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Executive summary

The Centre for Human Factors was commissioned to evaluate the effects of a creative writing programme launched by researchers of the University of Hull within two prison services, HMP Hull and HMP Manchester. The creative writing programme was designed with the aim of improving prison staff wellbeing. Using mixed methods combining both qualitative data (semi-structured interviews and group session transcripts) and quantitative data (surveys), the research team gathered participants' views about their experiences within the group sessions and about the proposed activities within and outside the group sessions (readings, journaling). This report summarises the findings of this project exploring the potential benefits associated with staff participation to the programme.

Wellbeing of prison staff is an important topic since research findings indicate high risks of mental health problems amongst prison officers (e.g., Kinman, Clements & Hart, 2016). In our sample at T1 (N=24), 37.5% of respondents had moderate to severe mental health difficulties (i.e., anxiety and depression signs). Almost all participants forecast benefits for their wellbeing by joining the programme. Moreover, from the interviews, participants reported that their motivations to sign up were mostly related to curiosity for the activity and interest about doing something creative or learning things about writing. Most participants had little or no experience in creative writing since school.

Most respondents (from both the survey and interviews) really enjoyed the programme. A range of benefits were reported by participants: regarding wellbeing, self-development, family relationships, and professional relationships both with colleagues and prisoners.

From a wellbeing perspective, the range of benefits found were the opportunity to escape from work and the opportunity to process emotionally difficult experiences. In that sense, the programme has been “therapeutic” and “cathartic” for some participants. Regarding self-growth, different benefits associated with the development of creative skills, with self-awareness, interpersonal confidence (i.e., speak out and express ideas) and self-confidence (i.e., self-belief in their skills and abilities) were reported, up to the point that some participants considered writing a novel. Therefore, this programme has potentially broadened their horizons of possibilities. Regarding personal benefits, stronger family relationships were reported by participants who processed difficult personal events and shared their experiences with family members.

As regards to professional benefits, benefits ranged from enhanced empathy for both prison families to enhanced relationships with colleagues. This is particularly important given the key role of peer support as a buffer to work-related stress. With regards to prisoners, fewer benefits were reported but there were potential benefits for enhanced staff-prisoner relationships and the broadening of creative writing impact to prisoners.

There were fewer respondents with moderate to severe mental health difficulties at T2. However, caution should be taken when interpreting the findings due to the possibility of self-selection bias in the collected data. Further investigation is necessary to replicate the results obtained through this project.



Project background

The Centre for Human Factors was commissioned to support the University of Hull team with regards to the data collection and analysis for the project *Prison Officers & Creative Writing* launched within HMP Hull and HMP Manchester. This work has been funded by the Higher Education Innovation Funding from the University of Hull and was led by:

- Dr Josephine Metcalf, Senior Lecturer in American Studies & Criminology at the University of Hull
- Dr Helen Nichols, Senior Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Hull
- Dr Chris Westoby, Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Hull

This project is intended to be an innovative pilot initiative to support the mental health and wellbeing of prison staff. The programme consisted of 8 sessions, each lasting 1 hour, held over 8 weeks (one session per week). The sessions covered various topics such hope and hopelessness, or humanity of prisoners and prison officers. Outside the sessions, participants were invited to read three books: "Prison Time" by Shaun Attwood, "Shawshank Redemption" by Stephen King, and "Poems from Guantanamo: The Detainees Speak". They were also encouraged to try journaling. Writing prompts were provided to participants at the end of each session to assist them with their journaling. During the sessions, participants were invited to share their writings with the group if they would like. The rationale behind this project is that reading and reflecting on topics presented in the selected books, as well as writing about these topics, can help improve participants' wellbeing.

The programme was facilitated by two tutors who had previous experience working within a prison setting. Initially, participants who signed up were divided in two groups for each prison, but recruitment challenges led to the following distribution: one group for HMP Hull, two groups for HMP Manchester. The participants were operative and non-operative prison staff. Overall, difficulties were noted in engaging prison officers in the programme, especially in HMP Hull.

The Centre for Human Factors, in collaboration with the project team, has designed and agreed upon a data collection plan that includes multiple sources of information (i.e., surveys and interviews). More specifically, activities undertaken by the Centre for Human Factors for the data collection and data analysis were:

- Working with the project team to determine survey content (demographic questions, code, etc)
- Setting up the survey on the online platform
- Working with project team to support engagement in the survey through communication messages
- Scheduling and running interviews
- Providing an analysis of the collected data

This piece of work took place between April 2023 and June 2023. With the aim of evaluating the programme, the research question was: **what are the benefits for attendees associated with their participation in the programme?**



Method

This project used mixed methods with qualitative data (semi-structured interviews and transcripts of group sessions) and quantitative data (surveys). This approach provides a wider range of information. The sessions were recorded to capture the content of the discussions between participants and the dynamics within the groups. Interviews were conducted to explore individual experiences more in-depth and capture richer information. Surveys were used to collect information about participants' characteristics and obtain a brief overview of their participation. Surveys were also considered a less time-consuming option for participants compared to interviews, allowing all participants to be part of this evaluative work based on their desired level of involvement. Below is an overview of the collected materials.

Group recordings

Group sessions were recorded by the tutors and transcribed by an external organisation selected by the project team. Although some group sessions were not recorded and are missing, a total of 6 sessions from HMP Hull were transcribed, and 12 sessions from HMP Manchester (6 transcripts for each group at HMP Manchester).

The transcripts of the sessions helped the research team to gain a better understanding of the organisational context and the challenges faced by prison staff. They were also useful in gathering additional data on the benefits of the sessions.

Questionnaires

Two surveys were distributed to prison staff who joined the programme, one at the launch of the sessions (T1) and one at the end (T2). Participants were invited to complete the surveys through an email sent by the project leader, directing them to the digital survey platform Cognito. Consent was sought at the beginning of the survey. Participants were invited to generate a code for matching their responses over time. However, the small sample size prevented a longitudinal analysis of the responses.

The questionnaires included both validated measures from scientific literature and questions designed for the purpose of this work. The validated measures used in both questionnaires evaluated participants' job satisfaction, mental wellbeing, mental health conditions and occupational self-efficacy. At the launch of the programme, participants were asked about their previous experiences in creative writing and their motivations for joining. At T2, they were asked about the perceived benefits of their participation. Open boxes were also included in the post questionnaire for participants to provide comments and suggestions. The structure of the questionnaire and details of the used measures can be found in the [Appendix 3-4](#).

Interviews

To gather further insight, participants were also invited via email to be interviewed by a researcher from the University. Consent was sought at the beginning of the interview. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the same external organisation responsible for transcribed the group sessions. Additionally, at the end of the programme, the two tutors running the sessions with prison staff were also interviewed.



