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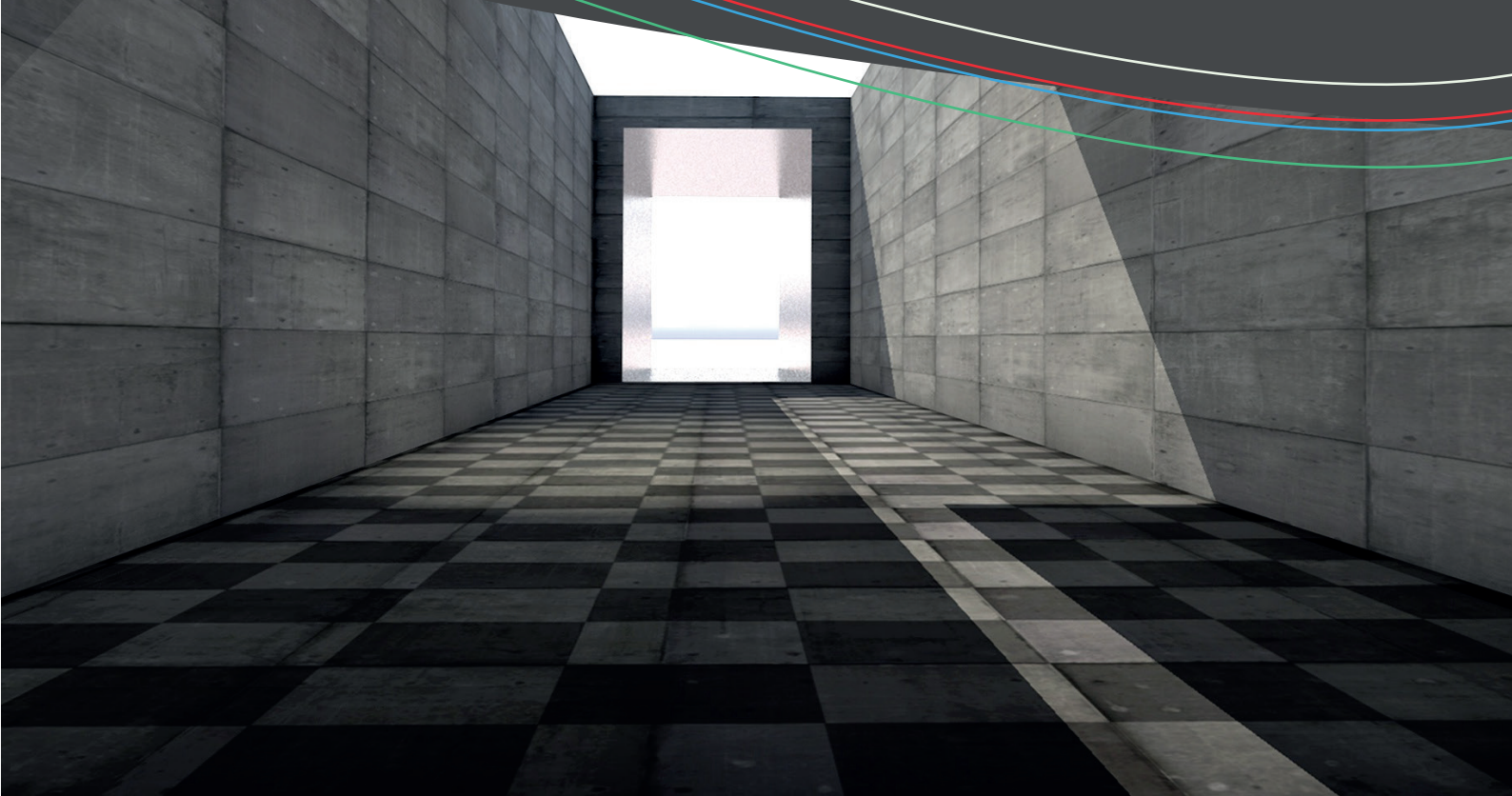
PUBLICATIONS

EVALUATING SOCIAL ACTION FOR REHABILITATION

Restorative justice in prison settings:
An evaluation case study | July, 2015

Theo Gavrielides, Andriana Ntziadima & Ioanna Gouseti

Theo Gavrielides, Editor



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: PROFESSOR THEO GAVRIELIDES, FOUNDER AND CDIRECTOR OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FOR ALL

This report presents the findings of our independent evaluation of the Khulisa programmes Silence the Violence and Milestones. They were delivered to 268 offenders and we worked with 194 of them over a period of 20 months to see whether Khulisa's model impacted positively on their recidivism, wellbeing and general pro-social behaviour. Measuring such variants over such a short period of time was always going to be a challenge. I was honest enough to point this out from the outset, when Simon and I attended an interview with the Cabinet Officer which expressed an interest in funding the interventions and their evaluation. In the end, not only the outcome of the interview was successful, but also the programme and indeed the partnership proving that the values of honesty and friendship are good ingredients for any success!

