyond the lifetime of the original projects. They also have a strong and well-developed commitment to co-creation (Restoke, 2022), something that we as a team held to be particularly important, given our aim to place lived experience at the centre of the development of the community group and to avoid the imposition of top-down, research-led narratives. Restoke did a call-out to the community, and we also ran a campaign on social media to engage potential participants.

8.2.3. Phase 1 workshops

The seven sessions of the Phase 1 workshops engaged community members with an interest in reimagining what justice could look like in SoT through theatre, visual art and writing exercises. We also experimented with artistic models of discussion – including The Long Table, an open-ended, non-hierarchical format created by the artist Lois Weaver – to explore and exchange ideas, which were recorded for the purpose of data collection. The discussions generated through this method of data collection were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. This first phase of workshops culminated in the group establishing themselves as the Hopeful Justice Collective (HJC) and presenting a sound installation that captured some of the stories, ideas and creative work in which the group had been involved (see Figure 4). It was developed in conjunction with members of the HJC with the intention of showcasing their work to the wider community (see the next subsection).



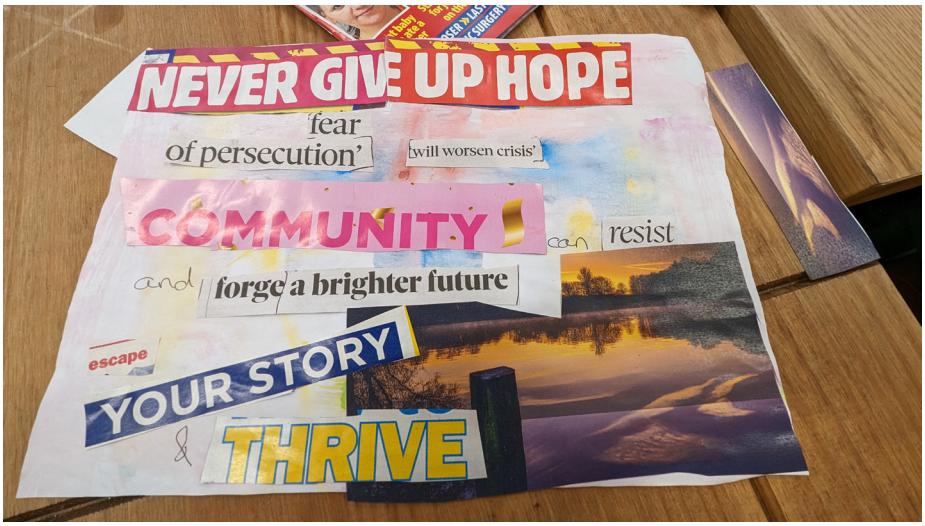


Figure 4. Left: zine-making instructions; right: a page from the zine made at the workshop. Photographs taken by Ian Mahoney.

Following the end of Phase 1, the researchers conducted focus groups with HJC members to understand their experiences and reflections on the work. This was used to inform Phase 2 of the workshops, which sought to support WwC to join the HJC, to continue to develop community conversations around justice and build stronger relationships among and between those who had convictions and those who did not.

8.2.4. Phase 2 workshops

During the focus groups with women with lived experience of the CJS, participants emphasised to the research team the importance of proactively reaching out and engaging participants for Phase 2; posters, they explained, would not be sufficient to draw people in. As a result, the research team engaged with key staff members at several different third-sector organisations supporting WwC and visited their meeting places. We were initially encouraged by this engagement work, and five WwC expressed an interest in joining the HJC for Phase 2. However, despite visible enthusiasm and support during these taster sessions, this approach had limited impact. Three women were recruited through these community organisations, with the assurance that others who were unable to attend the first workshop would participate in subsequent ones.

Regrettably, near the end of the first workshop, while moving from upstairs in The Ballroom to downstairs in the community café, there was an extended discussion between one of the WwC (hereafter referred to as Z) and a male member of the collective, who had also newly joined for Phase 2. This conversation left Z feeling unable to return to future workshops and had a subsequent knock-on effect, in that all the women who attended from this referring organisation and other prospective members did not feel comfortable attending future workshops. Subsequently, Z, accompanied by the service manager from the referring agency felt able to return to Fenton Town Hall before the second workshop and shared her experiences and reflections with the research team (see Section 4). In response to this, and at the request of the WwC, the research team arranged a women-only workshop held at the partner organisation's premises, a place where the women felt comfortable. We used this session to explore the same creative exercises we were running with the HJC group. We found that this mode of parallel delivery enabled us to engage with a wider range of WwC and share their reflections with the wider group (with permission) to ensure that the knowledge of these women remained part of the work of the project. Across the women-only workshop and the sessions at Fenton Town Hall, we worked with 13 women who had convictions; however, the engagement

in the project of all but two of these women was limited to one or two sessions. We address this further below.

The Phase 2 workshops used theatre, immersive games, movement and zine-making to consider the specific issues faced by women who have had contact with the CJS, with a focus on how the reintegration of those labelled as 'offenders' was addressed in the content of the sessions.

Following the success of the art installation (see Figure 5), in collaboration with the HJC, it was agreed that Phase 2 would culminate in a community event for residents of SoT led by The HJC members. This event engaged local residents in conversations around justice, accountability and harm through a zine-making session, theatre workshops, talks and a spoken-word performance.

Figure 5. Artistic sound installation in Fenton Town Hall, showcasing the work of the HJC to users of the building and the wider community. Photographer Sarah Nadin.

The researchers ethnographically documented the delivery of the TJ intervention, capturing all the workshop activities, participants' responses within them and the reflections and conversations that happened following the sessions. The embedding of experienced ethnographic researchers in observer-as-participant roles (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Harrison, 2020) enabled us to document important conversations and better understand the processes that underpinned the development of the collective, and thus the role that TJ can play in building cohesive communities and community groups.

At the beginning of the study, participants also completed an adaptation of the Government's Community Life Survey (GOV.UK, 2024) to capture quantitative data around their engagement as well as what the cost impact of a community-based TJ intervention might be on wider society. These methods are explained in more detail in Section 3.5.3. At the end of the project, researchers conducted a final focus group with all members of the HJC.

Commensality – the sharing of food – has been well documented as an important tool for bonding people together (Fischler, 2011). At the end of every workshop, the participants and research team sat together to enjoy a hearty meal, with a view to continuing to build a sense of rapport, belonging and familiarity within the group. This served three important purposes. Firstly, it created space for informal bonds and friendships to develop within the group; for example, at the end of our first workshop in Phase 2, one of our existing participants offered a ride home to a new member of the community, having realised that they lived nearby. Secondly, given the high levels of poverty and deprivation in the city – which last year saw over 24,000 families supported by local foodbanks (Stoke-on-Trent Foodbank, 2023) – it ensured that everyone was fed in a friendly and non-judgemental environment, and nobody was left wanting or hungry. Thirdly, it provided an informal opportunity for us as a team to get to know our participants and their experiences outside of the workshops.

8.2.5. Community focus groups with HJC members

At the end of the Phase 1 workshops and near the midpoint of the research, a focus group was held with members of the HJC. The purpose of this was to reflect on their experiences and feed into the Phase 2 workshops. A second and final focus group was also conducted with HJC members after the final workshop and community event to establish members' experiences of the project and the opportunities and barriers the research posed with regard to forming communities.

9. Findings

This section will discuss the findings of the research, addressing each of the objectives listed in Section 1.2 and considering the overall aims identified in that section.

9.1. Objective: Identify the needs of and barriers faced by WwC when they try to resettle/reintegrate into their local community

It is well documented that WwC face a series of personal, interpersonal and structural barriers to reintegration (Cobbina, 2010; Leverentz, 2011), including unemployment (Galgano, 2009), drug misuse, unresolved trauma (Doherty et al., 2014), domestic abuse and a lack of support (Kyprianou, 2022). The centrality of lived experience was integral to this research: it was embedded from the outset in the design of the project (see Section 2) and was present in every stage of its subsequent development and evolution. As such, it is an integral part of this report and features heavily in almost every section. This objective focuses specifically on women's experiences of the CJS, as survivors of abuse and/or having received a criminal conviction, and how these past experiences can create barriers to reintegration and resettlement.

9.1.1. Experiences of injustice

Injustice underpinned many of the narratives of those with lived experience who took part in this study, reflecting findings from other studies (see the review by Rogers et al., 2022). Underpinning these feelings were women's experiences of trauma (see Section 3.2.3), including domestic abuse and a pervasive sense of having been failed by the organisations that form the building blocks of our justice systems:

> "They [the courts] don't follow it through … they gave my ex an injunction to stay away from me. And, every night, he was across the road from my house. And then they gave him a flat just round the corner from me … the police didn't tell the council and things like that, so he got a flat just around the corner. He strangled me. He tried to kill me … there's no follow-up: there's no continuity … You phone the police and they say, 'We'll be out.' But, by the time they're out, they've gone." (Participant 4 in survivor focus group)

These findings were also echoed in the experiences of some of our HJC members. In one case, a member from a minoritised background spoke about the impact of her experiences of racism, threat and vulnerability, and the dismissive attitude of the police and other actors and agencies who would ordinarily be identified as being best placed to address her needs and provide support (Ethnographic notes P1/WSP4).

Both survivors and WwC highlighted how the CJS mutes their voices and dismisses their experiences of trauma:

> "You are a number and there's no understanding as to why … why aren't we looking at the reasons why people offend?" (Participant in women-only workshop)

Ideas around women's inappropriate entry into the CJS, the entanglement that ensued and their ultimate feelings of being failed by the system designed to protect them were echoed by a prison officer who participated in the prison-based focus group:

> "There is only the very, very odd case that you hear from girls in here where you think 'oh yes, you should be in prison'. Very odd case, where you think 'yeah, you definitely

should be in prison' but most of the girls are sound here, they all look after each other and they all look out for each other, and they all do their best for each other. If one needs something then the other one will give it to them, that's what I find in prison." (Prison officer participant in prison focus group)

Participants from the survivor focus group were scathing of the CJS, describing it as "rubbish", "diabolical" and "not worth the paper it is written on". Frustrations were focused on the police who "need to be more reactive". Within both the survivor focus group and the prison focus group, there was a clear sense of solidarity and the forging of a community through shared past experiences and their perceptions of injustices (see also the poem in Figure 6):

Participant 4: You're doing brilliant. You've got this girl.
Participant 2: You're not a victim; you're a survivor.
Participant 5; We can change things.
Participant 2: We've all been there.
Participant 4: You can change your voice, can't you?
Participant 3: And that's the horrible thing. I feel still, I feel like … Because this happened, I feel like I still haven't got a voice.
Participant 2: You have.
(Participants in survivor focus group discussion)

A sentence. But will it lead to a full stop,
Or will it become a paragraph of unfulfilled dreams?
A series of ellipses of half written could-bes and no happily ever afters.
I open my doors to you all. You are welcome. My heart is full.
Full of the laughter, full of friendship.
My life now in balance. The scales of justice are still.
Within my walls there is no judgment. Come as you are.
I am the refuge. A place of safety. A warm embrace of a space.
I am the beginning of new stories. Feel free to speak your truths.
We are your tales of transformation. A narrative tapestry of rich, vibrant colour.

Figure 6. Excerpt from Histories of Justice, Composed by the Hopeful Justice Collective.

This was significant in the wider context of our work because it highlighted the importance of empathy and understanding in ensuring that women with lived experience of the CJS are supported. This is a core area of focus across our work, and it was also recognised in the final focus group:

"So many women who are in the justice system come from backgrounds of domestic violence and domestic coercion and they are put into a prison situation where that's just exacerbated." (Participant in final focus group with HJC members)

Gendered experiences of injustice, feelings of powerlessness and lacking a voice, and not receiving suitable support within the CJS left some women feeling that they had no option but to take justice into their own hands. This resulted in retaliation, and in the cases of those in the prison focus group, had led to their incarceration:

"I was a victim of domestic violence for many years and had enough of it and basically I paid someone to beat them up because I wanted him to go through the pain he'd put me through and unfortunately it went too far and he was killed so I was done for murder." (Participant 3 in prison focus group)

"My daughter had been assaulted with a glass bottle and it got stuck in the back of

her neck and her head and the police came, the ambulance came and everybody came and the police knew who it was and there was witnesses and they never followed through, they never arrested nobody for it, nothing was done about it and I basically took the law into my own hands." (Participant 1 in prison focus group)

This highlights the need for a more equitable and accountable system that holds not only perpetrators to account but also professionals who fail to intervene to prevent or mitigate offending in the first instance.

9.1.2. Gendered justice

Participants felt that surviving domestic abuse brought with it additional sanctions. For example, one participant in the prison focus group explained that "women [are] punished for men's actions"; another felt that "women [are] getting penalised for domestic abuse"; and a third described how she had been excluded from her community because of her offending, which was again linked to her experiences of abuse.

There were repeated articulations that the stigma and accountability for women is different from men: "I definitely think being a woman makes it harder", "Yes, like women should know better." (prison focus group). This perception of justice as being gendered led to feelings of annoyance and despair towards the CJS. A participant in the women-only workshop felt that women are "set up to fail … it's a revolving door".

Across all the data, the research team found that that women are treated differently in all their interactions with the CJS, regardless of whether they were survivors or WwC. Women in prison also saw themselves as subject to gendered treatment when compared to men prisoners undertaking work in prison:

> "The males get triple the wages of what the females do in a female space [prison] but they've still got to buy the same things for the same price and they get more wages so it's not fair, is it? [...] And they don't have to buy sanitary wear and things like this: You do get it from the prison but it's only bog-standard stuff and if you are going through the menopause and things like that, it's horrendous." (Participant 1, prison focus group)

This echoes the calls in The Corston Report (Corston, 2007) and suggests that there remains a need for greater recognition of the disparities in the treatment of women in the CJS.

Meanwhile, participants who had been victims of crime, and who had approached the CJS to seek justice and support for these experiences, felt they had simply been disregarded and dismissed:

> "They [the courts and the police] make it out to make you feel like there's something wrong with you. They're [perpetrators] innocent, they've done no, nothing happens … when you do go to court and, basically, they make you out to be the liar. And the abuser is treated with more respect." (Participant 4 in survivor focus group)

Another participant in the survivor focus group recalled how, because of "picky little things" such as her partner's financial situation (e.g. owning an expensive car and house, and going on expensive holidays), her case against him had been thrown out of court. That he raped her, forced her to go on these holidays, or that there were witnesses to his abuse appeared irrelevant to the CJS, and her anger and frustration were palpable:

> "And I thought, 'How dare you!' [becoming tearful] I have to be black and blue or dead to get him arrested." (Participant 3, survivor focus group)

Women in the survivor focus group reflected on the attitudes they themselves had held towards abusive relationships before experiencing abuse themselves, recognising their own stereotyping, stigmatising and othering:

> "I remember, before I was abused, seeing, hearing about people like yourselves and

thinking, 'Jesus Christ, why didn't they get a life? Why are they staying there and taking that? Why don't they walk away?' And it's true: I did say that. 'I wouldn't stand there and take that: no way'." (Participant 2 in survivor focus group)

These feelings of being judged and blamed were shared by WwC, albeit for different 'reasons'. As participant 5 from the prison focus group explained:

"There is a lot of stigma attached as well to women with convictions when they go out. It's one of those things people think, 'oh women shouldn't commit crime'. People just look at you in a completely different way but if a man says he's been in prison, it's mmm. [implying that the situation would be viewed differently, i.e. kudos attached to a man's prison sentence]."

Contact with the CJS and the stereotyping that occurred led women to feel judged and become isolated from their communities:

"There is a feeling of self-worth that they don't have […] and I think that's the main thing because as a community we do need to be more selfless, the people need to be more selfless and less judgemental." (WwC interviewee)

This inequality was exacerbated by the barriers created by participants' past experiences and only added to their feelings of injustice and powerlessness. For example, one WwC participant explained that she received a criminal record because she was unable to persuade or insist that her child attend school, asserting that support from the community around her would have been more beneficial. Other participants also recognised that there was a role for communities in challenging the isolation and stigmatisation of women.