During the interview, participants were asked about their role, their experience in creative writing, their motivations to join the programme as well as their experience within the group sessions and the proposed activities both within and outside the group sessions. Please refer to the interview guide in the Appendix section ([Appendix 5](#)).

A note on the creative writings produced by participants

Participants have produced several writings during the programme, some of which have been sent to the project team for inclusion in an anthology. Although these writings could be considered as data, couple of factors prevent us from treating them as such in our analysis. First, texts sent by participants may suffer from self-selection bias. Second, due to the fictional aspect involved in writing, it is difficult to distinguish between a genuine reflection of participants' true experiences and elements that do not originate from their personal experiences. One might argue that fiction still carries something about one's own experience, however attempting to embellish a story sets a limit to this connection.



Data analysis

For the qualitative data (group recordings, interviews), the research team adopted a top-down approach to thematic analysis, with preconceived themes guiding the analysis. These themes were (1) individual benefits related to wellbeing, (2) other individual benefits, (3) professional benefits regarding relationships with colleagues, (4) professional benefits regarding relationships with prisoners, and (5) personal benefits regarding relationships with family and friends. Verbatim quotes related to each theme were extracted and categorized accordingly. No additional theme emerged from the analysis. The final list of themes is presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. List of themes and subthemes extracted from the qualitative data

Themes	Subthemes
1. Individual benefits related to wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Escape from work ▪ Processing of difficult experiences
2. Other individual benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of creative skill ▪ Development of confidence (self-confidence, interpersonal confidence) ▪ Development of the self
3. Personal benefits regarding relationships with family and friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Closer relationships with family
4. Professional benefits regarding relationships with colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of empathy within the work setting ▪ Connection building
5. Professional benefits regarding relationships with prisoners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support resources for prisoners

Regarding the survey data, basic descriptive statistics were run for describing the sample and extract frequencies of responses. Then, means and standard deviation were computed for the validated measures.

Results from these different sources of information were examined altogether to build a coherent understanding of the data.



Findings

Description of the sample

Group sessions

Table 2. Distribution of participants among study sites over time

	HMP Hull		HMP Manchester	
Original sign in	▪ Male	13	▪ Male	11
	▪ Female	17	▪ Female	14
	Total	30	Total	25
Final group	▪ Male	2	▪ Male	6
	▪ Female	7	▪ Female	9
	Total	9	Total	15

Table 2 shows a bigger drop from HMP Hull participants.

It should be noted that although the gender distribution and drop-off rate are almost equivalent (see **Table 2**), female are probably overrepresented in the programme compared to the percentage they represent in the prison staff population in both prisons. One possible explanation for this overrepresentation could be the gender distribution in roles, with females being more prevalent in non-operative roles (e.g., business administration) and males being more prevalent in operative roles (e.g., prison officer in wings). Regarding this, participants reported that, in general, operative roles experienced more time pressure. Additionally, non-operative roles may offer more flexibility and the ability to adjust schedules compared to operative roles.

Another potential explanation could be the influence of different gender-related norms (e.g., creative activities being perceived as more feminine, males being less encouraged to express their emotions during their education). Further investigation is necessary to explore this second explanation, as it may also present a barrier to participation.

Interviews

In total, 5 interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via MS Teams with volunteers. 4 were staff from HMP Hull and one was from HMP Manchester. One participant emailed back their answers to the interview questions. Among them, 4 were females and 2 were males.

The interviewees were mostly non-operatives working for Business Assurance services, Diversity and Inclusion or Administration. Only one interviewee had a prisoner-facing job which involved allocating prisoners to activities, workshops and jobs. No prison officers came back to the research team for an interview. One possible explanation could be the difficulty to find time for operatives and the lack of flexible work practices for this staff.

Questionnaires

From the original 55 sign-ins, 24 responses were collected at T1 (participation rate = 43.7%). 12 responses were collected at T2, constituting half of the sample at T1.



Table 3. Survey responses

	T1	T2
Number of responses	24	12
<i>Drop-off rate = 50%</i>		

At T1, most respondents were white (91.7%), others were from another white background (4.2%) and from mixed/multiple ethnicities (4.2%). 54.2% were female and 45.8% were male. 41.7% were aged between 25 and 40 years, 25% between 51 and 60, 16.7% between 41 and 45. The average tenure in the job was 8.54 years (SD = 8.7), and the average tenure in the Prison service setting was 10.21 years (SD = 8.9).

Most participants who joined the programme had little or no experience in creative writing since school (71%). However, even though they had little or no experience, some of them were aware of the existence of creative writing programmes either outside of a prison context (25%) or for prisoners and staff (16.6%). Some were part of a reading group (12.5%) and 16.6% were undertaking personal creative writing.

At T2, most respondents were white (83.3%), same amount of other white background and mixed/multiple ethnicities were found as T1. 66.7% were female and 33.3% were male. 25% were aged between 25 and 40 years, 25% between 41 and 45, 25% between 51 and 60, and 25% more than 60. The average tenure in the job was 9.50 years (SD = 8.05). The average tenure in the Prison service setting was 12.33 years (SD = 8.05).

It is worth noting the drop in prison officers in our sample: six responses at T1, one response at T2. More detailed information about the sample at both measurement times is provided in [Appendix 1-2](#).

Level of wellbeing of the sample

Participants' wellbeing was assessed through different measures:

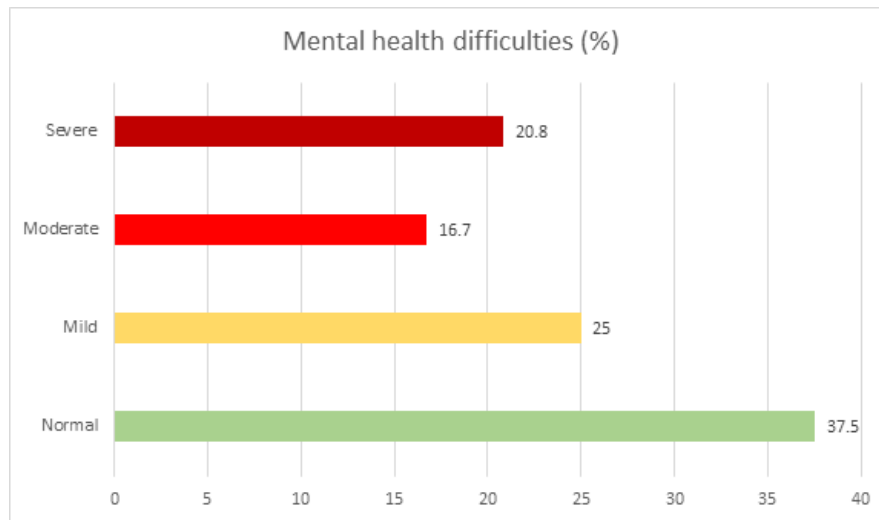
- job satisfaction (1 item, ranging from 1 to 7)
- mental wellbeing (7 items, ranging from 1 to 5)
- mental health conditions (4 items, ranging from 0 to 3)
- occupational self-efficacy (6 items, ranging from 1 to 6)