Based on the Good Lives Model and using restorative justice values, the Khulisa interventions constitute a proven, successful and replicable model of social action for rehabilitation. I have argued elsewhere that the focus of researchers should not be on proving (or disproving) the political or policy goals of the given funder. These goals are often confused with the question "what works". What we tried to do here was to look at "what happened". By paying attention to the realities and personal journeys of each individual who received the Khulisa interventions, we were able to drill down into far more interesting and complex findings. Thus, we truly hope that our research bridges a gap in the rehabilitation literature.

This evaluation study has been the outcome of collective work that was funded by the Cabinet Office. Therefore, special thanks should first go to the Cabinet Office team (Matthew Nardella and Katy Owen) as well as the SIB Grants manager and Officer Caroline Garkisch and Sarah Le-May. Thanks also to Lisa Robinson from the PNC/Criminal Histories Statistics Team and George Barrow of the Ministry of Justice. Additionally, we would like to thank the HMP Isis Prison Team and especially Grahame Hawking, HMP/YOI Isis Prison and Charlie Abbot, Acting Hub Manager, Offender Management Unit and Litigation for granting us access to the P-nomis database.

It was indeed an honour to work with Simon Fulford and his team Zoe Twidle and Damian Castelo. We also owe special thanks to Helen Mthyiane and Sheryl Penrose who patiently organised the data. Finally, I want to give personal thanks to my research team Andriana Ntziadima, Ioanna Gouseti and Despoina Bardosi. With minimal direction, they performed their roles diligently and professionally. Special thanks to Andriana for persevering until the end when things tend to get frustrating and the deadlines more demanding. I am also grateful to the RJ4All co-Director, Professor Artinopoulou for her advice and moral support.

Theo Gavrielides

FOREWORD: SIMON FULFORD, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF KHULISA

We are absolutely delighted to receive this final report on our Rehabilitation Social Action programme from RJ4All. It is a large and complex assessment with the most detailed analysis to date of the work that we do. Designing and implementing an evaluation around a programme delivered across four sites as far afield as London, Bolton and Hampshire was no easy task. Similarly, addressing the complexities involved in work that targets some of society's most vulnerable and socially excluded individuals, namely men with histories of repeat and violent offending, was a challenge that RJ4All did not take on lightly.

You only have to read the 2014-15 annual report from the HM Chief Inspector of Prisons to know that our prisons are in crisis. Violence is escalating while rehabilitation is sadly at an all-time low. Khulisa's programme was designed to try and address both issues, sequentially, while helping to put our participants on a clear desistance pathway.

Currently, working in prisons and with the probation service is extremely difficult. Probations are going through their biggest structural and systemic change ever while prisons face an escalating need for appropriate intervention programmes while their ability to deliver is severely curtailed.

Operating in this environment was and continues to be extremely challenging for Khulisa's staff and volunteers, just as it is for the hundreds of other exceptional voluntary organisations we work alongside. At times we struggled to get adequate referrals from partner staff, faced last-minute programme cancellations and, on more occasions than we'd like to list, were unable to get lads from their cells or run a session due to constraints in the system. Our delivery numbers lagged behind target for many months and, as RJ4All know better than us, obtaining robust and adequate data was a constant worry. As wonderful as your participants and volunteers are, paperwork is not always front of mind for them!

However, bringing social action into this intensive work is essential given both the current stresses our prison system is operating under and the need to reform public services in ways that encourage far more citizen engagement. Working with offenders and promoting desistance from crime is not easy and is not cheap. This type of work requires the right level of investment but can be hugely impactful on all involved. The benefits are felt by ex-offenders getting jobs, re-joining families and re-building shattered lives. Families feel the benefit of a husband who stays out of prison and is there for his kids. Volunteers see how seemingly small actions can make a big difference while they themselves gain new skills, self-awareness and a true connection to others. Communities reap the benefits of less crime, active citizens and strengthened social fabric.

I am delighted that even with the challenges and obstacles we encountered, RJ4All's assessment demonstrates the significant impact Khulisa's programmes have on reducing violence, promoting resilience and emotional well-being, helping prisoners to think differently and more positively about their futures and, finally, using a mentoring model to further support them on that journey. I won't repeat here what is succinctly captured in the proceeding pages, but I am proud to know that, once again, our innovative approach has proven successful. We would like to thank Theo, Andriana and Ioanna for all their patience and hard work.

Warmest,

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