9.1.3. Systemic failures

It became increasingly apparent during the course of our work that opportunities to support women are regularly missed, and there are profound consequences for those who are let down by these systemic failures. For example (and as mentioned above), one participant in the survivor focus group explained how the court had placed an injunction on her partner and yet, as a result of ineffective information sharing between agencies, he had been rehoused within her immediate community:

"It's a lack of communication between the courts and the police and the council. Because, he had this injunction to stay away from me for two years, he couldn't be within fifty metres … But he took no notice and, every night, he was across the road; every night he was threatening." (Participant 4 survivor focus group)

Another participant in the same focus group explained how she had been to the police five times with evidence (including camera footage) that her partner had breached an injunction by presenting at her home, but nothing had been done. A third participant described her outrage when the police attended her home because her abusive ex-partner had reported her missing, insisting they had a duty to inform him that she was safe:

"Why do they need to inform him? I don't want him informed. They had to inform him that I was safe. And I was like, 'What?' How ridiculous is that?'. I didn't want him to know I was safe; I don't want him to know anything: I just want to be left alone." (Participant 2 survivor focus group)

Other participants described systematic failures extending beyond the CJS. One explained that because her then partner, who was employed by the armed forces, had raped her on forces property, the police had no jurisdiction. There were no criminal sanctions and no record of the assault outside of the forces; instead, the perpetrator was told to stay with family until they moved him "just down the road" from her home address. Following a particularly violent assault, the same

participant explained:

> "When I got admitted into hospital, they [hospital staff] said to me that they were going to inform him [abusive ex-partner] because he was down as my next of kin then. And I said to them, 'No, I'm not with him. This is his fault.' But they were still like, 'But he's down as your …', I says, 'I don't care if he's down as my next of kin: he's the reason I'm here.'" (Participant 4 survivor focus group)

The survivors called for greater communication between agencies, and enforcement and consequences when bail or licence conditions were breached. This need for joined-up and holistic thinking was similarly identified by HJC members (see also Figure 7):

> "We can't just look at one of the systems, you can't just look at the criminal justice system and say it's that, you have to look at the education system, you have to look at the social care system, you have to look at all of these, all as a whole to say we need to change at grassroots level, and attitudes." (Participant in final focus group with HJC members)

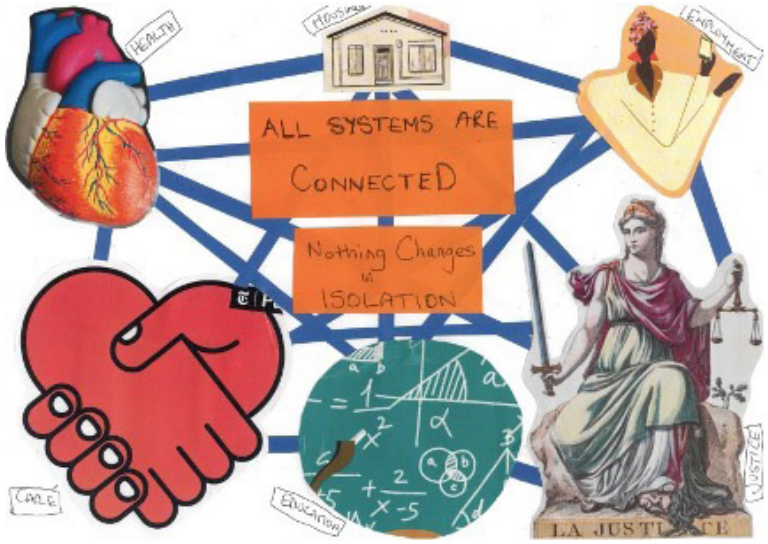


Figure 7. Zine work created by members of the HJC to show the complexities of systems linked to the CJS.

9.2. Objective: Identify and activate the strengths, assets and attributes that local communities can bring to the reintegration and engagement of WwC

Vogl defines a community as "a group of individuals who share a mutual concern for one another's welfare" (Vogl, 2016, p. 9), as contrasted with a group of people who share ideas but lack empathy or concern for one another. Accordingly, in building the HJC as a community group, regular check-ins, touching base and working to support both existing, new and future members formed a key focus of the workshops. We co-created several documents that helped us articulate a shared understanding of how we wanted to work together supportively. This included: a Collective Values Statement, a Skills Audit and a Manifesto. These were living documents that we repeatedly returned to, edited and expanded as we reoriented our work together, including when new group members joined us.

Building a community can further be supported by a shared sense of purpose, something that was

noted by one of the TJ experts we spoke to:

> "You can build community through really, I guess, grassroots activities, so essential to people making friends, building relationships, and I'm thinking of things like cooking and gardening … a mechanism for people in a community to do something that brings them together, that helps them deal with the cost-of-living, there's a social dimension to it. (TJ expert interviewee 4)

In our workshops, we held space at the end of each session to reflect together on the different creative practices in which we were engaging. It was in this time of reflection that members of the HJC decided to work towards an installation at the end of Phase 1, as they were keen to capture their learning in an enduring creative work. Similarly, the community event at the culmination of Phase 2 provided another way for participants to develop creative contributions towards a particular focused event. Both outcomes – the installation and the community event – offered a deeper shared sense of purpose around which to build relationships.

9.2.1. Shared history and identities

A shared sense of history and common social and geographical identities can be powerful tools for helping to build empathy (as outlined above) and creating a sense of belonging. The history of a location is inscribed in the minds and bodies of those who live there (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), and this was evident from the outset in our community workshops. For example, some participants had spent time in Fenton Town Hall while it was a serving as a magistrates' court, including one of our community participants who had regularly attended the site for case hearings as a probation officer. Equally, our ethnographic notes captured the importance of key events and locations in the city, specifically within a discussion about the decline and closure of Shelton Bar steelworks in 1978, at which one HJC member had once been employed. The steelworks was a leading source of employment in the city, with around 2,000 people working there before its closure (Gratton, 2020); this closure was emblematic of the wider deindustrialisation of SoT, and it had a profound impact on the community because everyone either worked in or knew someone who worked in the steelworks or allied industries such as collieries (Mahoney, 2015; Pile, 2023). This common history helped to facilitate bonding among participants; the shared sense of belonging provided opportunities for 'safe' topics of conversation that served as a catalyst to glue the group together from the start.

9.2.2. A shared (and suitable) physical space

The fact that the project was situated in a local community also meant that the shared physical space in which the workshops were held – The Ballroom at Fenton Town Hall – could be leveraged as an asset to support community building, enabling and empowering people to bond and develop community cohesion:

> "Our experience is that transformative justice happens when people are in the room together." (TJ expert interviewee 1)

The project's relationship with Restoke, their space in The Ballroom at Fenton Town Hall, and their relationship with the community café space was integral to the success and sustainability of the HJC. Their involvement allowed us to draw upon an established community space and so 'borrow' the trust that community residents already had in Restoke and the pride that locals held in retaining Fenton Town Hall as a community space. Thus, it was not just the availability of a community meeting place that was important for the success of the project, but the fact that it was a suitable venue for the workshops, and one with which many participants already had positive associations.

This relationship between people, place and space was exemplified by the role of the community within Fenton Town Hall. The community café provides a friendly meeting place for the local population and advertising of local activities and events (Figure 8) – many of which are located in Fenton Town Hall itself – and there are also meeting rooms available for hire. Children's classes, community interest groups and alternative education providers are now based there, and for a time the building housed the offices of a local MP. This change in history, role and purpose is reflected both in the continual vibrant advertising of events and activities and in the experiences of our community members. To that end, Fenton Town Hall remains an important site and resource for the community, providing opportunities for people to come together in friendly, engaging environments and activities.

Figure 8. The servery at the Fenton Community Café, which is housed in Fenton Town Hall. Photograph taken by Ian Mahoney and used with permission.

Our collaboration with Restoke demonstrated that – if sufficiently resourced – community arts organisations can be a significant asset for supporting the building of a stronger and more networked community and potentially the (re)integration of WwC. Restoke are deeply engrained in their community, bringing people together from across SoT to collectively engage in creative activities. We found that arts practice can generate spaces for exchange, understanding and respectful disagreement, while still maintaining concern for the welfare of others within the community (see Section 3.3 for a more detailed discussion). Healthy spaces of disagreement are an important part of any project that seeks to understand and strengthen communities; in an increasingly polarised world, such spaces offer scope to understand experiences and positions beyond one's own.

At the same time, it was important to be mindful of the building's history, not least as a magistrates' court. While lacking the ability of recall, buildings are witnesses to historical events and can embody people's memories (Lynch, 1964), and they can continue to project state power even after they cease to function in such a capacity. Conscious of this, members of the research team stood at the main entrance to Fenton Town Hall at the beginning of each session with the intention of offering a warm welcome to any new participants and offsetting any oppressive memories that the building might evoke.

Physical spaces can shape people's interactions, particularly when they may convey a sense of unease or bring painful memories to light. The importance of sharing a physical space with others needs to be balanced with the time it can take for individuals to adjust. The community café also played a key role in putting participants at their ease, especially in the meals afterwards, as it offered a welcoming space with friendly staff and advertised regular community activities. Thus, despite the history of Fenton Town Hall, it provided a haven and a 'brave space' (Arao & Clemens, 2013) for the HJC to lay the foundations for a new community focused around developing a shared alternate vision of transformative, community-focused justice and accountability.

The transfer of assets such as Fenton Town Hall

into community ownership opens up opportunities for communities – particularly in low-income areas – to develop their own facilities, uses and programmes of activities within these spaces. However, across the country, many such facilities remain at risk of closure due to a lack of funding or income, and this is compounded by low usage rates. Based on our experience conducting this research, we advocate for greater recognition of the important role of hubs and shared physical spaces within communities. Community participation also requires effective and functioning critical infrastructures, including cheap, regular and accessible public transport services. Thus, by enabling participation, meaningful investment in these resources can inspire a subtle but significant change in power. Given the current poor state of public transport in SoT, we felt we needed to offer to pay for participants to use taxis; however, this would clearly not be possible for all community-participation projects. If governments and other agencies want to encourage more widespread community participation, functioning public transport will be key.

The question that arises from this is: how do we unlock access to and funding for these locations so that they can become valuable community assets once again? Many of the most useful suitable places and spaces – community centres, institutes and working (men's) clubs – have largely closed. It was noted by one participant (Ethnographic notes P2/WSP1) that there are now many unused sites in the area; these are largely owned and gatekept by the local Labour Party, and they could easily be returned to public use as a way of reforming a sense of community in the locality. While many have had a chequered history, including exclusionary policies and practices underpinned by racist and gendered criteria and logic (Schofield, 2023), they provided valuable spaces for education, political debate and socialisation in working-class communities such as SoT. TJ seeks to radically reform our relationship with justice; the same principles can be applied to reclaiming space and reframing the narrative around the role and use of this space.

These spaces are even more important for vulnerable groups and populations, as they frequently need safe and brave spaces with which to engage but often have limited options available:

> "There needs to be put more in place: more funding for places like this [SWA premises, to hold coffee mornings]." (Participant 4 survivor focus group)

The importance of suitable physical spaces to the longevity of a community was also identified by a TJ expert:

> "It is a really safe space for everyone […] and that's why we all stick around so long." (TJ expert interviewee 4)

At present, however, there remains a paucity of available and suitable shared spaces, and Stoke-on-Trent City Council garnered a reputation, particularly under the Conservative-led minority administration of 2021–2023, for profligacy and failing to consider community needs, with community participants noting that this included investment in a significant number of new car parks around the city (Ethnographic notes, Women-only workshop).

While the city received £56 million in 'Levelling Up' funds (Stoke-on-Trent City Council, n.d.), rather than invest in shared spaces for the community, these funds have been targeted towards three specific projects in Hanley (the city 'centre'), specific heritage sites (namely Longton and Tunstall), and an accommodation development near the city's railway station. While this is laudable, given the long-term and painstaking nature of many of the new projects, along with the focus on attracting new investment and residents from outside SoT, many of the needs of the city's most impoverished, marginalised and vulnerable communities arguably remain unmet. In challenging times, core locations like Fenton Town Hall become even more important, providing safe, warm spaces for people to meet, engage and forge new bonds and opportunities. The availability of other social enterprises and Community Interest Companies within the same building, some of which provide wider help and support for vulnerable groups (which inevitably include women in general, as well as WwC), enables it to act as something akin to a one-stop-shop for community and individual needs.

9.2.3. Shared trauma

Communal experiences and shared challenges can also help galvanise communities. As the workshops progressed, members of the HJC became more willing to share their experiences of trauma, including situations that they felt had been resolved as well as stories where the impact of harm was still raw and palpable. Members disclosed experiences of homelessness, trauma due to abuse, and familial ostracisation due to religious beliefs and expectations. Such disclosures grew as the group continued meeting and felt increasingly comfortable with one another, especially following a session led by Clean Break, which focused on developing understanding of trauma and leading with kindness (see Section 4.1). The willingness to share such intimacy in a space with hitherto strangers suggested to the team that these shared vulnerabilities helped establish trust and contributed to building community cohesion from the start, and far sooner than anyone had anticipated. Perhaps unsurprisingly, domestic abuse was a shared trauma that featured prominently throughout the workshops and was a commonality among women with lived experience of the CJS (see Section 3.1.1).

Phase 2 was delivered by our partners from SWA and focused on human rights, needs and communication. Given their background, there were inevitably references to and examples taken from domestic-abuse situations. A new (male) member of the HJC stated that, in his experience, women leave one abusive relationship only to immediately enter another. This is a problematic statement on many levels, and it suggests that women look for abusive relationships or lack the sense to avoid them; it negates the complexity of human relations, wants and needs, as well as the way in which coercive and abusive behaviour can take time to appear or manifest. This viewpoint was challenged by the facilitators and HJC members, who discussed how the community may hear about the cases in which this happens, but that it is not typically the case: we rarely hear of the success stories after the fact. One non-binary HJC member recognised that psychological abuse and trauma are particularly hard to get over, that most people would rather be punched than coerced – "you're destroying the person, not just the body" – and that abuse can leave a survivor doubting themselves and asking, "am I going mad?" (Ethnographic notes P2/WSP3). The shared experience of trauma and the cohesion within the HJC served to challenge the stereotypical assumptions of a newer member of the group while simultaneously offering support to those with experience of abuse (Ethnographic notes P2/WSP3). Crucially, and in line with both the principles of TJ and those agreed and maintained by the group throughout, the discussion was respectful. During the meal afterwards, a member of the research team 'checked in' with this member, who accepted the difference of opinion and seemed unaware of the discomfort that his comments had created.

It may be that HJC members' willingness to share their experiences of trauma reflected an assumption that most people in any community have experienced trauma. Such disclosures are likely to have been encouraged by the Leading with Kindness workshops held during Phase 1 of the workshops (see Section 4.1), and it is possible that some participants found a TJ approach a useful and engaging way to discuss the harms perpetrated against them. Whatever the reason, trauma was widely shared across communities, and this underscores the potential for TJ's emphasis on systemic and community harms rather than solely on individual actions and the focus to not perpetrate further harm.

