

# The health benefits of an arts project for older offenders

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This research was conducted by **Dean J. Wilkinson** at the **University of Worcester** and **Laura S. Caulfield** at **Bath Spa University**

## Summary

Prisoners over the age of 50 are known to experience high rates of physical and mental illnesses, meaning their specific support and rehabilitation needs are often neglected within current prison regimes. This research study examined the experiences of older prisoners who participated in a therapeutic music programme. The participants indicated that the programme helped with emotional regulation, developed communication and social skills, and gave them a sense of achievement. Its inclusive nature provided an opportunity for the older prison population to develop new motivation and interests, as well as the social and emotional skills necessary for successful rehabilitation.

## The ‘Good Vibrations’ project is a collaborative music programme

In-depth interviews were conducted with 13 men who had previously participated in the ‘Good Vibrations’ project: a week-long programme in which participants learn traditional Indonesian Gamelan music (an informal, inclusive ensemble form using bronze percussion instruments for which teamwork and communication are essential).

## Accelerated physical and psychological aging occurs in older offenders

The researchers suggest that the cognitive and creative stimulation afforded by the Good Vibrations programme could help to mitigate these effects. The results in this programme replicate those observed in previous studies with

younger prison inmates. In the case of these older men, the programme was inclusive of those with physical disabilities, it encouraged participants to break from entrenched habits, provided distraction from the tedium of prison life, and aided social integration.

This summary is by **Vicky MacBean, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

## Keywords

**interview** **wellbeing** **music** **Offenders** **Skills** **health**

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