Although our sample size is small and unrepresentative of the whole prison staff population, our assessment of mental health conditions through the PHQ4 reveals concerning level of difficulties with 37.5% of respondents reporting moderate to severe mental health difficulties (i.e., anxiety and depression) at T1 (see **Figure 1**) and only 37.5% of respondents classified as Normal by their responses to this measure. Although these mental health difficulties may have no association with work and can be the result of difficulties in other life sphere (e.g., personal), these levels are concerning but aligns somewhat with the findings of another study (i.e., Kinman, Clements & Hart,



20160¹), which reported a high caseness rate of 72% regarding mental ill-health among prison officers.

Figure 1. PHQ4 results at T1



Note: N = 24.

Means and standard deviation of the other measures are displayed in **Table 4**. Standard deviation of job satisfaction reveals a high variability in respondents' perceptions (>1), meaning that some respondents are highly dissatisfied and others highly satisfied.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the measures at T1

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mental wellbeing	2.14	4.29	3.21	.55
Occupational self-efficacy	2.17	5.67	4.25	.86
Job Satisfaction	2.0	7.0	5.0	1.59

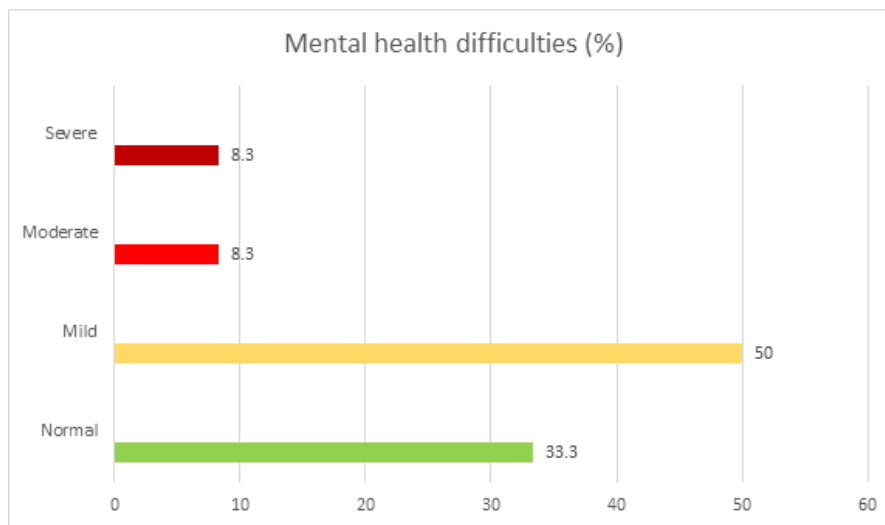
Note: N = 24.

At T2, 16.6% of respondents had moderate to severe mental health difficulties (see **Figure 2**). Although fewer respondents reported mental health difficulties compared to T1, this cannot be interpreted as a sign of the programme's effectiveness, because of T2 sample attrition. More details regarding this are provided in the limitations section.

¹ Kinman, G., Clements, A. J., & Hart, J. (2016). Work-related wellbeing in UK prison officers: A benchmarking approach. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*, 9(3), 290-307.



Figure 2. PHQ4 results at T2



Note: N = 12.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the measures at T2

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mental wellbeing	1.00	4.14	3.26	.83
Occupational self-efficacy	1.00	5.50	4.11	1.29
Job Satisfaction	1.0	7.0	4.42	2.07

Note: N = 12.

Potential factors that can impair prison staff wellbeing

Scientific literature has examined the potential occupational risks for prison staff (e.g., Ellison & Caudill, 2020²; Kinman, Clements & Hart, 2016). Kinman et al. (2016) identified low levels of all Health and Safety Executive’s risk domains (i.e., change, control, demands, peer support, management support, relationships, role) compared to other occupations. Ellison and Caudill (2020) linked issues related with these domains (i.e., unreasonable workloads, less control, lack of support) to the work-related stress experienced by prison officers. Moreover, their study found that exposure to violence was associated with higher levels of work-related stress. These findings and their potential impacts for prison staff stress and wellbeing have motivated the current project. Some of the stress risk highlighted within the literature have been cited by participants.

Prison staff face greater exposure to violence, potential harm and injuries, and challenging social situations compared to other typical occupations. These experiences can represent stressful events that may trigger post-traumatic stress disorder. Among our participants, there are signs of post-traumatic stress disorder: *“I was traumatised on the night [...] but yeah things like that you just think because what we do, we just think it’s normal and it’s not”* (Interview participant 3).

The prison work environment can be highly emotionally demanding. *“Whatever happens and whatever prisoners say to us, we try and help them, and we try and care, but we are working with severely damaged people sometimes and traumatised people. It affects us.”* (Manchester transcript G2 #7). Scientific literature has highlighted that emotionally demanding jobs involve regular use of

² Ellison, J. M., & Caudill, J. W. (2020). Working on local time: Testing the job-demand-control-support model of stress with jail officers. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 70*, 101717.



emotional labour regulation strategies that can lead to emotional exhaustion, a component of burnout (Pisaniello, Winefield, & Delfabbro, 2012³). Some emotional regulation strategies are reported in the group sessions. In particular, prison staff reported to have different persona when being at work and at home. It seems difficult to open themselves and share what they may be facing in their work with their family: *“I think we mask up at home in a different way. [...] You can’t talk about all the things that you’ve seen or heard”* (Manchester transcript G2 #7). From a prompt, one participant wrote about it: *“Which each day for me is always, paint my smile on my face and carry on, however, some people like my family never really know my true feelings or thoughts”* (Manchester transcript G2 #4). As well, they have to hide their feelings from prisoners and cannot reveal the specific conditions and events that affect them. Therefore, they have few opportunities to be open and honest. In that sense, engaging in creative writing can offer participants a rare chance to honestly express their emotions and be authentic.