9.3. Objective: Determine the suitability of an arts-based approach to TJ for improving community cohesion

TJ interventions regularly involve legal empowerment, political and civic education, mass protest, organising campaigns, and community care that builds alternatives to state systems. While they are by no means always rooted in creative arts practice (Lundy & McGovern, 2008; Reading, 2019; Sitrin, 2019; Brown, 2020; Cahill-Ripley & Graham, 2021), our research suggests that creative practice can offer unique tools to reveal and reimagine the carceral logic (to punish, imprison and oppress rather than to care for, heal and support), and it therefore provides a useful set of strategies for TJ processes and practices. The arts approach was experienced by HJC members as a stimulus for new ideas, an opportunity to engage with existing thinking in an accessible way, and a way to deepen our collective knowledge around TJ:

> "[Justice] is an important area, and the arts and creativity can help stimulate that and bring people together in the first instance and then cultivate ideas." (HJC member at the midpoint focus group)

> "They were just fun and then you realise that you had actually learnt quite a lot. It's like education by stealth. Oh, I'm having lots of fun, and now I know something about it so I can talk about this." (HJC member at final focus group)

Indeed, several participants in the workshops and the community event explained that they were drawn into the project due to the arts focus of the work and their understanding of Restoke as a community arts organisation. The use of an arts-based approach was significant in both recruiting and retaining participants:

> "The thing that actually got me coming was the fact that it was exploring arts-based ways of looking because that's something that I'm really interested in [...]. So, from all the justice side of things I was like that's almost irrelevant at that point, how are we going to use the arts to do the introducing and talk about heavier subjects, and then obviously finding out more about the transformative justice got me more interested in that." (HJC member at final focus group)

More specifically, we found that creative methods were helpful for TJ work in four specific ways, which we will outline in the remainder of this section.

9.3.1. An artistic language to articulate personal experiences of justice

Across the workshops, we found that using creative processes enabled members to articulate personal and difficult encounters with harm. For example:

- zine-making offered tools to visually explore domestic abuse, including through conversations while crafting (see Figure 9);
- process drama created a space to embody experiences of the system and reimagine roles for our communities;
- the creation of audio work involved a collaging of different views, stimuli and voices;
- writing poetry offered different literary structures to explore cyclical experiences of trauma.

Arts practice can therefore be a powerful vehicle for communities to express, acknowledge, and understand encounters with harm that are present within their local area. As we have discussed, individuals and communities hold trauma, and our research showed that creative practice can be an accessible, less exposing and more expansive way to explore this trauma and collectively imagine and enact processes of healing than other forms of community interaction, such as discussion alone.

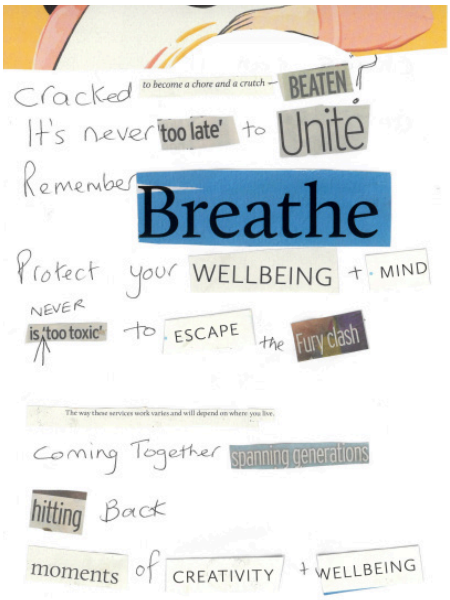


Figure 9. Representations of trauma created by members of the HJC.

As well as enabling the group to engage with members' experiences of harm, accountability and justice, creative practice also enabled people to unfix themselves from existing narratives, offering a different lens or set of tools to consider broader systems, questions and visions as a collective. Furthermore, while much of the material we navigated in our sessions together was difficult and challenging, the use of arts practice to undertake this work appeared to provide a sense of hopefulness, and working regularly on group activities made the collective nature of the work apparent. As one participant noted:

> "It's a thing of hope actually, [...] actually there are a lot of people who want to make a difference and there are people who are working towards making a difference and actually that made me a lot more hopeful that maybe you can't necessarily change the world but if we can change our own little bits of it, then that will join up." (HJC participant in workshop)

9.3.2. An opportunity to imagine and rehearse alternatives to the established CJS

An underpinning rationale for using an arts-based intervention was that such an approach might offer the opportunity for participants to untether themselves from existing structures and systems of holding people accountable for doing harm. In the early workshops, several group members' attachments to existing models of justice were powerful and had often been reinforced by cultural images of punitive justice. We found that using creative approaches to directly engage with the role that culture plays in shaping our ideas of justice opened up a useful criticality in the HJC. For example, members performed stories about justice from their childhoods for one another. Separately, in the Clean Break-led session, the practitioners invited members to reflect on stories that appear in the media about justice and punishment. Creativity therefore offered a way into critically engaging with the ways in which culture impacts how justice is enacted.

Using performance practices also enabled members to experiment with how they might take action to create a more just neighbourhood. For example, our workshop on community accountability drew on an exercise created by activist Mia Mingus (2020), which explores how most acute violent events are the culmination of a series of escalating incidents rather than simply occurring out of nowhere. In groups, participants

were asked to draw a graph with an inclining line on it and then plot several smaller incidents of harm that incrementally build towards an acute act of violence. They then collectively identified and discussed what kinds of interventions people might be able to make in specific scenarios to stop events from escalating.

This exercise produced unexpected insights into the potential of arts-based approaches to contribute to TJ practice. For example, while participants were creating their own graphs in groups, one member, visibly upset, withdrew from the session. A member of the team sat with this person in the breakout space and talked through her response; it was established that our collective work around escalating violence had resonated with a significant experience of harm that she had experienced. By the time the member returned to the session, participants were creating short wordless movement performances of the interventions they had discussed. For example, one group was translating how they would challenge bigoted language by presenting a series of cyclical physical actions of stepping in and redirecting one another. The member rejoined the group she had been part of prior to stepping out of the space, and together, they decided to restage the moment she withdrew from the discussion to experiment with the ways in which they might each have more meaningfully supported her in the moment of distress and might continue to support her beyond the boundaries of the workshop. Through their movement piece, the member and her group were able to non-verbally experiment with a difficult scenario they had just experienced and explore different approaches to support, testing out these approaches together. Vettraino et al. (2017, p. 86) asserted that theatre practice promotes "embodied reflexivity; connecting mind and body to create and explore […] imaginative 'blueprints' for possible future choices." Theatre practice, and its potential for embodied reflexivity, enables us to engage with raw and challenging experiences in ways that are embodied, tactile and complex. This example of working through the moment of distress aligns with this idea of embodied reflexivity, illuminating one way in which theatre might usefully contribute to TJ practice.

Unaware of the group's decision to re-enact the moment when the member withdrew from the discussion, one of the research team watching the performance thought that another issue had arisen in real time. The member waved her away, explaining that it was part of the act, much to everyone's amusement. By witnessing this public display of instinctively provided care, participants could see that the care was there (ethnographic notes P1/WSP5).

9.3.3. Reorienting positions through a multi-artform approach

We held a space within the workshops for different forms of arts-based inquiry, putting different artforms and experiences into dialogue; these included theatre, creative writing, zines, the Long Table discussion format (which was recorded), a performance game, movement, film, and a sound installation (examples of these are available from the Creative Toolkit). This wide range of different creative forms offered participants the opportunity to express complex feelings and ideas around justice. The sessions required flexibility from those involved to move across forms, some of which the members were unfamiliar with. This had particular value, in that it required members to explore and express ideas from multiple perspectives; for example, engagement with the idea of accountability will necessarily be different in a written poem, an embodied movement piece, and a visual collage. These traversing forms therefore require people to interrogate ideas through different modes of expression, necessitating a layered evaluation of one's own position. As one HJC member noted:

> "I think this kind of work, having this kind of conversation, asks everyone, even if they haven't had a live issue around the system or around violence, asks everybody to think about the way they are in the world." (HJC member at midpoint focus group)

The approach supports people to move away from a structure of binary debate to instead consider how they navigate the challenges of

approximating a position through a given form. Experimenting with new forms invites us to more readily consider how we might use the tools of that form to express an idea, and it therefore requires us to consistently reorient our position.

9.3.4. Creating spaces for dissensus

Reflecting on and sharing experiences and views of justice can be politically and emotionally challenging for all of those involved; however, in both the workshops and focus groups, we found a significant appetite from community members to explore one another's – often contrasting – ideas of justice (see Section 3.4.2) and accountability in collective ways. Creative practice gives a much-needed space for encountering and understanding other perspectives in relation to our own.

We created a performance game entitled ComMOONity (Figure 10), in which members were asked to actively respond to a series of prompts that invited them to imagine a future mission to the moon that needed them to work collectively to build their own society in space. This performance game involved exercises that required members to consider what values, systems of governance and applications of justice they might produce. Groups were then encouraged to think about how they might work to build those systems and values in our present society. This work resulted in extended conversations and creative actions within the groups as they wrestled with the significant differences between people's positions.

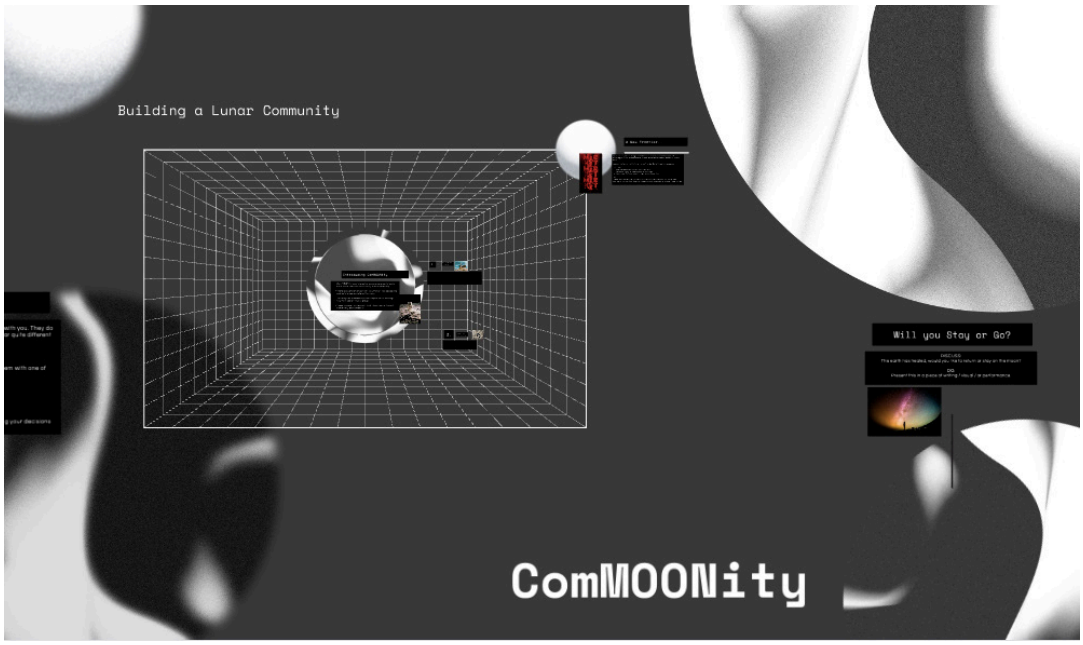


Figure 10. ComMOONity performance game.

In a separate workshop, participants were asked to create a 60-second audio recording of themselves talking about what their own utopian justice system would look like. Pairs of participants then switched recordings, listened to their partner's audio piece through headphones without speaking, and then spoke their partner's utopian imaginaries out loud as they listened, repeating verbatim the audio they heard. This activity was adapted from Sylvan Baker and Maggie Inchley's (2020) ongoing Verbatim Formula project. In our research, this exercise of speaking each other's imaginaries resulted in participants hearing and acknowledging their (at times) conflicting views on what justice should or could look like. Members commented that the exercise

had helped them to listen more deeply to one another's views. This exercise enabled divergent views to be heard, performed and explored, without requiring a resolution or debate.

In reflecting on some of the challenges faced by TJ organisers, Hayes and Kaba (2023) note:

> "The more difficult work begins when a person must reconfigure or replace their damaged or delegitimised worldview […] Organisers must help people reimagine the world, commit to rehearsing for and building that world, and develop creative ways to remain grounded in an increasingly chaotic and fractious environment, together." (p. 95)

In this way, community arts practices might be able to offer people tools to reimagine the world, but also – by enabling the plurality of futures to co-exist within the same space – to sit with worldviews that do not align with their own. This is vital for improving well-being within communities.

9.4. Objective: Establish whether TJ can support the reintegration of WwC into their local community by making them feel stronger, more equal and more connected, and assess the broader impact this has on community cohesion

9.4.1. Centrality of lived-experience expertise

The centrality to TJ of engaging, hearing and responding to the voices of those with lived experience of the CJS was recognised at all stages of the data-collection process for this project. One TJ expert summarised it thus:

> "It's crazy to try and do this work without involving people who experience it at the sharp end … the involvement of people is not an optional extra, but impacts on our own pocket in much the same way as right now we too often have conversations that impact on other people's pockets, but we never ever have the conversation with them." (TJ expert interviewee 1)

This was echoed by other TJ experts:

> "Unless we can engage with victims' organisations and acknowledge the pain that victims feel due to the crimes that happen, and at least engage with ways that that can be resolved, the less effective we're going to be." (TJ expert interviewee 2).

> "It's really important to allow people who have offended to provide them with a voice or to help demonstrate how those people have led relatively normal lives up until the point that they have offended and if they haven't led relatively normal lives, then demonstrating what particular circumstances they have suffered from to try and provide explanatory factors for their behaviour … I think providing the bigger picture, the actual story for what causes offending is really important." (TJ expert interviewee 4)

As noted elsewhere, a particular challenge we faced was around the engagement of WwC in Phase 2 of the project, and this had the potential to limit our findings. Nonetheless, over the course of the project, we learned that HJC members in fact had significant experience of a range of

different forms of contact with the CJS; this ranged from being arrested multiple times for a variety of offences (and subsequent incarceration), to experiences of homelessness and associated contact with the police on the streets, to working across the CJS and seeing the many forms of injustice faced by women with lived experience. This helped to shape the experiences, attitudes and ideas of the HJC with a sense of injustice for WwC arising organically throughout the project.

The desire from survivors and those with lived experience of abuse and/or the justice system for more brave spaces speaks to the importance of supportive groups and networks in communities; this is something that members of the HJC remain keen to explore and facilitate (Ethnographic notes P2/WSP6&7).

9.4.2. Bringing people together

The nature of many TJ debates means that there is space for radical thinking and idea development, and the research team expected that this might shape who would engage with the project. When it started, we quickly discovered that there is interest in changing society and the justice system, and resituating communities and accountability, across a broad spectrum of society. Participants ranged from young people in their twenties to retirees, and there was a huge wealth and diversity of experience. Some members had worked in psychotherapy, youth justice, probation and custodial environments. There was no clear-cut, single reason that drew people to join the group. Our work provided opportunities to bring a diverse group of people together, who otherwise might not have met or had the chance to understand each other's views Some wanted to learn more about justice, some were attracted the arts-based delivery, while others were attracted by the topic-focused, arts-based TJ methodologies, which provide a powerful tool for bringing people together.

Around 12 members formed the core of the HJC for the rest of the project, and some others dropped in and out. This provided a stable core around which the group revolved and ensured that there was a sense of familiarity among those who formed the collective. All were aware and accepting of the fact that people had competing demands on their time, and we were pleased and encouraged to see others return, welcoming them back each time and actively engaging everybody in the activities, rather than forming cliques. Across the project, five men (including a member of the research team) attended the workshops, and there were two non-binary members; all other members of the collective identified as female. Despite significant efforts on the part of Restoke and local councillors who sought to support the project, only two members of the collective and one of the facilitators were from ethnically minoritised communities, something that was noted several times in discussions throughout the project. We were also joined at one workshop by a local councillor whose constituency has a significant British Asian community, who explained that many women from minoritised communities do not feel a sense of belonging to the wider community (Bibi, 2022), and this can act as a barrier to engaging with the wider justice apparatus and external groups. This is particularly the case for women who have experienced domestic and sexual abuse (Harrison & Gill, 2018; Hulley et al., 2023), and it can be exacerbated when combined with fear of othering influenced by wider racialised discourses prevalent in society (Bibi, 2022).