In relation to the work-related stress risk of lack of control, some participants felt powerless within the justice and prison systems. One participant expressed this feelings: *“There isn’t anything that I can do. It’s awful”* (Interview participant 3). Feeling incapable of doing anything can negatively impact wellbeing as there is strong evidence that having control over aspects of work is an important job resource that can mitigate stress and is linked to work wellbeing (e.g., Sonnentag, 2015⁴; Sparr & Sonnentag, 2008⁵).

Long term exposure to these risks, through the very challenging working context within prisons, is likely to have an impact on the ways in which prison staff interact with their environment. This shift can occur gradually, consistent with burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001⁶), or can occur as a specific experience. For example, one specific aspect of a prison officer's career that has been repeatedly mentioned in the ‘epiphany’ activity, as part of the program, is the point at which they encounter challenging interactions with prisoners. Participants have chosen to write about the moment when this exposure leads to a shift in how new recruits approach their work. The initial enthusiasm and optimism with which they begin their career can shift into disillusion. This particular moment may be a crucial turning point in an officer's career and overall well-being and can be a worthwhile avenue to explore further.

Motivation and barriers to engagement

Most participants thought that the programme may bring benefits to their wellbeing (96% of survey respondents). One interviewee clearly linked their participation to improving their mental health conditions, stating *“I was really [mentally] poorly last year which was why I was so interested in this, doing something else”* (Interview participant 3). Another has been previously advised by therapists to engage in creative writing for their wellbeing but had never given it a go. A smaller proportion

³ Pisaniello, S. L., Winefield, H. R., & Delfabbro, P. H. (2012). The influence of emotional labour and emotional work on the occupational health and wellbeing of South Australian hospital nurses. *Journal of Vocational behavior, 80*(3), 579-591.

⁴ Sonnentag, S. (2015). Dynamics of well-being. *Annu. Rev. Organ. Psychol. Organ. Behav., 2*(1), 261-293.

⁵ Sparr, J. L., & Sonnentag, S. (2008). Feedback environment and well-being at work: The mediating role of personal control and feelings of helplessness. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 17*(3), 388-412.

⁶ Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual review of psychology, 52*(1), 397-422.



forecast benefits in their relationships outside of work (37.5%), with work colleagues (33.33%), or with prisoners (25%). No respondents anticipated any negative effects associated with creative writing.

From the interview data, most interviewees stated no prior expectations regarding the programme. One quote from Interview participant 4 captures this general view: *"I didn't really know what we would be doing"*. However, different motivations were found, and participants were sometimes driven by multiple reasons, mostly related to curiosity for the activity. One participant stated *"I really wanted to try something new, and I knew it's not natural or my thing, but I still give it a go, but it definitely met my expectations"* (Interview participant 1). There was also an interest about engaging in something creative or learning things about writing and techniques. One interviewee also mentioned potential benefits for their role, saying *"I thought I was always a bit rubbish at writing reports, [...] and I just thought it might teach me to be a little freer with words and to find different ways of writing styles so that's why I signed up. [...] You know I've always fancied trying a bit of writing but never really known where to start"* (Interview participant 2).

Although there was clear interest and openness to the activity for some participants, barriers had to be overcome for certain staff members. Session recordings revealed that some participants felt guilty taking this time for themselves while their team members were struggling with human resources. This sentiment was reflected in the following discussion:

- ““ A1: *I feel a bit guilty though I have to say.*
 A3: *Absolutely understand where you're coming from.*
 Tutor: *Because of the staff workload?*
 A1: *Yeah because I know there's no cover on the wing for me.*

This indicates that a major barrier to participation may be the lack of time and resources. This resonates with a comment from an interviewee: *"I think mainly, there was an interest there but also because I've moved roles I had time on my hands to do it. [...] I felt able to give of myself to do it, but if I had been on an Administrative Management Unit (AMU) I probably wouldn't have done because of the pressure and time"* (Interview participant 5). Moreover, in the session recordings, participants expressed reluctance to close the wing in order to attend the sessions, as they considered it unfair to the prisoners. Overall, this stresses the importance of facilitating the conduct of the sessions by providing staff with adequate resources or designing the programme in a way that better suits the working conditions of prison officers.

Other possible barriers mentioned by participants are related to attitudes from colleagues. One tutor reported a participant's comment on the matter: *"I said what was it like coming to here, did you get any stick off your mates and one of them went [...] "every Thursday I've had crap off the lads". He said "you know, it's a bit of banter but really they're interested as well"*". Therefore, for some staff, attending the sessions despite being teased may require a great deal of courage and resilience. This attitude can be associated with the occupational culture in the prison setting. However, there is hope that this barrier can be overcome through word of mouth if the initial staff participants become advocates and share the benefits of the programme they have experienced.



Benefits of the programme

Most respondents (from both the survey and interviews) really enjoyed the programme. However, this should be taken with caution as the data may suffer from self-selection bias. This will be discussed in the limitations section.

Nevertheless, for those participants who did engage, a range of benefits were reported.

(1) Individual wellbeing benefits

First, in terms of wellbeing benefits, two major subthemes emerged. Some participants appreciated the opportunity to **escape from work**, finding it beneficial to have dedicated time where they didn't have to think about work and could clear their minds of work-related issues. Several quotes support this:

“[...] because when you're focussing on [the writing], there's nothing else going on in your head" (Hull transcript #5)

“It's been, whosever idea it was in the first place, genius idea because certainly from my perspective to have an hour in the week at work where you're not having to deal with what you've got to deal with, it's just wonderful, like an oasis” (Manchester G1 transcript #5)

“I enjoyed the homework, and it actually helped me with my mental health. I did my homework on a Sunday afternoon and found that this took my mind off thinking about going back to work the next day” (Interview participant 6)

“We're in a stressful world, we're do a stressful job and to have something that takes you out of your job for a brief time, into a different environment has been really, really good for me, very positive” (Interview participant 2)

“It was just kind of like a reset really, it's like you're doing one thing and then you're able to just go and focus on something else solely for just a little bit and then you come back and sort other stuff out” (Interview participant 5)

Some described the experience as **“therapeutic”** and **“cathartic”**, allowing them to express their feelings and process emotionally difficult experiences whether work-related or from their personal life. There was evidence that engaging in creative writing helped create a distance between themselves and difficult experiences. Despite requiring careful consideration, there were many instances in participants' writings where difficult events were described. Two participants found they could let go of a difficult personal experience they felt they had been 'carrying' up to this point.