This, combined with the importance of space and place discussed in Section 3.2.2, leaves us cautious about reaching conclusions regarding the transferability or generalisability of our findings to all communities. Nonetheless, there are some important themes that we were able to triangulate across the different components of the research, including the systematic review of existing literature and interviews with TJ experts, which gives us a level of confidence into their transferability.

The topic of TJ provided opportunities to present different and often contradictory views, which challenged everyone's thinking, gave cause for reflection and kept participants engaged:

> "I'm trying to focus on what [research team member] said. The provocation of what do

we want the criminal justice system to be like for our young people and what it is hard to come away from is all the other stuff that isn't there for them." (Long Table discussion)

"I thought if I had the space I would take in a young mother and a baby, because you need people around you as positive influencers, someone who can change a nappy, hold a baby, rock a baby, feed a baby, give a bit of … But instead these mothers have been scrutinised and judged and picked apart in the way that you're not if you are from a privileged background." (Long Table discussion)

These discussions were important, because they showcased that the group were looking beyond the immediate criminal act and paying more attention to the wider experiences of WwC. With greater recognition of the root causes of female offending, a space can open up for people and communities to provide better support for those who need it, including those who may have past experience of contact with the CJS. The role of TJ in promoting community-based strategies was identified by a TJ expert:

"I think there are ways that they [community members] find strategies to counter-address what's happening in the community. And, those strategies can be very different things. Strategies can be talking about, actually, why our community's under resourced – and that's a political and social issue, which the community needs to organise around – can organise around." (TJ expert interviewee 3)

9.4.3. Attitudes to justice and a shared sense of purpose

Attitudes to justice are diverse but often firmly held by people within society. This can be a significant point of conflict between different parties. Much thinking around attitudes to justice in England and Wales currently focuses on the role and influence of penal populist discourses and the way that these can shape attitudes (Mahoney et al., 2022; Pratt, 2022):

"There's two beliefs – fairness beliefs – at play in the population. One is what they call 'contextual fairness' and the other a sort of more 'an eye for an eye' type fairness. And 'whatever the crime, everybody should get the same penalty'. And it's quite easy for women to trigger the belief: even with women, particularly, on the 'eye for an eye' thing." (TJ expert interviewee 2)

"They're very, very wedded to the idea that people who commit crime have made a rational, premeditated choice to do that crime. They've done it on purpose and, therefore, all the ways to reduce crime need to work on that rational decision … what the reframing stuff would say is, 'That's a very strong belief, but you can work around it, to try and work on other beliefs, which may be more productive' as it were." (TJ expert interviewee 2)

The reality, however, is much more complex than this. While many headline debates, including in and around election periods, focus on the idea of being 'tough on crime' (see Section 1.3.1), there is an underlying desire to try and reform the system to improve opportunities for (re)habilitation, (re) integration and (re)settlement, and reduce the stigma of criminalisation:

"MPs are most amenable to change on this [reform of criminal record checks during recruitment processes] because they also feel that people should get a chance to move on in their lives and not have something that happened twenty years ago still be dogging their efforts to get jobs and so on." (TJ expert interviewee 2)

One of the big challenges for proponents of TJ echoed throughout our own findings, is the need to overcome an ingrained reliance upon statutory groups and organisations to intervene and provide support:

"It's very, very easy – and, actually, very convenient – to resort to punitive approaches. I think a lot of what I see as transformative justice work is actually about, first of all, addressing the over-reliance on other people to resolve issues in

> our communities. And then, once we've got away from that we can then, hopefully, find better ways of addressing harm and things." (TJ expert interviewee 3)

As we note elsewhere in this report, TJ approaches centre accountability very differently:

> "There is a [capitalist] desire to imagine that justice can be done or completed, but enacted by the authorities, and so that distances us from the process. TJ invites people to consider 'justice' as processes, ongoing, perhaps unfinished but therefore far more likely to need community engagement and disseminated accountability. That might account for some of the tensions, because there's something comforting in the narrative that the state will look after us. So actually, your work in those workshops is not just to get the varieties of justice people might imagine but also to loosen the ties to the very idea that the state will/must/should care and protect effectively." (Notes from a discussion between SB [a member of the research team] and AW [a member of the advisory group], March 2023)

As we note in Section 1.2.1, TJ acknowledges that cultural conditions and structural barriers, including those in our communities, play important roles in the causes of crime (Gready & Robins, 2019; Hoddy & Oliveira, 2021; Campbell et al., 2024); it posits that by taking small steps and acting at an early stage, we can all play a role in reducing the potential for a criminal, exploitative or abusive act to take place and can provide important support for someone to (re)settle, (re)integrate and (re) engage in our communities should they become criminalised. This was a fundamental shift for many of our participants and something that took time to explore. The creative-arts-based practices we drew upon throughout the project enabled us to do this sensitively but in depth, supporting members of the community to better understand the situation and engage and address things differently. In this way, TJ can break down the binary between those who do harm and those who experience harm:

> "The question is not how we can shut them out so that we can be kept safe from them because that's not really how it works; the question is how can we as a community help to heal and work together when someone has done something wrong, to move forward to a safer future." (TJ expert interviewee 4)

There was acknowledgement among members of the HJC that these ideas are radical and require a significant rupture from established norms:

> "Life isn't fair, but how much of that is because we say, well it's not and we accept the status quo and how many times do we actually go, that's making things more difficult for me, it takes longer, it means I have to change some of the things that we do or our attitudes or give us a little less privilege maybe or whatever but if it's in our power to go, yes, it's not fair but I can do something about that." (HJC member at workshop)

HJC members were clear that there is a role for them to play in changing systems, and that they may be able to fulfil part of that. It was widely recognised that volunteers have a shared purpose to keep the community together (Ethnographic notes P1/WSP4), and there was growing recognition that building shared capacity – rather than reliance upon one or two key individuals – was important for bringing communities together and affecting change (Ethnographic notes P1/WSP4). This is particularly important because, as was noted in one of our advisory group meetings, communities are diverse, and the needs of all must be represented; this is something that was central to the project and the work of the HJC as a community group:

> "This is not a process of researchers trying to extract implications of justice from a community or set of communities. Instead, it emphasises that we cannot get to different ideas of justice without engaging with different views. This research and workshop process helps people open up beyond their own narratives to meet others' views …The focus does not have to be about establishing agreement or changing people's minds, but asking the questions around established/received systems of justice and working through examples." (Notes from a discussion between SB [a member of the research team] and AW

[a member of the advisory group], March 2023)

Throughout the project, we found that creative methodologies were helpful in that they did not seek to directly resolve justice issues identified by members but instead opened systems, power dynamics and underpinning ideas to different forms of questioning, imagining and exploring (see Section 3.3.3)

In this way, creative approaches can encourage a depth of engagement with problems rather than asking communities to focus on short-term or immediate responses. TJ invites people to consider justice as a process: ongoing and perhaps unfinished, but thus far more likely to need enduring community engagement, participation and shared accountability. Using arts-based practices provided us with a varied set of tools to navigate and sit with this complexity, while also offering communities the means to build the capacity to explore these ideas together.

9.4.4. Accountability

TJ enables accountability to become a process of relationship building and community engagement, in which communities work together to identify harms, reflect on their own role in the causes of these harms and collectively consider how they might address them. Accountability is then no longer experienced as an oppositional act that isolates individuals who do not align with community expectations; instead, TJ asks the community and those who have caused the immediate harm to come together, develop a sense of accountability predicated on a shared understanding of harm and find ways to heal (Olsson & Moore, 2024). The person who has done harm participates in this communal process. As other TJ experts noted:

> "Transformative justice provides a new perspective on how to view our relationships with our community, our friends and family … using early intervention and educational programmes to help people understand that there is community accountability when people do bad things or do wrong things, there is a reason why they make these decisions, and we all play a role when someone offends [….] Transformative justice therefore offers a different perspective through which to understand communities and their role in justice spaces." (TJ expert interviewee 4)

However, as another practitioner noted:

> "The challenge is to change that accountability lens from the individual, to the other factors." (TJ expert interviewee 2)

Explorations of accountability with HJC community members enabled us to consider everyday practices of justice and the smaller things that each of us might change in our daily lives that will move us to a more just community – something that is often difficult. Participants recognised that violence does not happen in a vacuum, and that TJ aims to connect such incidents to the conditions that create and perpetuate them. They understood that TJ advocates for supporting people exactly where they are, recognising the impact of violence upon people's lives and communities (Ethnographic notes P1/WSP6).

This was a productive way to support people and communities to be empowered and achieve change in justice spaces, where achieving national and systemic change can feel overwhelming. Exploring ways in which we could activate community accountability around issues or hold ourselves accountable for harm we have caused in our relationships with others offered manageable paths to action. As one member noted:

> "[Initially,] I thought it was more about changing the justice system at the top, but I've come to realise that it's more about everybody has got a part to play, everybody can make a difference and it is up to us all, it is everybody's responsibility in the community and it's having a different perspective, isn't it, when you are thinking about what you can do personally to support." (Long Table discussion)

Our explorations of accountability challenged

HJC members, and they increasingly engaged in deeper reflexive thought around their own views, biases and actions, indicating that transformative approaches can help to foster greater personal accountability for one's own actions and those of others in the community around us:

> "I've really enjoyed it and to be honest it's made me look at myself, and hopefully I'm trying my best to change a few aspects of myself, and I'm hoping it's working." (HJC member in final focus group)

> "I think the people who've stayed the course are the people who've been willing to listen to lots of different opinions, and whether you agree with them or not, being able to respect them and listen and be open minded, rather than 'oh no, I don't agree with that'. I think that's been really lovely to see that happen." (HJC member in final focus group)

We found that thinking about an expanded vision of accountability was an engaging and expansive way for communities to feel empowered in addressing the failures in the justice system. We also found that engaging in conversations of community accountability expanded the scope of what was being investigated by the group into broader conceptions of justice, including transformative gender justice, racial justice and wider forms of social justice, equality and equity:

> "Can we agree and somehow address the crime of poverty, because most women are imprisoned for crimes of poverty, that they suffer from, not because of extreme violence and not because of huge crimes. So I suppose those are my two passions: can we object to the grotesque numbers of people in prison inappropriately, particularly just compared with other countries much better than us and to the importance of addressing poverty because this is the cause often in people being in prison and it's destructive for other reasons, and can we lobby our MPs, our councillors, go out on the streets and support good projects." (HJC member at workshop)

We were encouraged by this desire among participants to move beyond a focus on criminalisation and for members to foster this shared sense of ownership of the need to work collaboratively at a grassroots level, to see change because:

> "[We need to be] willing to think about the issue of poverty as a structural injustice rather than an individual that has to be blamed or whatever." (TJ expert interviewee 1)

Our findings show that there is a role for communities in justice, and that people can come together to explore and develop shared understandings of justice. This is significant, because crime and justice have an important role in boundary maintenance in society through demarcating what is acceptable or deviant (Durkheim, 1997). These boundaries are important at a community level because of the way in which people live in such close proximity to one another. Given that local communities are the sites of many of the criminal and deviant activities that we as individuals encounter, it is important that members of those communities have a role in shaping responses. This is because not only crime, but also its aftermath (including the (re) settlement, (re)integration and (re)habilitation of people with convictions are experienced in, by, and through communities. Moreover, in small and close-knit communities – which, based on all of our experiences, seems to include Fenton – the experiences of injustice and structural barriers are frequently shared but difficult to articulate to a wider audience. In this context, our arts-based methodologies have helped to facilitate these discussions and develop empathetic shared understandings, as illustrated in Figure 11.

Communities are not perfect, but they have to be accountable.
Help to build strong, supportive communities by gathering circles of people to share stories, struggles and resources.
Create spaces to build shared language on what positive, loving and caring relationships look and feel like.
As well as those with mistreatment, abuse and violence.
Violence does not happen in a vacuum.
Make it a practice of taking accountability
and provide a space to talk about our actions
and complicity and the impact it has on others.
Sometimes events can be emotionally devastating to one an all.
Being honest and open about our experiences and witness of the behaviour of others can prevent escalation of abuse within our communities.

Figure 11. Excerpt from Generations of Transformative Justice, Composed by the Hopeful Justice Collective.

9.5. Objective: Establish whether TJ can enhance individual welfare and social well-being for both WwC and local residents and measure the cost-effectiveness of the approach

9.5.1. Background

HJC members were asked to complete two online surveys: one in December 2023, prior to the start of the workshops, and another in July 2024, after project completion. Any individuals joining the workshops later were asked to complete a baseline survey when they joined and a second survey at the end of the project.

The surveys included:

1. the Community Life Survey (CLS), a key evidence source used by the UK Government to understand community engagement, volunteering and social cohesion (GOV.UK, 2024);
2. the Client Service Receipt Inventory (CSRI), a survey used by economists to help understand the wider societal resources that individuals use and engage with, such as health and social care and contact with the criminal justice system; the CSRI facilitates estimates of economic impact (Personal Social Services Research Unit, n.d.).

A total of 21 participants completed both surveys at baseline and 13 completed both at the follow-up stage; however, only three individuals completed them at both baseline and follow-up. This has limited our comparative analysis to average scores for the two groups, and it is important to recognise that even these may reflect differences between the characteristics of the two groups rather than change over time.

Four WwC participating in the project were also invited to complete the same surveys at the same time points but only provided baseline data. This reflects our wider difficulties in engaging WwC within the wider project. Given the small numbers of individuals who completed the surveys, the findings should be treated as indicative only, and

future studies should explore ways to maximise participant recruitment and to improve follow-up data responses, especially from WwC.

To better understand the economic benefits and improvements in health and well-being resulting from performing arts interventions on community engagement and cohesion, future evaluations could consider using randomised designs with control groups.

Demographic data

Demographic data collected at baseline are reported in Table 1 (all tables are provided in Appendix 1). The profiles of the baseline and follow-up stage respondents varied in a number of ways. For example, while 90% of baseline respondents were aged between 45 and 79 years old, 69% of respondents at the follow-up stage fell within this age range.

9.5.2. Results from the CLS

In this section, we present some highlights of the responses to the CLS questions. A summary of the full results is given in Table 2.

Overall well-being

Each participant was asked how satisfied they currently were with their life. At baseline, the average score out a maximum possible 10 for community participants was 7.6 (it was 7.3 for the WwC). This had reduced to 5.7 for community participants at follow-up. Similarly, average scores (again out of 10) for a question asking to what extent they felt things in their lives were worthwhile fell from 8.4 (8.0 for WwC) to 5.2 between baseline and follow-up, and from 7.8 (both groups) to 5.8 for a question asking how happy participants were.

Interestingly, questions about anxiety and loneliness showed trends in the opposite direction. Reported average scores for anxiety (with a best possible score of 0 and worst possible of 10) improved between baseline (4.3) and follow-up (2.2) for community participants. WwC returned an average baseline score of 2.8, indicating that they were somewhat more anxious than the community participants at baseline.

The scoring for the CLS question assessing feelings of loneliness ranges from 1 (hardly ever/occasionally feel lonely) to 5 (never/hardly ever feel lonely). Community participants returned improved scores at follow-up (an average of 1.5, compared to 2.2 at baseline). WwC returned an average baseline score of 2.3 for loneliness.

Perceptions of the local area

The proportion of community participants who said they "tend to agree" or "definitely agree" with the statement that their "local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together" increased from 67% at baseline to 77% at follow-up. A smaller proportion of WwC (50%) agreed with this statement at baseline.

Community connections and belonging

Despite the fact that CLS questions measuring a sense of community, trust and regular contact with neighbours (e.g. talking to neighbours, helping in an emergency or doing shopping) showed a decline in average scores between baseline and follow-up for the community participants, there was an increase (from 57% to 61%) in the proportion feeling "strongly" or "fairly strongly" that they belonged to their immediate neighbourhood. Three of the four WwC felt "fairly strongly" that they belonged to their immediate neighbourhood at baseline.