“Never done anything like it before, but it has been cathartic. It's almost like it's given me permission to write feelings down” (survey comment)

“I pushed myself away from that and I wrote” (Manchester G1 transcript #5)

“It let me really step back from where I am every day and like assess it, like somebody else, like it was like being a fly on the wall for my day and being able to look at it without any feelings behind it” (Interview participant 4)



"[...] because I've never found a way to kind of move on from some things in my life or they've always kind of sat in my head. You know, things from my childhood and I actually spoke about how it had made me feel actually, being able to write it down. It's almost like a release so, I think I got more out of the course for my wellbeing point of view than I did about finding ways to write things" (Interview participant 2)

"[The epiphany prompt] that one was particularly helpful for me, you know after it I felt like it was something I had held inside me for 8 years and then it was just gone and I didn't feel, like I was still holding it, it was there and then it was gone" (Interview participant 4)

Regarding the therapeutic effects, one participant described creative writing as a coping mechanism. In the stress literature, coping mechanisms are regarded as ways for individuals to effectively deal with stressful events. The development of such a coping mechanism was clearly experienced by one participant who stated: *"Now it's like another coping mechanism that I can call on, on the darker days, so it will be able to get me through whatever I'm doing that day. I know it happened, the last time was 3 weeks ago, I was having a really, really bad attack, and I just sat in bed and I had my book, [...] and just getting out on the page it doesn't hurt me anymore as it's not in there anymore it's out, so I've got the strength to sort of move on with the rest of my day" (Interview participant 4)*. This is a powerful benefit of the programme and demonstrates the value of creative writing as a coping mechanism for dealing with stressful experiences.

Interview participant 4 describes how therapeutic this activity is for them personally:

"when I'm feeling one certain way and I don't understand why and I just want it to go away it's the only thing where I can write exactly how I'm feeling exactly what the problem is and really get it out [...] it's not really broad, it's something that I can really hone in on and write about, really privately but in a lot of detail so it's, it's not vague it's not wishy washy its out and it's on the page and if I wanted to I can get rid of the page, which I have done actually, [...] I can get rid of it like both by writing it down and getting out of my head, getting rid of it from my head but also I can physically just get rid of it"

These two subthemes of escapism and catharism are not mutually exclusive and can be both experienced by participants. Based on self-reported data, these findings give supporting evidence that the programme can bring wellbeing benefits. Furthermore, survey respondents strongly agreed with the statement: "I would recommend creative writing to help others' well-being".

However, one interview participant reported perceiving no benefits for their wellbeing. Exploring their responses as a whole, this interviewee expressed high satisfaction with their work, which suggest they needed less escape or processing difficult work-related matters. The interviewee also stated a preference to not process personal events: *"[the tutor] would say a lot of people write about the past and stuff like that, that doesn't interest me, I don't want to delve into that"* (Interview participant 1). Another possible explanation to their lack of benefit could be that the interviewee found the writing process difficult as it did not come naturally to them.

(2) Other individual benefits

In addition to wellbeing benefits, other individual benefits were identified. This programme allowed participants to **develop their creative skills**. Some participants reported the benefits of engaging

in something creative and different from their job requirements, exploring areas far beyond their usual routine. The possibility of exercising more diverse abilities was positively experienced.

“it’s using your brain in a slightly different way to what you normally do” (Manchester G1 transcript #3)

“it’s active in a different way like exercising your brain” (Interview participant 5)

“it felt completely different to anything I’ve done for a long time, different to what I normally do at work so like you’re in a room, chatting about all these like concepts of creative writing and chatting about poetry and stuff it’s just very, very different” (Interview participant 5)

“a lot of what we do is about physical stuff, you know physical health, we put stuff out there about prostate cancer and breast cancer and [...] it’s all physical stuff whereas this was really about getting your brain working, so that was quite different.” (Interview participant 1)

Participants also reported positive outcomes both in their **self-confidence** regarding their skills and themselves **and interpersonal confidence** for speaking up and expressing their ideas. Moreover, survey respondents also found that the programme helped them express themselves.

“*I think I was quieter to begin with but as I gained a bit more confidence about it and, I’m not normally one to speak up, it did encourage me to speak up a bit more and give an opinion and read bits and pieces out, not something I would normally ever consider doing” (Interview participant 5)*

“helped to build up my confidence by sharing my writing with [the tutor] and other course members” (survey comment)

“before I’d think oh I can’t do that because you know I’m a wreck and I can’t do that [...] For me to speak up in front of those people about something that was really, really, incredibly personal was a massive boost for me being able to do that” (Interview participant 2)

Other individual benefits related to **self-growth** were reported. Some participants described the experience as pushing them outside of their comfort zone, leading to a gain in self-knowledge and in personal development.

“*I think I try to develop myself; I think that’s what we here for, I think we’re here to, we’re on a journey of self-development and sometimes the most frustrating thing for me is when I look at things and I think I’ve not developed, I’ve not moved on” (Manchester G1 transcript #7)*

“the creative writing has kind of made me look at myself inside and I’ve never experienced that in a training course before” (Interview participant 2)

“I think I learned that I probably know myself a bit better than I thought I did [...] Because I didn’t particularly enjoy school, I didn’t, a writing course of something like that is not something that I would normally go anywhere near, so I’m really pleased that, I suppose



its growth and development by stepping out of my comfort and trying something new.”
(Interview participant 1)

The program also instilled a sense of pride in participants regarding their writing. Some even gained enough confidence in their skills that they decided to continue writing and considered writing a novel. Therefore, this programme has potentially broadened participants’ horizons of possibilities.

(3) Personal benefits: Relationships with family and friends

Third, some benefits related to personal relationships were described. While fewer participants mentioned positive changes in their personal relationships compared to the well-being and self-development benefits, it was noted that those who processed difficult personal events and shared their reflections or writings about these events with loved ones reported **stronger relationships** with them.

“[...] actually discussing things with one sister who had similar experiences to me, I think it’s made us even closer because of that shared understanding. Neither one of us had actually really talked it through before about some of the experiences we had from childhood and we’re now planning to do that. She’s done the same, you know talked about her experiences and mine and it helped her as well. [...] So, yeah I guess that’s brought us a bit closer”. (Interview participant 2)

(4) Professional benefits: Relationships with colleagues

On a general note, it is noteworthy that the professional sphere (workplace experiences, relationships with prisoners, etc) was a topic more frequently depicted in participants’ writings, while it was less mentioned in the questionnaire or interviews.

Fourth, there were a range of professional benefits. Specifically, some participants reported **enhanced relationships with colleagues** because the discussion format brought more interaction between staff members. The opportunity of establish more social connections is an important aspect of this programme, especially regarding the prison context is characterised by low social support (Kinman et al, 2016). There is evidence that social support acts as a buffer to work-related stress.



“The staffing can be tight and everybody’s really busy so to have that time and to sit and actually talk to someone that you’ve probably know for ten years but have never really had a proper chat with, that was really helpful.” (Interview participant 1)

“I think it brought me closer to the people that were in the group because I knew them to say hello to but obviously more the developing personal relationships kind of thing”
(Interview participant 5)

The tutor from Manchester shared an example of enhanced relationships: *“something always went wrong admin wise and then after one of the groups she took him in for a chat with their member about something that had happened, [...] they’d opened up communication about a problem and [...] they were sorting something out.”*

Furthermore, there were reports of **increased empathy** towards both prison families and colleagues by discussing things and exchanging point of view. Regarding colleagues, this programme helped participants gain a better understanding of each other’s roles and challenges.



“I found more of an appreciation for my co-workers” (Interview participant 4)

“I think because it opens up those doors to other people’s perspectives and how they see things” (Interview participant 3)

Peer support and the quality of co-worker relationships are very important characteristics of a healthy workplace, and similarly, poor peer relations constitute a risk to work-related stress. There is some evidence that the programme contributed to positive relationships with colleagues, and this is an interesting avenue for further exploration.

(5) Professional benefits: Relationships with prisoners/prisoner families

Regarding prison families, there was one instance where participants analysed a work situation that resonated with their discussion on the topic of humanity: “[...] they treat them as though they are the people who’ve done the crime and he said we shouldn’t be doing that he said, we should be treating everyone with humanity” (Manchester G2 transcript #7).

Finally, with regards to prisoners, fewer benefits were reported although the tutor reported an instance where a participant expressed their willingness to promote creative writing to prisoners: “He said I’ve never really done this myself, expressed myself and he was saying how he sees things on the wings, and he did say, “now I’ve seen this I can relay it to prisoners” (Manchester tutor). By doing so, prisoner-facing staff can potentially **enhance their relationships with prisoners** and broaden the impacts of creative writing to prisoners.

Factors associated with group setting

From the analysis, some conditions of the session setting appeared to be enjoyable. These elements are noteworthy as they can constitute necessary conditions for this programme to provide benefits to the attendees.

One survey respondent described the sessions as a *safe space*: “It provided a safe space in the hectic working day”. This can be related to the escape from work mentioned previously. Others mentioned the absence of competition and judgement between participants: “you know I was open about it and spoke about it a couple of times and I certainly didn’t feel judged” (Interview participant 1).

The nature of the support from the tutors is also an important factor. “[the tutor] had a way of kind of getting the best out of people and he was really engaging and ever so supportive. [The tutor] is been supporting all of us outside the work with writing as well” (Interview participant 2). The tutors encouraged participants to share their reflections on each topic as well as their writing without pushing those who were not ready yet: “what worked for me was there was no pressure from [the tutor] to speak up in front of everyone” (Interview participant 6). The respect for each participant’s pace was also appreciated. In particular, it seems that the tutors played an important role in alleviating participants’ individual barriers: “[the tutor] says to us you know like “just chill out, it doesn’t have to be perfect first time, it doesn’t even have to be good”” (Interview participant 4)”. The tutors’ former experience was key in addressing participants’ fear and helping them gain confidence in their writing. “Creative writing can be a bit scary [...], I made sure in every session they knew it wasn’t competitive, it wasn’t an achievement of academic level, it was an opportunity for them to just simply express themselves in their own way” (Manchester tutor). “What was funny, because I’ve obviously done this kind of thing with prisoners for so long also, the same things and the same fears



and the same barriers came out from both: “oh I’m not good at writing” and “I’m not sure” (Manchester tutor).

These previous elements are linked to the concept of **psychological safety** that describes “perceptions of the consequences of taking interpersonal risks in a particular context” (Edmondson & Lei, 2014⁷). Psychological safety plays a critical role in understanding why people voice, share knowledge, collaborate and work together, and has been found in some literature to be a mediator enabling teams to achieve target outcomes (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Here, participants perceived a low risk associated with sharing their writing: they mentioned the absence of judgement and laughter, and support and encouragement from the tutor for sharing their thoughts and writing. These factors may have created an atmosphere of trust that facilitated the achievement of the programme’s objectives.

The quote from interview participant 4 precisely summarises this experience:

“I feel like that when you’re trying to be a bit creative and stuff you want to put up a barrier to protect yourself in case someone doesn’t like it and I think in that first week that’s what we were all doing a little bit but you know once we’d seen each other’s faces week after week, knowing that no one was actually laughing at us when we were reading our things and actually everyone was being really enthusiastic and like cheering us all on, it yeah, really comfortable, it was also like a nice honest area where we could all say stuff to each other”.

This quote also reveals another important aspect which relates to the temporality. Participants became more comfortable as the sessions progressed. Therefore, the length of the programme should be thoroughly considered.

Regarding the characteristics of the group setting, an appropriate size provides participants with enough room to be active during the sessions and share. It could have also helped them build their confidence.

“Had it been a bigger a group I think that would have been harder. Had there been like 15 people in a room I would have sat at the back in the corner [and say nothing] but because there was only like half a dozen of us and I knew everybody, I found that a lot easier to actually get involved and join in so that worked really well” (Interview participant 2).

Finally, the discussions stimulated by the sessions are another key element. Survey data highlighted that the discussions were among the top things participants enjoyed. For example, “it was quite nice to actually engage in conversation with this, just discuss ideas with everybody you know, didn’t have to be my idea, could be somebody else’s idea, you know, “have you thought about this?”” (Interview participant 2) or “Being able to sit and hear all the other perspectives and to be able to join into that discussion is what made it so exciting to keep coming back and what made me look forward to going to it every week” (Interview participant 4). They also enjoyed the possibility of receiving feedback on what they were producing: “I mean just reading some of the things I’d written out and getting positive feedback from members of the group and stuff that was, that was really good [...] Getting good feedback from other people encourages you more” (Interview participant 5). Without this frame – either the programme or the discussions and exchanges between participants – it is difficult for some attendees to carry on with personal writing on their own as stated by Interview participant 5:

⁷ Edmondson, A. C., & Lei, Z. (2014). Psychological safety: The history, renaissance, and future of an interpersonal construct. *Annu. Rev. Organ. Psychol. Organ. Behav.*, 1(1), 23-43



“it is something I would like to continue but with the course, you know, like you had ideas you could bounce off from and I’ve kind of lost that bit now, like trying to figure out how I do that for myself”

It is worth noting that through these discussions, the active position required by the programme and the proposed activities may have led to positive outcomes: *“[in other wellbeing training] there’s no interaction, so the actual interaction and having somebody there to sit and discuss things with made it a lot more engaging”* (Interview participant 2).