Activities in the local community

At baseline, 43% of participants reported being involved in at least one of the following forms of community activity:

- School governor (five participants).
- A group making decisions about local education services (three participants).
- A decision-making group set up for various activities such as tackling local crime problems (one participant).
- A group making decisions on local health services (one participant).
- A decision-making group set up to regenerate the local area (one participant).
- Another group making decisions on services in the local community (two participants).

Only one of the four WwC who supplied baseline data reported participating in a group, which was making decisions on local services for young people.

At follow-up, the percentage of participants who reported taking part in community activities dropped to 31%. Similarly, the proportion of community participants who reported having spent time helping with social action activities (e.g. organising a community event or trying to set up or stop the closure of a local service or amenity) in the last 12 months reduced from 67% at baseline to 62% at follow-up.

In contrast, however, community participants were considerably more likely to report that they had volunteered in the last 12 months at groups, clubs or organisations (excluding the TJ project) at the follow-up stage (77%) than at baseline (57%). The same was true for unpaid help offered to other people in the last 12 months (increasing from 71% to 85%). The average amount that community participants reported having given to charity in the last four weeks also increased, from an average of £20 at baseline to an average of £34 at follow-up.

One community participant reported at baseline having participated in five decision-making groups in the preceding 12 months, including a group set up to regenerate the local area, a decision-making group set up to tackle local crime problems, a tenants' group decision-making committee, a group making decisions on local services for young people, and another unspecified group making decisions on services in the local community. This provides a vivid reminder of the reality that the work and responsibility for community improvement are not evenly spread across individuals.

Influence and social action in the local area

Scores measuring the extent to which participants felt that they could personally influence decisions affecting their local area were high at both time points (around 3 out of a best possible score of 4) but dropped very slightly at follow-up (from 3.0 to 2.8). A very similar pattern was observed in scores assessing how personally important it was for participants to feel they could influence decisions in their local area (3.3 at baseline, 3.2 at follow-up). Average baseline scores for WwC were the same as those for community participants.

Participants were also asked if they thought people in their area could really change the way that their area is run by getting involved. The proportion saying they either "tended to agree" or "definitely agreed" with this statement increased from 81% at baseline to 100% at follow-up. Three of the four WwC agreed with the statement at baseline.

9.5.3. Costing analysis

Cost of setting up and running the project

The cost of delivering the project was £21,600. This included £14,637 costs for the employment of two co-facilitators from the women's theatre company Clean Break, who specialise in working with people with convictions, the prison population and the wider community, and £6,963 for project support from SWA. Other costs were related to the recruitment of participants, supervision, travel, general training, room hire, focus groups, workshops, specialist trauma-informed training and project management fees.

Budgetary impact and cost per participant

With a total budget of £21,600 and 38 participants, the cost of the project can be estimated at £568 per participant.

Results from the CSRI

The CSRI survey was administered to project participants, alongside the CLS, at the baseline and follow-up stages. The CSRI survey used in this economic evaluation reported on health and social care, as well as the use of and contact with the CJS. The survey results are reported in Table 3.

To assess the cost impact of the project, all the resource information provided in the CSRI by respondents was combined with unit costs available from official sources, for example, the Home Office report The Economic and Social Costs of Crime (Heeks et al., 2018) and the Unit Costs of Health and Social Care 2023 Manual, produced by the University of Kent (Personal Social Services Research Unit, 2023). In terms of a costing approach, assumptions made on which unit costs to include, and the data sources that informed this, can be seen within Table 4.

The average cost to health, social care and the CJS for the 21 baseline survey participants was £792; in contrast, the corresponding average cost for the 13 participants who completed the survey at follow-up was £432, showing an average participant resource-use saving of approximately £360 over time for health and social care and the CJS.

Another way of considering the cost impact of the TJ intervention, and what some of the wider economic benefits might be, would be to consider the average participant spend of £568 against given units of improvements identified within the study evaluation. For example, policymakers and decision-makers may deem that a £568 average spend for a 20% improvement in reported anxiety and/or 14% improvement in loneliness is money well spent.

Given the limitations of this study, including its small sample sizes and differences between the populations providing data at baseline and follow-up, these results should be viewed as indicative at this stage. However, it would be incorrect to completely dismiss the measured improvements as a real effect; after all, in their meta-analyses of community engagement in public health interventions, O'Mara-Eves et al. (2015, p. 29) found that "there is solid evidence that community engagement interventions have a positive impact on a range of health outcomes across various conditions." Haldane et al.'s (2019) systematic review also adds weight to this argument, providing evidence that community involvement does have a positive impact on health, particularly when substantiated by strong organisational and community processes. The World Health Organization (2020) also asserts that there are "undeniable benefits to engaging communities in promoting health and well-being" adding, "At its core, community engagement enables changes in behaviour, environments, policies, programmes and practices within communities."

9.5.4. Costing Discussion

It is worth noting that the CLS data results from the TJ study indicated a number of differences between the participants and the wider UK population, based on the most recently published UK Government results from the 2021/2022 CLS (Gov.uk 2022). For example:

- Only 6% of 2021/2022 CLS respondents said they "often" or "always" felt lonely, while no participant in the TJ project gave this answer at the baseline or follow-up stage.
- Of general CLS respondents, 16% had engaged in formal and 26% in informal volunteering at least once a month, compared to the 43% of TJ project community participants at baseline and 38% at follow-up who had helped with groups, clubs or organisations at least once a week over the last 12 months.
- Just over a quarter of general CLS respondents (27%) agreed that they could personally influence decisions affecting their local area, compared to 90% of TJ project community participants at baseline and 77% at follow-up.
- Two-thirds (66%) of general CLS respondents reported having given money to charity in the last four weeks, compared to 95% of TJ project community participants at baseline and 85% at follow-up.

Notwithstanding these differences, and bearing in mind the significant methodological limitations of the study, there are some tentative indications that the arts-based TJ intervention benefited participants in various ways. For example, participants responding at the end of the project were more likely than those responding at the beginning to say that they felt a sense of belonging in the local neighbourhood, that they viewed it as a place where people of different backgrounds get on well together, and that – in their view – local people could really change the way that their area is run by getting involved. They were also more likely to report having engaged in some types of voluntary or charitable activities. Ratings for anxiety and loneliness were also improved at the follow-up stage, although it was notable that scores for life satisfaction and happiness had worsened. It is possible that these latter findings reflect the rising cost of living and worsening mental health among the population over the study period (ONS, 2022b; Mental Health Foundation, 2023).

9.5.5. Conditions required for TJ to meet its potential

Taking time

While unexplored in the context of rehabilitation, resettlement and reintegration, time is a theme that has always been associated with crime and justice, particularly around people 'doing time' while incarcerated (McNeill, 2015); however, time is also needed for change, for new opportunities and directions to emerge or to heal after victimisation. Time is also central to TJ approaches and generating change, developing genuine participation in democratic structures and decision-making processes (Waisbich & Coelho, 2019), and offering up space for healing and reparation of harm (Reading, 2019). Research has therefore shown that time is vital for generating change, and our project was no different: time needed to be spent unpacking and exploring key themes, ideas and experiences and coming together to form meaningful, compassionate shared understandings. This included recognising the challenges and circumstances that people had faced and were still facing, as well as developing tools for change as a community and as individuals within it, to look to the future.

The way that time operates in community-building work is not always linear; as Aylwyn Walsh (2023) asserted in her work on arts practice, repair and redress in a South African context, "a redressive orientation to futures is not a chronologically linear journey, but one that moves between temporalities via creative arts pedagogies, and thus contributes to reparative futures" (p. 10). This resonates with the ways in which the HJC were often not progressing forwards in our creative practice, but rather we were pulled off on tangents and looping back to conversations and ideas discussed in earlier sessions as our understanding of harm and accountability grew. There were key moments at which we were moving forward towards producing an artwork or hosting a workshop, but at other times we were looking backward to develop our knowledge. Providing the space and the time to do this work is vital for the realisation of stronger and more just communities.

Furthermore, not only can it take time for the changes that TJ advocates seek to achieve to occur, but "small steps are key, and it won't be a quick change" (Ethnographic notes P1/WSP6). HJC members and TJ experts recognised that change may not be quick or dramatic:

> "It takes a couple of generations to change beliefs, but you might be able to work around where people's beliefs are to get them to support a different system." (TJ expert interviewee 2)

Time is often a scarce or limited resource; political change and electoral cycles operate on relatively fixed timescales with political leaders favouring quick fixes to support their policy aims and ambitions while they are in power and able to influence change.

However, across the TJ literature (Gready, 2019; Gready & Robins, 2019; Hoddy & Evans, 2020), it is emphasised that social and structural change is not something that can be rushed, with many TJ projects initially running over two or three years, and often building from there:

> "… once they [community members with lived experience] are ready, and getting ready in our experience takes six or eight months, and then inviting other people along to the conversation and the party, and then together they are working for a year, first of all at building human relationships and then actually about working out what are the things that they can do to achieve things." (TJ expert interviewee 1)

Time remained a central theme throughout this project. It took time to form and develop new bonds and senses of community, especially when bringing people with diffuse identities, attitudes and experiences together. Tuckman (1965) describes the process of small-group development, exploring the different phases of forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning, all of which need time for people to understand one another and the way in which they can function as part of a group.

Our early workshops reflected this. There was a degree of respectful disagreement between

HJC members: some believed there was a need for parameters and law enforcement, while others took a more abolitionist approach. This diversity of views posed the potential for conflict, particularly when the collective was in its infancy and people were encountering more unfamiliar views. However, later on, particularly when undertaking activities around critical readings and reflections on policy and practice, the group became increasingly united in its recognition of injustice and the need for root-and-branch reform of the justice system. There were times when the conversation could have become less considerate, and some members were more vocal and expressive in their views than others; while we acknowledge that this may have suppressed the views of some participants, the team felt that the group moderated themselves well and worked to maintain the agreed principles, which resulted in a genuine consensus that there is a need for change (Ethnographic notes P1/WSP2). On the whole, the HJC worked through Tuckman's phases remarkably quickly, particularly given that they met, on average, just once per month; this is perhaps a testament to their shared goal of better understanding the challenges faced by WwC.

Tuckman and Jensen (1977) also noted that specific events (such as introducing a new population to the group, as we did here in Phase 2) can serve to rupture the process and lead to re-storming and re-norming. This was also the case with this research (see Section 4.3), particularly when two men joined Phase 2, one of whom remained a regular participant. These new additions changed the dynamic of the group (see Section 4.5.2 for further discussion on the importance of involving men).

Interactions within the HJC were largely good-natured, and the positioning of the research team to act as mediators within debates meant that we were able to support critical but constructive debates and conversations as people's attitudes progressed over time. We were fortunate in the sense that we had the time and support to enable us to have members of the team to act in such a capacity, and community groups need someone to spend the time (at least in the initial stages) mediating some debates to facilitate the development of meaningful bonds. With time to build community cohesion, the group themselves were able to challenge controversial views. Thus, when community groups are formed, there may be a need for a significant time commitment from those involved in developing and running them, many of whom may be volunteers:

> "[Another activist in the organisation] and I are like the two paid staff in the organisation. And then there are a lot of other members just volunteer their time. So the two of us are paid. And there are maybe four or five people who do quite a lot of the work. Also, because I think those people are. They are more entrenched in society. They spend most of their time on social society work. So one of our colleagues … his day-to-day work is like a manual worker in a migrant domestic work organisation. Another is a kind of a journalist and things like that." (TJ expert interviewee 3)

> "The organisation has about 40 volunteers and that number has obviously ebbed and flowed over the years but, by and large, the reason why we are such a successful organisation is because we are driven by a community and so there is a lot of volunteer work." (TJ expert interviewee 4).

Finally, it is important to recognise that people within communities have many competing demands on their time, e.g. family and work commitments, and that their lives can sometimes be chaotic. This reality presented challenges for this research, impacting on recruitment and consistency of participation. Therefore, while greater community engagement in supporting WwC and others affected by crime and justice is desirable, it is vital to recognise the significant practical and logistical barriers that may need to be overcome for engagement to be meaningful and effective. For TJ projects specifically, there is a clear need to support communities in developing the capacity – and making the time – for such radical involvement and change.

A culture of mutual concern and support

Linked to the importance of lived experience (see Section 3.4.1), we observed a culture of mutual concern and a desire to give and receive support among HJC members. Our early focus group with participants from the women's estate also showed how important support within the community is for those who are nearing their re-entry into society, and some expressed anxiety around this:

> "How do I know that I'm going to get back into the community, how do I know I am not just going to get back into my lifestyle of drinking and taking drugs, how do I know what's going to happen to me?" (Participant 4, prison focus group)

A TJ expert offered an explanation for this:

> "There is this idea that if you don't fit community expectations into what is acceptable then you're just not going to be part of the community anymore and that's just awful." (TJ expert interviewee 4)

In line with this, the workshop with justice-involved women identified "the need for more understanding and support in the local community". This was also recognised by HJC members:

> "Creating and bringing people into communities where they are respected, where they are cared for, where they are looked after, where they are listened to, has got to be a step forward rather than oh, we've done this thing, we're going to be shunned now because you are a bad person." (Long Table discussion)

Discussions encompassed the knock-on effects of not being supported and the responsibilities communities have in creating a space where people are accepted for who they are, where differences are valued and where it is recognised that they are, after all, members of the community in their own right:

> "I think that people need to be invested in their communities, they need to feel valued and that they are part of that community, and they are valued where they live. If they are valued where they live, I think that they are less likely to try and maybe destroy it, I don't know, but I think for some people it is harder valuing yourself in some circumstances and I think we need to work harder as a community to ensure that everybody feels valued." (Long Table discussion)

Research participants agreed that potential solutions to meet the support needs of WwC need not be overly complicated or resource intensive; indeed, someone simply reaching out and checking in can play a very important role. As one participant explained:

> "It would be nice to have that kind of, not 24/7 support, but someone to just message you so they can help you kind of get back into the community." (Participant 6, prison focus group)

When tasked with creating a mind map, participants were asked to engage in 'blue-sky thinking' and rebuild the CJS from scratch. In this scenario, money would not be an issue. Participants in the workshop with justice-involved women identified the need for more spaces to foster community connections for people who may be isolated and at risk of being exploited by others. They also highlighted the importance of increased resources for family days in prison, echoing the significance of spending time with children and significant others as important areas of focus. Further, they expressed the need for support for families in the community as they address the challenges of navigating criminalisation. Families are themselves members of the community, and they frequently experience the stigma of criminalisation alongside the person with a conviction (SCCJR, 2015); we argue that this support needs to be maintained beyond the prison gates and through the transition back into the community. The need for family-centred provision has also been identified in other research (e.g. Rogers et al., 2022), and the need for better prospects for prisoners to maintain links with their families was a recommendation made by Lord Woolf nearly 30 years ago (Home Office, 1991, para. 1.167); this is a point that has been repeatedly highlighted in subsequent reports (e.g. Farmer, 2019; see also Section 3.6).

Importantly, however, some participants expressed that they did not feel equipped with the understanding or awareness to step in or to support. The specialist workshops – for example, the one led by Women's Aid and Clean Break's trauma-informed Leading with Kindness session – helped to grow the understanding that often just small steps can begin to showcase a desire and willingness to support, and this can in turn open the door to greater engagement and trust between community members (Ethnographic notes P1/WSP3). The project seemed to have some success in creating a community within the HJC:

> "It's a long time since I've been part of a community, in fact probably when I was very young because there aren't many communities about today, so I have felt as if I am a part of the community, which is very nice" (HJC member at final focus group)

Navigating power and shared ownership

The notion of power is peppered throughout this report, but it is explored here within the context of sharing the ownership of the project with the participants.