Limitations and future avenues

As mentioned previously, there may be a self-selection bias in the data as people who dropped out of the programme could be those suffering from greater mental health difficulties. Therefore, if the programme is run again, it would be worthwhile investigating the experiences of participants who dropped out and understand the reasons behind it. It is possible that the programme does not effectively address the needs of those currently experiencing greater difficulties. Another explanation could be related to the preference of individuals in how they express themselves: some may find it challenging to write down their feelings or feel that it does not suit them.

The self-selection bias also affects the findings regarding the programme's benefits. Indeed, people who didn't respond to the post questionnaire could also be those who haven't benefited from the programme or haven't enjoyed it as much as those who responded. Therefore, even though these preliminary results show some positive outcomes and are encouraging, further studies are required to strengthen the findings.

Investigating the experiences of people who dropped out could also contribute to understanding the barriers to participation. Such knowledge would help in designing a programme that addresses these barriers. Some of them are already known such as workload and the difficulty of accommodating prison officers' schedules.

Another limitation is the lack of participation of prison officers in this evaluation work but also during the programme. Their views and experiences have probably not been captured in this work while they might be the ones who would benefit the most from this programme. Indeed, prison officers are more exposed to violence, injuries and harm than non-operational staff and thus, can have more difficult work experiences to process.

These findings have raised additional questions. Especially, it would be important to test whether certain roles within the prison setting benefit more from the programme compared to others based on the above idea. It may also be interesting to assess participants' wellbeing at different times after the programme to capture its long-term effects. Additionally, investigating how the discussions could serve as a medium for participants to build more resilience could be interesting. Finally, it would be valuable to explore the necessary conditions during the sessions for attendees to benefit from the programme.

In conclusion, one finding that highlights the relevance of the program is its distinction from other well-being provisions. While others are seen as addressing individuals who are mentally distressed and require immediate assistance, this program is considered by one participant as being applicable to all staff members: *"there's like people you can contact if you need help or PAN Assist or something like that, there are things that you can go to but that's like specific needs, I think, whereas this is more of a holistic, it's like a general approach"* (Interview participant 5).

Contact

The Centre for Human Factors is keen to discuss any of these findings. If you have any questions relating to this report, please contact us at humanfactors@hull.ac.uk



Appendix



Appendix 1. Survey data (T1)

		Job Position			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Administration officer	2	8.3	8.3	8.3
	Band 3 Business Admin	2	8.3	8.3	16.6
	Band 4 Non-operational (Admin)	2	8.3	8.3	24.9
	Head of Business assurance	1	4.2	4.2	29.1
	Healthcare	1	4.2	4.2	33.3
	Library manager	1	4.2	4.2	37.5
	Manager	2	8.3	8.3	45.8
	Managing Chaplain	1	4.2	4.2	50.0
	Nursing Assistant	1	4.2	4.2	54.2
	Operational Support Grade	1	4.2	4.2	58.3
	Principal Officer	1	4.2	4.2	62.5
	Prison Officer	6	25.0	25.0	87.5
	Senior Officer	1	4.2	4.2	91.7
	Specialist Production Instructor - Print Shop	1	4.2	4.2	95.8
	Staff nurse	1	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	



Appendix 2. Survey data (T2)

		Job Position			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Admin	1	8.3	8.3	8.3
	Band 3 Admin	1	8.3	8.3	16.7
	Business Admin	1	8.3	8.3	25.0
	library manager	1	8.3	8.3	33.3
	Manager	4	33.3	33.3	66.7
	Prison Officer	1	8.3	8.3	75.0
	Senior Case Admin	1	8.3	8.3	83.3
	Senior Officer	2	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	12	100.0	100.0	

Participant experiences					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Improved my relationships with colleagues	12	1.0	5.0	3.667	1.1547
Improved my interactions with prisoners	12	1.0	4.0	3.083	.7930
Helped me to express myself	12	1.0	5.0	4.333	1.1547
Improved my overall wellbeing	12	1.0	5.0	4.000	1.0445
Enjoyed the process of journaling in my own time	12	1.0	5.0	4.083	1.0836
Enjoyed the creative writing exercises we did in class	12	1.0	5.0	4.167	1.1934
Enjoyed using the books as writing prompts	12	1.0	5.0	3.500	1.3143
Enjoyed the discussion element of the course	12	1.0	5.0	4.417	1.1645
Intend to continue creative writing	12	1.0	5.0	4.333	1.1547
Would Recommend creative writing to help others' wellbeing	12	1.0	5.0	4.583	1.1645
Excited to have my work showcased as part of a collection and to be a published author	12	1.0	5.0	4.417	1.1645



Appendix 3. Questionnaire structure (T1)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this project

To help us understand your experiences of this project, and to help us refine the course if it runs again in the future, we have some questions for you before and after the writing course.

It will only take few minutes to complete the survey.

We will keep your responses confidential and your answers to these questions will not be paired with your personal information in any feedback or reports.

Informed consent

Please read the following statements carefully and tick each checkbox to acknowledge your consent.

- I confirm that I have read the participation information sheet for the current study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had any questions answered satisfactorily.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my data up to the point of submission.
- I understand that the survey in which I am participating will be recorded as data, that the data will be collected anonymously, analysed and used, to develop ameliorations in the course and possible recommendations.
- I understand that the research data, which will be anonymous (not linked to me), will be retained by the researchers and may be shared with others and publicly disseminated to support other research in the future.
- I understand that my personal data will be kept securely in accordance with data protection guidelines, and will only be available to the immediate research team.
- I agree to take part in the study above

Code generation

Our research team is interested to explore the benefits of participating in the Creative writing programme. It can possibly inform future programs or interventions. For this, we need to link participants' answers pre and post participation.

To do this whilst also maintaining your anonymity, we invite you to generate a unique identification code by answering the questions below. The numbers and digits from your responses will be combined to create a single code. This code will be used only by the researchers, and **will not at any point be made available to your employer**. It will not be possible to identify you from your responses.

Providing this information is completely optional and choosing not to provide it will not prevent you submitting your survey responses.

Code:



- The number of the calendar month you were born in (01-12)
- Gender (M/F)
- The first initial of your first name

***However, code duplicates have been found in our sample. If the survey should be run again, other questions should be asked to generate an unique code.**

Please tell us a little about yourself...