During Phase 1, there was an appetite among members to lead the opening sessions of the workshops; for example, one member ran an exercise about appreciation and being in the moment, another led an activity around movement and interpretation, and a third looked at emotions in the body. Furthermore, the ethnographic notes record how the group appeared keen on the soundscapes idea and were becoming increasingly creative in their thinking, with more members taking ownership of the space. However, it was noted in the final HJC members' focus group that these member-led activities were not always fully appreciated, as they often reflected the interests of the person leading them rather than those of the wider group.

The intention of the research team was to gradually hand over leadership roles to participants in the hope that the workshops would continue beyond the research-project period. We had hoped that the trust that was building within the community and the location of the work on their own doorstep would ease the transition of ownership. However, as the end of the project neared, we saw limited willingness among workshop participants to take on leadership roles. The reasons for this appeared to be a lack of confidence in their leadership skills combined with feeling overburdened with other life/work commitments. This was reflected while preparing the community event to showcase the work we had been doing, as one participant anxiously pushed back against leading an activity, partly due to their own lack of confidence in leading.2

Challengingly, and despite efforts throughout the project to encourage members to take ownership of the HJC, by the end of the project, we were unsure as to whether it would continue after the research team withdrew. There was a clear appetite for continuation, but as discussed earlier, members had competing demands on their time and felt that they needed someone to take a leadership role, directing ideas and activities. This reinforces the need for the provision of significant capacity and resources to enable meaningful engagement in community activities:

> "I wouldn't want to be taking control, I haven't got that much time to do that, I've got other claims on my time at the minute, but being involved in something, yes, I'd want to help in some way." (HJC member at final focus group)

> "I think this is always the thing, when you get to this stage, it's like unless you have somebody or an established group or a couple of experienced facilitators to say we're going to create something. I think as us, if you go, we'll be like where do we take it, I mean we might meet up and do a few things, but it won't be a given." (HJC member at final focus group)

More positively, during the final focus group with community members, and at the very end of data collection, we were pleased to hear that nobody felt that there had been a power imbalance in the workshops:

> "I felt like everybody was on the same level, even though obviously some people have come from different walks of life, and nobody wore a badge ... But it felt good because everybody was on the same level." (HJC member at final focus group)

One member remarked that they had not realised that the members of the research team held PhDs or included professors, due to the way in which we had immersed ourselves in the community throughout the research process:

> "I didn't actually even know until today that you two were doctors … I've never once felt like you guys were speaking down to us in any way, shape or form." (HJC member at final focus group)

The research team felt that a relatively equal power balance between all involved in such workshops is important for them to be effective, as it allows for open discussion and, in our view, contributes to creating brave spaces (see below).

9.6. Objective: Inform policy and practice about the needs of WwC and how best to meet them through community-led interventions

It is the authors' hope that the recent arrival of a new UK Government may give rise to new opportunities for the findings of this research to inform the development of policy over the lifetime of a new parliament (despite Labour's manifesto promise to use "all relevant powers to build prisons").

Our findings – particularly from the focus groups conducted with survivors of abuse and women in prison – indicate a need for more effective, considered and personalised support that recognises the challenges facing WwC. This need has been reflected in policy ambitions advocating for the reduced use of short custodial sentences and greater recognition of families and communities in supporting the desistance journeys for WwC (MoJ, 2018a). As our findings in Section 3.1.1 show, women frequently feel failed and let down by a lack of effective multi-agency coordination and communication; those who are already in a vulnerable position then become exposed to greater risks of further victimisation and abuse.

The limited engagement of WwC in the second phase of this research means that we are currently unable to assess the direct capacity of communities to support them at present. However, the difficulties in engaging these women in a community-focused group arguably illustrates their reticence – informed by past experiences of stigmatisation and abuse – to engage with others publicly. This is an important consideration for policymakers and practitioners, given that engagement with the wider community and acceptance by that community form crucial pillars of the third – or tertiary – stage of desistance (see McNeill and Schinkel, 2024)

In the workshop we ran with WwC, we found that the participants particularly enjoyed how the use of arts practice offered them an opportunity to engage with issues in ways that did not require them to share their own personal experiences:

> "Sometimes we just talk about what's happened to us and how we ended up here. I like how this isn't real, it's made up by us all, but it's still the real kind of things." (WwC workshop participant)

Instead, we used creative frames to explore issues that the group felt strongly about. This boundary between reality and imagination enabled us to move away from individual encounters of harm and trauma to consider some of the shared and systemic issues that impact women in the justice system, as well as enabling them to take the lead in imagining alternative futures for our relationships with justice. This use of creative practice to examine community issues is a well-documented strategy in community theatre scholarship and contributes to its capacity

to engage groups that might be considered more reticent to attend other communal events addressing justice (Bartley, 2020; McAvinchey, 2020).

As we have explored throughout this report, and as signalled in the policy goals in place at the time of the research, there is also a role for communities in supporting WwC as part of wider strategies. The interplay between communities and local and national policy and practice decision-making is significant and complex in this regard. The loss of many sites of justice from communities – as documented elsewhere in this report – means that there is an increasing distance between the two. Courts are more dispersed, and prisons – while still problematic in terms of the inadequacy of meaningful opportunities for (re)habilitaiton prior to (re)settlement and (re)integration – have also become more geographically isolated from the communities that they seek to protect. As noted in Section 1.3.1, this is particularly the case for women's prisons.

It is interesting to reflect on the concept of "community prisons" initially proposed by Lord Woolf in his detailed report into the riots that took place in prisons in the late 1990s (Home Office, 1991). Woolf described a vision in which community prisons would be "sited within reasonable proximity to, and having close connections with, the community with which the prisoners they hold have their closest links" (paras. 11.49–11.68). Unfortunately, circumstances – including a series of escapes from high-security prisons – meant that Woolf's recommendation was never implemented; furthermore, despite the idea resurfacing again in 2005 (Clarke, 2005), the value in a community-prisons approach to the prison estate has still not been recognised.

Our findings show that there is an appetite in communities for more effective engagement with policy and practice. HJC members expressed a desire to see policy and practice engagement with the project, and they put forward ideas to help them develop a better understanding as to how the justice system operates at present, such as a court visit. We were fortunate to be joined by two newly elected local councillors for one of our Phase 1 workshops, both of whom are very active members of the SoT community and keen to make a difference. Thus, the HJC and its desire to engage and seek change have been made visible to local policymakers.

HJC members recognised the need for community action and that they cannot rely on local and national government to affect change (Ethnographic notes P1/WSP4); however, crucially, while the appetite for involvement in the justice process is there, our findings indicate the need to build collective capacity and efficacy within communities for the promise of this to be realised. Communities should not be expected to step in and fulfil the role of the state. After 14 years of austerity, many of our most important communities – particularly from the perspective of vulnerable groups, including WwC – are poorly resourced, with people's time and personal resources already stretched. Echoing the findings of Hall et al. (2018), who explored the role of families in maintaining connections to communities and building "resettlement capital", our research indicates that the local and national state cannot abdicate their collective responsibilities and expect communities to fill this void.

Beyond the justice landscape, this project also offers significant insights for cultural policy and arts practitioners due to its distinct approach to arts provision for and with women with lived experience of the CJS. Organisations delivering arts and criminal justice work predominantly do so through projects that are solely aimed at working with people with that shared lived experience. There is currently a sparsity of cultural provision that intentionally brings people with lived experience together with other local residents who do not have direct experience of the CJS. In this research, there was a clear desire from community members to more actively support WwC, alongside a feeling that arts practice was a useful way to facilitate reintegration and support relationships to develop within communities.

9.7. Objective: Contribute to the literature and knowledge base about using TJ to engage and integrate communities within a UK context

Worldwide, this research is the first to both use an arts-based approach to TJ and to apply it to (re)integrating WwC. It will therefore make significant contributions to knowledge bases relating to both TJ approaches and arts-based community interventions. We have already begun to document our findings via blog posts and presentations to academic and practitioner audiences, including at the 2023 Ministry of Justice Insights Festival, and we are mapping out a series of publications based on our empirical and methodological findings as the project draws to a close. Beyond this, we have developed a Creative Toolkit to enable others to learn from and apply the creative-arts-led approaches that we have developed in their own TJ practice.

9.8. Objective: Promote the personal and professional development of all those involved in the project

The research team have used this project to work creatively with a variety of people from different disciplines, at different stages of their development. This included:

- Three MA students (two social work students from London South Bank University and one criminology student from Nottingham Trent University) were invited to choose topics for their systematic reviews that related directly to this project and feed into this 'live' research. One review focused on TJ, another on barriers faced by women in the CJS, and the third on suicide/self-harm within the women's estate. Undertaking this work enabled the students to meet the requirements of their degrees, and the two social work students are now in full-time employment. Their original intention to adapt the systematic reviews and have them published in academic peer-reviewed journals has not been possible due to their work commitments.
- The personal and professional development of the two workshop co-facilitators with lived experience of the CJS, who came to us from the charity Clean Break, was obvious to the research team. As their confidence grew and their skills expanded, each was more willing to take on responsibility for devising and leading exercises within the workshop. During the project's culminating community event, the development of both co-facilitators was again clearly evident as they supported HJC members to run their own exercises. Following the community event, both were asked by the editor of an academic journal that explores key themes around community justice to write a reflection on their own personal journeys through the justice system and beyond.
- All members of the research team also benefited from their involvement in the programme. Testimonies from the research team and co-facilitators are provided in Appendix 2.

10. Limitations and learning

This section aims to capture team discussions during which we reflected on our work to see what we could have done differently. Inevitably, this included Z's experiences within the group (see Section 2.2.2). It should be noted that the research team found out about Z's decision not to return from the service manager of the referring agency. To try to mitigate the impact, but also to understand more about Z's experiences and perspective, Z agreed to attend Fenton Town Hall with the service manager and meet with members of the research team shortly before the second workshop in Phase 2.

The purpose of this section of the report is to create learning opportunities for researchers and practitioners who support isolated and vulnerable people with a view to bringing them into a hitherto unknown community. We are not providing answers; rather, we are offering points for learning and reflection.

10.1. Recruitment

During the early data collection, it became apparent that an active approach to recruiting WwC would be crucial. When referring to activities for bored young people, one WwC explained:

> "You can't just have a building and advertise saying this is happening because they're not going to look, but if you go out there and walk in the park and see a big group of kids or even a group of adults and say this is going on over here, if you want any help or support." (WwC interviewee)

One of the TJ experts we interviewed also advised us to consider:

> "Where are the community groups or organisations where people hang out, can you just go along and join in there and find out if there are any people who might be willing?" (TJ expert interviewee 1)

With this in mind, the research team identified local organisations working with women who engaged in behaviours that might increase the likelihood of their involvement with the CJS (e.g. sex work, drug addiction) and organisations whose role it was to support those already involved with the system. These projects often serve as gatekeepers (Havard, 2019), and engaging with them can thus be an important milestone towards building confidence and trust with vulnerable women with lived experience. We therefore made active efforts to engage with staff in the project identified and, having first met those who expressed in the research via virtual platforms, the team, including the members with lived experience, visited them in person. During these visits, there was noticeable interest, but regrettably, despite offering to provide transport to and from Fenton Town Hall, only three WwC from this direct recruitment attended the first Phase 2 workshop. Nevertheless, the workshop was constructive, and there were multiple contributions from WwC, who seemed engaged in all the activities. It appeared to the research team and the HJC that the initial integration of WwC had made a very positive start:

> "In January there were a few new faces, and so I presume that some of those new faces ... but then the next meeting a lot of them didn't come back, and I thought I wonder why, what was it about the session that maybe they thought this is not for me. Because it seemed that it had gone quite well, they seemed to be well integrated, seemed to be enjoying the activities." (HJC member at the final focus group)

We were disappointed, then, to hear afterwards that participant Z, one of the WwC, had found the mixed space challenging, and specifically the persistent questioning of a newly recruited male HJC member. As discussed in the previous section, these interactions were not witnessed by the team because they occurred during 'in between' moments when we were transitioning from the workshops to the café for food. Regrettably, Z felt unable to speak with the research team at the time; she seemed in a rush to leave, turning down the offer of food, stating

she had other commitments and needed to go. It was not until some time later, when the service manager contacted us that we learnt of her experiences and of her decision not to return to future workshops. Having heard of Z's experience, others from this organisation also did not return, and the number of WwC who engaged in the project was significantly reduced. This came as a disappointment to HJC members too:

> "I'm sure all of us were looking forward to listening to their experiences – not them standing up there and talking to us as a group, but as a one-to-one basis or just on a social level. And I was very disappointed with that." (HJC member at the midpoint focus group)

In collaboration with staff at the referring charity, it was agreed that we would hold an additional workshop to give the WwC a voice in a women-only space on the charity's premises. It was during this workshop that it became apparent that the charity worked alongside the probation service, offering group work to women on licence or probation.

We, the research team, reflected on these experiences and decisions and questioned whether our decision to not engage with statutory services, such as probation, as part of the recruitment process had been the correct one. Our original thinking was that because TJ theory holds that the state perpetuates cycles of abuse and (re)traumatises people (Transform Harm, 2018), engaging statutory services would be counter to TJ principles (see Section 1.2.1). To some extent, the women-only workshop validated this decision; there was talk among participants about whether or not the session counted towards their Rehabilitation Activity Requirements (RAR) – stipulations that can be included in a community or suspended sentence order (GOV.UK, 2019). It seemed that holding the research workshop in collaboration with and on the premises of an organisation the WwC associated with their criminal conviction and sentence was unhelpfully blurring the boundaries between the research and their statutory requirements. In addition, one of the WwC who attended the first workshop in Phase 2 explained that she was uncertain about whether to speak out about her experience for fear it would impact on her relationship with her probation officer or result in possible breach of her probation conditions.

The complexities of the relationship with statutory agencies were further highlighted by one of our recruitment drives with a mother with a very small baby. Although she was interested in the project, this potential participant was unable to attend the workshops because she had a child protection plan that stipulated that only named (and approved) individuals had permission to care for her child. This meant that she could not use the crèche facilities attached to the workshops because the facilitators had not been approved by social services. The research team viewed this as a blow to the project, particularly given one TJ expert's view that children can be a point of commonality that can help build a community (see Section 3.2.1):

> "We end up saying we'll arrange childcare, or we'll do this, but if the desperate struggle of bringing up a wee one on your own is just part of life, well why should we not be there when you're talking about these things." (TJ expert interviewee 1)

10.2. Trauma-informed approach

One workshop during Phase 1 was led by our partners from Clean Break. The session, which was called Leading with Kindness, set out six fundamental elements of trauma-informed work. As a group, we reflected on the extent to which we had adopted a trauma-informed approach during the project to date, focusing on Z's decision not to return after the incident that occurred at her first workshop, which we saw as a pivotal moment in the research. Taking each of the six fundamental elements in turn, our reflections are as follows.

i. Promoting safety: As outlined above (Section 3.5.5), we were successful in creating brave spaces and were delighted that the core of the community formed as quickly as it did. This was evidenced by HJC members'

willingness to share private and intimate information early in the process. The research team had endeavoured to send clear messages about the importance of participant safety, which we believe played a part in creating brave spaces for the original HJC members. On reflection, perhaps we should have done more to reiterate and emphasise our commitment to keeping participants safe when the WwC joined at the start of Phase 2; this may have helped Z to feel safer in the space. Based on this reflection, we would recommend that future projects seeking to integrate two or more communities spend time considering and overcoming the hidden barriers to integrating a new, vulnerable community and ensuring that from the outset, the space feels brave and safe for them.

ii. Promoting trustworthiness: The research team also felt that Z's request to speak with us face to face and to return to Fenton Town Hall accompanied by the service manager from the referring project (see Section 2.2.2) – the space in which she had felt uncomfortable only weeks before – was testament to the trusting relationships we had built with her even over such a short time:

"I think the fact that [Z] has raised what happened is a great step for her and she would really like to share her experiences of the justice system with you, and feels the incident is in no way a reflection of yourselves as facilitators." (Email from service manager of referral agency, 9 February 2024)

During this conversation, Z stated that she may still come to London for the launch of the end-of-project report and, while this may not happen, her willingness to consider this again suggested to the research team that we had built a high level of trust very quickly over the course of only two meetings.

This experience prompted us to further reflect on the notion of brave spaces and the need to differentiate between the physical space and the emotional space. Given Z's decision to return to the physical space, was it her emotional space that needed attention? Thus, we would suggest that in future iterations of this kind of project, it would be wise to spend time working specifically with vulnerable communities to build positive trusting relationships before integrating them into a wider community.

iii. Choice: The research team agreed that Z did have choice and a voice in this research. For example, she chose not to join us for dinner, despite our attempts to persuade her to stay. Further, Z and her contemporaries chose not to return to the workshop. As a testament to the relationships we had built and the choices that arose from this, the organisation through which we had recruited these WwC invited us to run a women-only workshop to hear their voices. In facilitating this request, we were underscoring the role of choice in our work.

iv. Collaboration: It is a principle of TJ that work happens from the grassroots up. While one member of the team had extensive experience of living and researching in and around SoT, the rest of the team were not embedded in the community prior to the commencement of the research. We could not have carried out the project without the HJC collaboration. The team held collaboration at the heart of the work from its inception, throughout its delivery and right up until the end; it was Restoke's commitment to collaboration that made them – and thus Fenton Town Hall – ideal partners for the project. The workshops themselves were developed collaboratively between Sarah Bartley and the two co-facilitators from Clean Break, each with their own lived experience of the CJS. We drew on the research with those with lived experience (focus groups with women with lived experience of the CJS and interviews with TJ experts). We also drew on the expertise of other organisations (SWA) and arts-based practitioners (Restoke and Rideout) to ensure input from a diverse group of stakeholders, each with their own understandings and knowledge.

More importantly, from the outset, we invited members of the HJC to co-produce the project with us, positioning them as the experts in the locale. Our approach was to offer exercises to the group that facilitated them to explore themes, power dynamics, and practices that interested them rather than those the research team had identified. Members also brought

their own exercises to sessions to run with the group, and we created space for this knowledge sharing; we learned a lot about ourselves and the HJC community through this.

v. Empowerment: The research team made efforts to accommodate the needs of the participants. For example, when a new participant with hearing issues joined the group, an exercise was modified to make it easier for her to engage. In the feedback afterwards, she made a point of thanking the research team and explained how this adaptation had helped her to integrate into this new community (Ethnographic notes P1/WSP6).

   While, on the face of it, Z's experience may have seemed like a setback, we have reflected that the way in which she managed the situation may have provided an opportunity for her to show her development and progress. Our subsequent conversations with both Z herself and the service manager have suggested that Z did not retreat into her shell as she had learnt to do, but rather she spoke out about her experiences and used her voice to bring about change:

   "I'm really happy that [Z] had the courage to speak up rather than sitting on this, thanks also for meeting with us I do think it helped [Z] to take control of the situation." (Email from service manager after the face-to-face meeting at Fenton Town Hall, 19 February 2024)

vi. Awareness of cultural, historical and gender issues: We had been conscious from the outset that introducing WwC – many of whom have a history of gendered abuse – into a mixed-gender community carried with it risks; we made efforts to address these through knowledge, empathy and understanding, and through our partnership with SWA, who were present in all workshops during Phase 2. There was a feeling within the team that if the interaction involving Z (who had shared with us her history of abuse from a former partner) had occurred within the larger group, we could have managed it. However, it happened to occur during a conversation in an 'in-between' moment, out of the researchers' earshot. This prompted us to ensure that, from that point onwards, a member of the research team was present in all locations at all times– including in those liminal spaces between different rooms and the café, whenever members were too. We would recommend that researchers undertaking similar projects in the future make sure to do the same.

10.3. Brave spaces

We were conscious that it would be difficult to create a 'safe' space for the workshops – i.e. one "free of discomfort or difficulty" (Arao & Clemens, 2013, p. 139) – and so we chose instead to use the term 'brave space' (p. 141) to acknowledge the participants' strength and bravery in entering an unknown space and sharing their stories with unknown others. It was also the team's intention to use the space to give voice, control and empowerment to HJC members.

Reflections on creating brave spaces led the research team to conclude that running two parallel series of workshops in Phase 1 – one for the local community and another for WwC – might have had more favourable outcomes, encouraging the two new groups to flourish simultaneously, providing time to build trusting relationships and brave spaces within each community, and allowing each individual member to integrate more easily into Phase 2 with the support of others from their original workshop group. In addition, by the time the two groups were brought together, members of each would have shared understandings of TJ and the purpose of the research, which would have negated the need for a taster workshop and ensured that all members entered Phase 2 on an equal footing.

This research identified shared experiences as an important part of forming communities: WwC had shared experiences of the CJS, including a need for justice (see Section 3.1), and they shared similar histories and purpose (see e.g. Section 3.2). Both contributed to the creation of brave spaces.

10.4. Group stability

A further dilemma we faced during the project related to whether or not the Phase 2 workshops should be open to new community participants. Our decision that they should was based on a recognition that WwC are often labelled and stigmatised for their offending (see Section 3.1.2). Despite our work around dispelling such myths during Phase 1, we were concerned that opening the group only to WwC for Phase 2 could put the spotlight on them and their past behaviour, subjecting them to scrutiny and stigma. Ultimately, we felt that there would be a more equal power balance if WwC were not the only people new to the Phase 2 workshops.

We were also aware that this decision brought its own risks, as new community participants would likely be unfamiliar with TJ, as well as with the group dynamics and rules, and may not have the same understanding of the impacts of criminalisation. They would also be unknown to the research team, making us less able to predict their responses and behaviour. Indeed, the behaviour of one of the new community participants in the first workshop of Phase 2 led to the withdrawal of many of the WwC (see Section 2.2.2). As explained above, if given the opportunity to run similar research in the future, the research team would run two groups concurrently, one for each community, exploring the theme of TJ. This would create opportunities to build everyone's knowledge of TJ and use the space to create two separate communities with similar knowledge and understanding. Only when the two groups were cohesive would we bring them together (see the recommendations in Section 5.1.2).

10.5. Creating a community

When reviewing the research in a final focus group with members of the HJC, they expressed the view that the extended time gap between Phase 1 (January 2023–July 2023) and Phase 2 (January 2024–July 2024) of the workshops had meant that the research had lost momentum. Even the booster session offered in the autumn prior to the start of the Phase 2 workshops was felt to have come too late, and the efforts to keep members engaged via virtual platforms were viewed as insufficient. Members believed that had there been less time between Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the project, fewer participants would have dropped out and there would have been a higher turnout for the latter stages:

> "I know we had like a catch up in between and a Zoom meeting, but they felt it was quite a long time to have picked it up in January and they kind of lost momentum, and I suppose other things then come in to take its place." (HJC member in final focus group)

10.5.1. Informal networking

We were interested to observe whether HJC members would arrange to meet or have conversations during the break between the phases. This did not happen, and it was only in the final focus group that we realised that nobody had shared contact details with one another. The research team had not actively set up a social media group or email list due to wanting to maintain the confidentiality of participants, but nor had anybody else. As a result, we had accidentally facilitated an overreliance upon us and Restoke to facilitate ongoing engagement among the collective. In future, we would recommend looking to harness opportunities such as food-sharing events at the end of workshops and other activities to enable informal networking among community members. We would also actively promote the sharing of contact details, encouraging a representative from the community to take on the administrative role and lead those who were willing to share their details.

10.5.2. Gendered provision

Another repeated point of discussion among the research team and during the Phase 1 workshops was whether the Phase 2 workshops should be women-only spaces. The ethnographic notes captured a discussion around how WwC might feel about men being in the group and the possibility that this might this be too traumatic for some. However, we were conscious that TJ seeks to develop community accountability and engagement to challenge unequal and intersecting power relationships and promotes a bottom-up understanding of the lives and needs of populations (Gready & Robins, 2019; Worldwide Universities Network, 2021) without relying on the state. Ultimately, we took the view that men are part of the population, being present in almost all communities, and they thus need to take an active part in the (re)integration of WwC into society; men cannot be seen solely as the problem behind the offending behaviours of many WwC, but they must also be part of the solution. In the recruitment events, we were open with the WwC in saying that the workshops were mixed spaces consisting primarily of women but also some men and non-binary members. We emphasised the intention to empower WwC, highlighting that the research team (including a registered social worker) and our partners from Women's Aid had their welfare in mind and would be present throughout to offer support. We also explained that workshop participants were free to leave at any point without giving a reason and that we would support them in that decision-making process (see Section 4.1).

This research was based on feminist principles aimed at promoting women's freedom and empowerment (Parr, 2015). Believing that gender inequalities are open to change is central to all schools of feminism (Hannam, 2012), and Finlayson (2016) argues that feminism consists of two main elements: the belief that patriarchy exists and an opposition to patriarchal systems. In this model, men can also be feminists, as the male members of the research team and partnership agencies consider themselves to be. In one Phase 1 workshop, the male ethnographer recognised that he was the only person in the group who identified as a man. Within this, he reflected that it was difficult to determine whether the absence of men was a good thing for creating a safe space for WwC. While it opened up a space in which women felt comfortable, the lack of male representation meant that for much of the project, there were limited opportunities to engage men in discussions and consider their role in creating safe spaces for women in the wider community, or for equipping them with the skills and confidence to challenge problematic behaviours safely. These reflections will be developed further in a separate publication.

11. Conclusion and recommendations

The research project had two central aims.

The first was to explore whether TJ can effectively facilitate social cohesion and promote equality within local communities. This research suggests that an arts-based approach to TJ generates spaces and opportunities to collectively explore difficult topics by using creative tools that help communities examine and express their experiences with justice; it provides openings to look beyond the state narrative and break down the binary between those who are harmed and those who cause harm. This increased understanding of 'grey areas' and individual accountability to instigate small acts or make small changes, in our view, facilitate social cohesion and, by challenging stereotypes and exposing stigma, it also promotes equality within local communities.

The second central aim of the project was to establish whether TJ can effectively support WwC to reintegrate and resettle into their local communities. Because of the limited number of WwC who participated in the project, we are unable to say with complete confidence that TJ has this potential. However, for the reasons outlined above, we feel confident that there is a role for communities in supporting WwC as part of wider strategies. There is an appetite in communities to play this role, offer mutual support more broadly, and participate more actively in building more cohesive and understanding communities.

11.1. Recommendations

11.1.1. For policymakers

Recommendation: Community responses have been identified as the most effective way to address the causes of offending by women (Corston, 2007; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2021), and these require physical communal spaces for meeting. We recommend that these sites be supported through local and national infrastructure schemes, including community asset transfer, to enable strong, cohesive communities to form and reform.

Recommendation: Lived experience of trauma, crime and harm is embedded throughout communities. It is important to engage sensitively with the voices of communities, especially those with lived experience of hardship and exclusion, as part of the policy-development process, to ensure that policy reflects the realities of people's lives.

Recommendation: Locally rooted arts organisations are particularly well placed to facilitate spaces for communities to come together and creatively explore justice/harm in complex and process-focused ways. There is a need for increased resourcing and recognition from local and national government to allow arts organisations to undertake this nuanced work around justice in our communities.

Recommendation: When building community groups, it is important to engage with relevant existing groups and embedded organisations to build on their (local) knowledge and skills.

Recommendation: When setting up a community group comprising members of the wider local community, there need to be clear leaders; these may be volunteers or paid staff, but sufficient funding for resources needs to be allocated to support anyone who takes on coordination and administrative roles, including the interpersonal and organisational work of facilitating a group. Support should also be provided to build capacity within communities for members to develop the skills to take on these key roles.

Recommendation: While communities play important roles in (re)integration, (re)settlement and (re)habilitation, their capacity is limited, and community provision for WwC is inconsistent, limiting their ability to seek support to address

their needs and prevent further offending (Ministry of Justice [MoJ], 2018a). We echo Hall et al. (2018) in calling for the state to maintain support for people exiting the CJS rather than withdrawing and leaving communities to fill a void in service provision.

Recommendation: TJ and community building are slow, and change takes time. The true impacts of this project are unlikely to be realised until long after the research element has ended. While we recognise how integral feedback on progress, demonstrating impact and value for money, are to all funding, we recommend that policy changes should include extending timescales to better understand the impact of long-term projects and research, particularly those focused on creating and building communities.

Recommendation: There needs to be a clear communication system/pathway between agencies when women (and men) are involved in the CJS. Decisions made because of criminal behaviour must be adhered to by all organisations to increase the safety of victims of crime, reduce the likelihood of further offending and help restore faith in the CJS. The need to address the latter has been identified by the UK Government (HM Government, 2021).

Recommendation: In line with The Corston Report (Corston, 2007) and current MoJ priorities, we recommend a rapid reduction in the use of prison sentences for women. Our findings support the idea that these sentences are frequently harmful and compound the vulnerability of an already at-risk group. Existing policy recognises that many women could be more effectively supported in their communities (MoJ 2018a, 2018b, 2023b), through innovative 'residential women's centres' rather than prisons. The fact that Corston's recommendations have not been fully implemented 17 years after their publication means that these changes need to be expedited within the new parliament.

Recommendation: We echo Rogers et al.'s (2022) recommendation for a mapping exercise to establish and evaluate the extent to which trauma-informed approaches have been implemented, both within the prison estate and in relation to community sentences.

Recommendation: Women-only spaces are important, especially to those who have experienced abuse or exploitation from men; however, men are present as members of any community, and it is important to empower women to live in mixed communities for meaningful resettlement and (re)integration to occur. We recommend that policies and projects focused on the transition from women-only spaces into society include a stage during which women are invited into a trauma-informed mixed-gender brave community space. These distinct phases would prepare vulnerable women for reintegration into wider communities at a pace suitable to them. To achieve this, trauma-informed mixed-gender community spaces need to be created and resourced.

11.1.2. For community practitioners/researchers

Recommendation: Our findings indicate that TJ can offer opportunities to promote understanding of social issues, including offending; it should therefore be considered as an underpinning theory for future interventions that address sensitive issues and seek to promote equality and social cohesion.

Recommendation: Projects that aim to integrate vulnerable communities must spend time considering and overcoming the hidden and visible barriers to integration and ensuring that the space feels safe and brave for them. Reflecting on our experiences on this project, we recommend that when different groups are to be integrated, significant time is first spent supporting and preparing each group separately.

Recommendation: Arts organisations working in criminal justice contexts should explore new models that bring together people with lived experience of justice and community members without direct experience to address local justice issues and expand their provision.

Recommendation: When building or integrating community groups, it is important to focus on shared experience from the start and revisit it at

pertinent moments (e.g. when new members join).

Recommendation: Further research is required to understand the extent and impact of trauma within communities.

Recommendation: Those leading community groups should always assume that their members have experienced trauma. This is consistent with TJ, which states that we have all experienced harm. Adopting a trauma-informed approach will reduce the risk of reproducing harm and help to create brave spaces from the start. Recognising shared or resonant traumatic experiences can also help to build strong relationships within and across communities.

Recommendation: Those building community groups may be reticent to share individuals' contact information. We recommend – with members' permission – facilitating a sharing of contact details to enable groups to be in regular communication outside and beyond the framework of organised sessions.

Recommendation: Further research is required to understand the needs of WwC as they try to (re) integrate into communities following contact with the CJS, and the role that TJ and other forms of community participation might play in supporting them to do this.

Recommendation: TJ advocates are encouraged to explore the utility and unique possibilities of using a multi-arts model when exploring harm and accountability in their work with communities.