1. What is your current age?
 - 18 - 25
 - 26 - 40
 - 41 - 55
 - 46 - 50
 - 51 - 60
 - 60 +
 - Prefer not to say

2. Which of the following best describes your ethnic background?
 - White - British / English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish
 - Other white
 - Black / Black British
 - Asian / Asian British
 - Mixed / Multiple ethnicities
 - Arab
 - Other
 - Prefer not to say

3. Which of the following best describes you?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Prefer to self-describe
 - Prefer not to say

4. How many years have you been working in your current prison (in years)?

5. How many years have you been working for the Prison Service in total (in years)?

6. What is your current level within the prison?
 - Prison officer
 - Supervisor
 - Manager
 - Senior Manager
 - Other
 Please state if other _____

7. What is your experience of creative writing?

Please tick all that apply

 - No experience / no experience since school



- I am aware of creative writing programmes outside of a prison context
- I am aware of creative writing for prisoners / staff
- I have undertaken personal creative writing
- I have taken part in a creative writing programme or group
- I have taken part in a reading group

8. What do you think creative writing could do for you?

Please tick all that apply

I think it could have a positive effect on

- my wellbeing
- my peer relationships at work
- my relationships outside of work
- my relationships with prison inmates
- I think it could have little or no effect on me
- I think it could have a negative effect on me*

*If you think the creative writing may have any negative effects on you, please note below any concerns you have

Thinking about how you currently feel:

Over the past couple of weeks

	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
1. I have been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
3. I have been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
6. I have been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have been able to make up my mind about things	1	2	3	4	5

Tennant, R., Hiller, L., Fishwick, R., Platt, S., Joseph, S., Weich, S., Parkinson, J., Secker, J., & Stewart-Brown, S. (2007). The WarwickEdinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS): Development and UK validation. Health and Quality of Life Outcomes, 5, Article 63.

Again, thinking about the past couple of weeks...

how often have you been bothered by the following feelings?



Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
Not being able to stop or control worrying	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
Feeling down, depressed or hopeless	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
Little interest or pleasure in doing things	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day

Kroenke K, Spitzer RL, Williams JB, Löwe B. An ultra-brief screening scale for anxiety and depression: the PHQ-4. *Psychosomatics*. 2009 Nov-Dec;50(6):613-21. doi: 10.1176/appi.psy.50.6.613. PMID: 19996233.

Thinking about your job...

	1=Extremely dissatisfied; 7=Extremely satisfied						
Taking everything into consideration, how do you feel about your job as a whole?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Dolbier, C. L., Webster, J. A., McCalister, K. T., Mallon, M. W., & Steinhardt, M. A. (2005). Reliability and validity of a single-item measure of job satisfaction. American Journal of Health Promotion, 19(3), 194-198.

Thinking about yourself at work...	1=Not at all true; 6=Completely true					
1. I can remain calm when facing difficulties in my job because I can rely on my abilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. When I am confronted with a problem in my job, I can usually find several solutions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Whatever comes my way in my job, I can usually handle it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. My past experiences in my job have prepared me well for my occupational future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I meet the goals that I set for myself in my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I feel prepared for most of the demands in my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Rigotti, T., Schyns, B., & Mohr, G. (2008). A short version of the occupational self-efficacy scale: Structural and construct validity across five countries. Journal of Career Assessment, 16(2), 238-255.



Appendix 4. Questionnaire structure (T2)

Introduction section were the same as T1 (welcoming message, informed consent, code)

Please tell us a little about yourself...

Questions 1 to 6

Thinking about how you currently feel:

Same measures as T1 were used

Thinking about your experience of the creative writing groups	1 = strongly disagree 5 = strongly agree				
The writing course improved my relationships with work colleagues	1	2	3	4	5
The writing course improved my interactions with prisoners					
The writing course helped me to express myself					
The writing course improved my overall wellbeing					
I enjoyed the process of journaling in my own time					
I enjoyed the creative writing exercises we did in class					
I enjoyed using the books as writing prompts					
I enjoyed the discussion element of the course					
I intend to continue creative writing					
I would recommend creative writing to help others' wellbeing					
I'm excited to have my work showcased as part of a collection and to be a published author					

Of the three books we used for discussion, please rank them in order of preference by adding either 1 (my favourite), 2 (second preference) or 3 (least preferred) in the boxes below

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Shawshank short story | <input type="text"/> |
| 2. Guantanamo Poetry | <input type="text"/> |
| 3. Prison Time memoir | <input type="text"/> |

Thinking about your job...

Same measures as T1 were used

Final thoughts

If you have any comments about your experiences of the creative writing programme you would like to share confidentially with us, please add your thoughts in the space below



If we were to run the course again in future, would you suggest we do anything differently?



Appendix 5. Interview guide

Interview Version 1 (11/10/22)
<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Who we are – background, our role in the project 2) Explain ethics – information sharing (only group data summaries) / audio recording consent / transcription consent / anonymity / right to withdraw / GDPR data storage / access / reporting 3) What the project is about – creative writing programme for prison officers to support wellbeing
<p><u>Interviewee info</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Job Role – broadly explain job role “tell me a bit about your job” 2) Background - Years in current role / similar roles / Prior experience / Background 3) Current Job - How do you feel about your job at the moment?
<p><u>Exploring their experience of the writing programme</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why did you sign up for the creative writing programme? 2. Had you done any creative writing before this programme? 4. In what ways did the CW programme meet your expectations? Were there any ways it didn't? 5. What were your general impressions about the groups sessions? What worked well for you? <i>(How active were you in contributing to the group learning sessions? Did this change over the course of the sessions and if so, why was this? What contribution(s) to group discussions were you most proud of? Has your engagement on this course been different to educational courses you have done in past?)</i> 6. How did you find the individual journaling tasks (“homework”)? 7. What was your favourite book we discussed and why AND what was your favourite writing exercise and why? 8. Are you proud of the work you produced? How does it feel to become a published author? Have you spoken to friends / family about the course? 9. What impacts did the groups have on your personal development, if any? 11. How did the groups change the way you think about your work? 12. Do you plan to continue with your writing? 12. Would you recommend this programme or creative writing to others in your workplace? Who do you think might benefit from it (ie any particular job role)? 13. Were you particularly pleased/proud of any of your creative writings? (Which ones/why?) 14. What, if anything, would you suggest we do differently if we ran the groups again? 15. How is this programme any different from other wellbeing provisions? *added question
<p><u>Looking Forwards</u></p> <p>Possible few extra questions, <i>if appropriate:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Would you have engaged with this as an online course if it had been offered that way? (Eg would you have been motivated enough to do the exercises in your own time?) 2) Do you think there may be similar interest from other HMPPS? 3) We are making a short film relating to the work we did, would you be willing to be interviewed for the film? <p><u>End</u> - Reiterate next steps, ethics, and what will happen to data</p>