> "Transformative justice is the principle that everyone in every way of their life needs to be implementing ... When we do that, when we accept that we all need to be taking accountability for things that happen around us and we all need to be looking towards community healing and helping each other, and not giving up on each other, and understanding each other[……]Then I think we can move closer to the point where people are ready to stop and think, 'okay, how can we address this issue without putting people in prison and throwing away the key?'." (TJ expert interviewee)

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13. Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1. Sociodemographic variables of survey participants.

	Public participants				Women with convictions participants	
Variables	Baseline pre intervention data collection		Post intervention data collection		Baseline only data collection	
Complete survey returns	Total responses: 21		Total responses: 13		Total responses: 4	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Age ranges						
16–19	0	0	0	0	0	0
20–24	0	0	1	8	0	0
25–29	2	10	1	8	0	0
30–34	0	0	0	0	0	0
35–39	0	0	1	8	1	25
40–44	0	0	0	0	0	0
45–49	4	19	0	0	1	25
50–59	5	24	4	31	1	25
60–64	5	24	2	15	0	0
65–69	1	5	1	8	0	0
70–74	1	5	2	15	1	25
75–79	3	14	0	0	0	0
80 or over	0	0	1	8	0	0
Gender or other description						
Female	20	95	11	85	3	75
Male	0	0	1	8	1	25
Other	1	0	1	8	0	0
Ethnicity						
White British/English	19	90	12	92	4	100
White Irish			1	8		
Indian	2	10				
Religion						
No religion	11	52	8	62	3	75
Prefer not to say	1	5	0	0	0	0
Buddhist	0	0	1	8	0	0
Christian	8	38	4	31	1	25
Other	1	5	0	0	0	0
Highest qualification achieved						
Further education	6	29	1	8	2	50
Trade apprenticeship	0	0	1	8	1	25
Diploma level qualification	5	24	2	15	0	0
University degree (undergraduate)	8	38	6	46	0	0
University higher degree (postgraduate)	2	10	2	15	1	25
Average number of older people (than respondent living in the household.	0.6	57	0.7	54	1.3	25
Percentage refers to having at least one person older in the household).						
Number of children living with you under the age of 16						
1 child	4				1	
2 children			1		1	
Currently employed	9	43	5	38	2	50
If employed, days absent from work because of illness in previous 12 months						
Zero days	13	62	9	69	3	75
Less than 5 days	3	14	1	8	0	0
Between 6 and 10 days	2	10	1	8	1	25
Between 11 and 15 days	0	0	0	0	0	0
Between 16 and 20 days	0	0	1	8	0	0
Between 21 and 30 days	1	5	0	0	0	0
More than a month but less than 3 months	0	0	0	0	0	0
More than 3 months but less than 6 months	1	5	0	0	0	0
More than 6 months	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	1	5	1	8	0	0
Hour per week typically worked a week in the previous 12 months	43	48	28	31	26	50
If receiving benefits, total received per week	£180	43	£127	38	£110	75
Income bracket per year in the last 12 months						
Prefer not to answer	5	24	1	8	0	0
£0	2	10	0	0	0	0
£1 to £9,999	4	19	2	15	2	50
£10,000 to £24,000	9	43	10	77	1	25
£25,000 to £49,000	1	5	0	0	1	25

Table 2. Responses to the Community Life Survey (some responses are rounded).

	Community participants					Women with convictions participants	
Community Life Survey questions	Baseline preintervention data collection		Post intervention data collection			Baseline only data collection	
	Total responses: 21 Average score	% response to qu	Total responses: 13 Average score	% response to qu	Change in score	Total responses: 4 Average score	% response
Overall Wellbeing							
Overall how satisfied are you with your life today? (Not at all satisfied v's completely satisfied = 0-10).	7.6	100	5.7	77	-1.9	7.3	100
Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile? (Not at all worthwhile v's completely worthwhile = 0-10).	8.4	100	5.2	77	-3.3	8.0	100
Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday? (Not at all happy v's completely happy = 0-10).	7.8	100	5.8	77	-1.9	7.8	100
Not at all anxious vs Completely anxious (Not at all anxious v's completely anxious = 0-10).	4.3	100	2.2	77	2.1	2.8	100
How often do you feel lonely? (Never, hardly ever, occasionally, some of the time, often/always = 1-5)	2.2	100	1.5	77	0.7	2.3	100
Activities in your local community	n		n			n	
Number of community activities engaged in within last 12 months i.e. school governor	5	24	1	8	-4.0	0	0
Membership of decision making groups in your area - i.e. A decision making group set up to tackle local crime problems or on local education services	9	43	4	31	-5.0	1	25
	Average score (range 1-4 best score being 4)		Average score (range 1-4 best score being 4)			Average score (range 1-4 best score being 4)	
To what extent do you agree or disagree that you personally can influence decisions affecting your local area?	3.0	100	2.8	100	-0.2	3.0	100
How important is it for you personally to feel that you can influence decisions in your local area?	3.3	100	3.2	100	-0.1	3.3	100
Your local area	Average score (range 1-4 best score being 4)		Average score (range 1-4 best score being 4)			Average score (range 1-4 best score being 4)	
Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?	3.76	100	3.23	100	-0.5	4	100
		% confirming statement		% confirming statement	% change		% confirming statement
To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together? (Tend to agree / definitely agree)	14	67	10	77	10.3	2	50
Do you think that over the past two years this area has got better to live in? (Yes)	5	24	0	0	-23.8	1	25
Generally, how satisfied are you with the local services and amenities in your local area? (fairly satisfied or vary satisfied).	10	48	7	54	6.2	3	75
Your community							
How strongly do you feel you belong to your immediate neighbourhood? (Fairly strongly/ very strongly)	12	57	8	61	4.0	3	75
	Average years		Average years				
How many years have you lived in your neighbourhood?	25		18		8.2	10	100
	n responded	%	n responded	%	% change		
How often do you chat to your neighbours, more than just to say hello? (On most days/Once or twice a month)	12	57	5	38	-18.7	1	25
How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Generally, I borrow things and exchange favours with my neighbours (Tend to agree/Definitely agree)	13	62	5	38	-23.4	1	25
How comfortable would you be asking a neighbour to keep a set of keys to your home for emergencies, for example if you were locked out? (Fairly comfortable, Very comfortable).	15	71	7	54	-17.6	1	25
If you were ill and at home on your own, and needed someone to collect a few shopping essentials, how comfortable would you feel asking a neighbour to do this for you? (Fairly comfortable, Very comfortable).	16	76	6	45	-30.0	1	25
To what extent would you agree or disagree that people in your neighbourhood pull together to improve the neighbourhood? (Tend to agree, Definitely agree).	12	57	7	54	-3.3	2	50
Thinking about the people who live in this neighbourhood, to what extent do you believe they can be trusted? (Some of the people can be trusted/Many of the people can be trusted).	19	90	11	85	-5.9	2	50
On a scale where (zero) is not at all and 10 (ten) is completely, in general how much do you think people can be trusted?	7	100	6	100	0.0	5	
Using the internet	n	% confirming statement	n	% confirming statement		n	% confirming statement
Use of the internet (those reporting 'More than once a day' or 'once a day at least').	21	100	12	92	-7.7	4	100
Identity and social networks							
How often do you personally contact your family members and friends. (Not including any people you live with).							
Meetup in person with family members or friends (2-3 times per week, Once a day).	15	71	6	46	-25.3	3	75
Speak over the phone or video or audio call via the internet with family and friends (2-3 times per week, once a day).	13	62	4	31	-31.1	3	75
Email or write to family members or friends (2-3 times per week, once a day).	7	33	4	31	-2.6	2	50
Exchange text messages or instant messages with family members or friends (2-3 times per week, once a day).	12	57	3	23	-34.1	2	50
If I needed help, there are people who would be there for me (Tend to agree/Definitely agree).	21	100	11	85	-15.4	3	75
If I wanted company or to socialise, there are people I can call on (Tend to agree/Definitely agree).	20	95	10	77	-18.2	3	75
Volunteering							
Volunteered in the last 12 months (Not including the Re Stoke Transformative Justice project you are currently involved with).	12	57	10	77	19.8	2	50
Over the last 12 months helped groups, clubs or organisations at least once a week.	9	43	5	38	-4.4	2	50
Started helping these groups, clubs or organisations.	16	75	10	77	1.0	3	75
Unpaid work to other people							
Have you offered unpaid help to other people in the last 12 months?	16	75	11	85	8.4	1	25
In the last 12 months, have you done any of these things, unpaid, for someone who was not a relative?	15	71	11	85	13.2	1	25
Have you given to charity in the last 12 months?							
Have you given to charity in the last 12 months?	20	95	11	85	-10.6	2	50
Approximately how much money have you given to charity in the last 4 weeks?	430 (Average pre-intervention £20)	95	445 (average post intervention £34)	54	-41.0	50 (average £12.50)	50
Social action							
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?							
When people in this area get involved in their local community, they can really change the way that their area is run.	17	81	13	100	19.0	3	75
If you had spent any time helping with social action activities, please state on how many occasions in the last 12 months you helped.	14	67	8	62	-5.1	2	50

Table 3. Wider societal resource use and associated costs.

Community participants								
	Baseline pre intervention data collection			Post intervention data collection				
Complete survey returns	Total responses: 21			Total responses: 13				
Resource use variable	n reported service use	% participants reported	Costs	n reported service use	% participants reported	Costs	% change in service use between baseline and follow up	Cost differences per variable
Health care and/or social care services used in the last 12 months	11	52		3	23		-29	
General medical ward	4	19	£5,052	1	8	£1,263	-11	£3,789
Emergency/crisis centre	3	14	£885	0	0	£0	-14	£885
Hospital or other outpatient health care appointments used in the previous 12 months	7	33		1	8		-26	
Accident and Emergency	2	10	£590	0	0	£0	-10	£590
Outpatient clinics	5	24	£740	1	8	£148	-16	£592
Community mental health centre	2	10	£320	0	0	£0	-10	£320
Other community health contacts used in the previous 12 months	9	43		3	23		-20	
Practice nurse	2	10	£106	2	15	£106	6	£0
Pharmacist	3	14	£42	1	8	£14	-7	£28
General Practiotiner/family doctor	8	38	£392	3	23	£147	-15	£245
Physiotherapist	1	5	£50	0	0	£0	-5	£50
Psychiatrist	1	5	£29	0	0	£0	-5	£29
Psychologist	1	5	£63	0	0	£0	-5	£63
Community psychiatric nurse/case manager	1	5	£63	0	0	£0	-5	£63
Social worker	2	10	£106	1	8	£53	-2	£53
Occupational therapist	1	5	£53	0	0	£0	-5	£53
Contact with the criminal justice system								
Police contact	4	19	£7,776	2	15	£3,888	-4	£3,888
Nights spent in a police cell or prison	1	5	£362	0	0	£0	-5	£362
Total costs for baseline and post intervention			£16,629			£5,619		11010
Average cost			£792			£432		360

Table 4. Unit costs and cost assumptions used with resource-use data to calculate costings.

Resource use variable to cost	Unit cost	Breakdown of cost/explainer	Source
Health care and/or social care services			
General medical ward	1263	Section 7.1 - mean cost examples calculated by report authors	The unit costs of health and social care_Final3.pdf (kent.ac.uk)
Emergency /crisis centre	295	The average cost for the lowest level of investigation and treatment in 2022	How much does an A&E visit cost the NHS - NowPatient
Hospital or other outpatient health care appointments			
Accident and Emergency	295	As above	
Outpatient clinics	148	The average cost for a consultant-led outpatient appointment is approximately £148. However, this figure can fluctuate based on the specific nature of the appointment and the required medical expertise.	(NHS England)/(NHS England Digital).
Community mental health centre	160	IAPT Contacts	Unit Costs of Health and Social Care 2022.pdf (pssru.ac.uk) Table 2.1.1. NHS NATional Cost Colleion for mental health services
Community health contacts			
Practice Nurse	53	per hour	The unit costs of health and social care_Final3.pdf (kent.ac.uk)
Pharmacist	14	per consultation	Community Pharmacist Consultation Service (CPCS) – Nottinghamshire LPC (communitypharmacy.org.uk)
General Practitioner/family doctor	49	per 10 minute consultation	Table 9.4.2.: Unit costs for a GP. The unit costs of health and social care_ Final3.pdf (kent.ac.uk)
Physiotherapist	50	per half an hour assessment or consultation	Based on a mid point band 9 cost per working hour table 8.2.1. The unit costs of health and social care_Final3.pdf (kent.ac.uk)
Psychiatrist	29	per 10 minute consultation	Table 11.3.2 Annual unit costs for hospital-based doctors The unit costs of health and social care_Final3.pdf (kent.ac.uk)
Psychologist	63	per half an hour assessment or consultation	Table 8.2.1: Annual and unit costs for community-based scientific and professional staff The unit costs of health and social care_Final3.pdf (kent. ac.uk)
Community psychiatric nurse/case manager	63	per half an hour assessment or consultation	Table 8.2.1: Annual and unit costs for community-based scientific and professional staff The unit costs of health and social care_Final3.pdf (kent. ac.uk)
Social worker	53	per hour	Page 75. The unit costs of health and social care_Final3.pdf (kent.ac.uk)
Occupational therapist	53	per session	Page 77. The unit costs of health and social care_Final3.pdf (kent.ac.uk)
Contact with the criminal justice system			
Police contact	1944	Average taken from police costs Table 1	The economic and social costs of crime (publishing.service.gov.uk)
Nights spent in a police cell or prison	362		The cost of keeping a prisoner in cell overnight
Some costs inflated/ajusted to 2023 prices		Inflation calculator | Bank of England	

14. Appendix 2: Testimonies

14.1.1. Workshop co-facilitator 1

My experience during this project has been full of learning. Holding control of the group – believing in myself while delivering – has taken some time though. Co-facilitation has helped me see my role and how working together is the key. I have seen my confidence grow throughout the process. To be working on such an important subject has shown every mind opened to change makes it worthwhile. Feels really special to be part of this.

14.1.2. Workshop co-facilitator 2

Working on this project on a professional level helped me build my confidence in my practice as a drama practitioner, as delivering and working with adults was a new environment for me; I usually work with young people aged 13–21 years old. Sarah, who led the workshop, gave me the opportunity to come up with ideas and exercises when working on the lesson plans, which gave us ownership in our delivery – this was a real collaborative process. On a personal level, it was rewarding to see how much the project empowered the adults and to watch the views and stereotypes they had on the justice system surrounding criminals change over time as they explored the possible backstories of those that were convicted of different crimes.

14.1.3. Principal Investigator: Tirion Havard

Involvement in this project has opened up my eyes to the value of arts as an interesting and influential method of data collection. Difficult topics were discussed in sensitive ways that allowed the creation of brave spaces for people to share and for communities to build. I will always look for ways to use the arts in future research. On a more individual basis, securing funding for this project was an important factor in obtaining the chair and becoming a professor at London South Bank University.

14.1.4. Co-Investigator: Ian Mahoney

Being involved in this project has been an enlightening experience. Being welcomed back into the communities of Stoke-on-Trent, where I have previously lived and researched and continue to visit, has rekindled many fond memories of the city and the people who reside there. The openness and honesty of the HJC members has been particularly profound at times, and the whole process has encouraged me to engage in deep reflection around my own engagement with the people and communities in which I live. I will forever be grateful to our community members for their time, patience and engagement with the project.

14.1.5. Co-Investigator: Sarah Bartley

This project has been an opportunity for me to develop my engagement with practice as research. I have 15 years' experience as a community arts facilitator and have been a performance studies researcher for a decade, but I have not previously brought my own practice into my research. The project also enabled me to develop dialogues across a collective of people from different disciplines, places, positions and experiences; these relationships were invaluable to my continued growth as a thinker, maker and collaborator.