

Sound Training

2016 Impact Evaluation of Prison Programme Pilot

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This report was written by the education and youth development 'think and action tank' LKMco. LKMco is a social enterprise - we believe that society has a duty to ensure children and young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood. We work towards this vision by helping education and youth organisations develop, evaluate and improve their work with young people. We then carry out academic and policy research and advocacy that is grounded in our experience.

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1 Executive summary

Education provision in prisons is currently undergoing extensive reform, creating opportunities for organisations like Sound Training to provide new educational programmes. Sound Training has developed an intervention programme which aims to improve reading age by supporting vocabulary development and decoding skills. Sound Training has previously been successful when working with young people and children in schools and the programme was adapted to meet the needs of learners in this new setting. The Sound Training programme was piloted in three reform prisons with delivery taking place over a six week period.

This evaluation assesses the impact of the programme on the following learner outcomes:

- Reading ability
- Confidence
- Self-Efficacy
- Attitudes to reading and education

It also includes a process evaluation which considers the factors which supported and hindered the programme's impact, including prison-level factors and features of the programme itself.

Reading ability

Almost all of the 34 learners included in the evaluation increased their reading age considerably over the course of the programme, with the exception of one high ability and one low ability reader. The average gain in reading age was 18 months, which increased to 23 months when learners with a maximum baseline score were discounted. Examples of particularly significant progress include 5 learners who increased their reading ages by 39, 60 and 65 months respectively. Many learners increased their reading age to the maximum 18.9 years: at baseline, 21% (7) of learners had a reading age of 18.9 compared to 65% (22) of learners at endpoint. Learners also reported that they had improved numerous other reading related skills including spelling, vocabulary knowledge and the ability to decode words. Learners felt that these improvements positively impacted on their ability and behaviour in other education programmes.

Confidence

Although most learners had high levels of confidence at the start of the programme, Sound Training improved learners' confidence in their reading ability as well as in relation to spelling, reading aloud and public speaking. Learners also felt more confident when taking part in other education courses as a result of having more confidence in their reading skills.

Self-efficacy

Learners' high self-efficacy (their belief in their ability to improve skills) was reinforced by the programme and in turn, increased the learners' engagement and progress. As most learners' self-efficacy was high at baseline so it was not possible in this pilot to establish whether Sound Training improves low self-efficacy. However, there is evidence that the programme did lead to increases in some learners' self-efficacy, in relation to specific areas such as spelling when they saw the progress they were making. Notably, at endpoint, many learners mentioned their improved literacy skills when providing examples of times their abilities had improved, whereas literacy skills were not mentioned at baseline.

Attitude to reading and education

Attitudes towards reading and enjoyment of reading varied among the learners. The programme impacted positively on learners' attitudes toward reading for pleasure as many reported they were more likely to do so after having completed the programme. However, this change in attitude had not yet resulted in a change in reading behaviour. Learners had positive attitudes towards education in terms of its value but often felt negatively about prison education programmes. Once learners began the course they developed a positive attitude towards the Sound Training programme and although these more positive attitudes did not necessarily change learners' negative attitudes to other education programmes, some did express positive intentions to take part in more education as a result of completing the Sound Training programme.

Process evaluation: programme factors

The majority of learners, including those with initially low levels of motivation, enjoyed the sessions and developed a strong motivation to engage in the programme. Comments from learners and staff regarding why learners enjoyed and engaged with the programme revealed some common factors which were consistently seen to have impacted the programme's success. These included: fast-paced, interactive activities; the delivery style and manner of the Tutor; the visibility of learners' progression; the programme structure and the timing of sessions.

Process evaluation: prison factors

The programme's success was affected by the nature and logistics of each institution. Effective organisation and clear communication between Sound Training and the prison helped the programme run more smoothly. Allocating one dedicated member staff, with clear responsibility for managing the programme, also improved organisation and communication. It was beneficial if this dedicated member of staff knew learners well, as they could then provide support for learners throughout the programme. Although the programme was targeted at middle to high-ability learners, the learners that were recruited had a range of abilities. Nonetheless, the data underpinning this evaluation suggest that learners of all abilities were able to make progress. Based on our findings we recommend that prisons should aim to recruit voluntary learners to ensure motivation is high and to reduce dropout.

In conclusion, this evaluation finds compelling evidence that Sound Training had a considerable, positive impact on reading ability. Furthermore, learners on the programme improved other literacy skills as well as their confidence, self-efficacy and, to an extent, their attitudes towards reading and education. Learners enjoyed and valued the programme immensely and were keen to report the positive impact it had on them.

2 Methodology

2.1 Overview of outcomes, dimensions and measurement tools

Outcomes	Dimensions	Measurement tools
Reading ability	Reading age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading age assessment (WRAT4) • Qualitative interviews • Qualitative endpoint surveys
	Self-assessed impact on other literacy skills	
Confidence and Self-Efficacy	Confidence in reading ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of midpoint sessions • Qualitative interviews
	Belief in ability to improve	
Attitudes to reading and education	Enjoyment of reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of midpoint sessions • Qualitative interviews • Qualitative endpoint surveys
	Attitude to education	
Process: Programme factors	Enjoyability, engagement and motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of midpoint sessions • Qualitative interviews • Qualitative endpoint surveys
Process: Prison factors	Organisation	
	Staff involvement and support	
	Selection of learners	

2.2 Measurement tools

2.2.1 Reading age assessment

All learners' reading ages were assessed using the WRAT4 reading test prior to the Sound Training programme and on completion of the final session. The test was administered by prison education staff. The test gives a maximum reading score of 18.9 though the standard scores within the 18.9 band can vary. The difference in reading age of each learner was calculated in months and the mean difference in reading age scores was calculated.

2.2.2 Qualitative interviews

We conducted qualitative, semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders involved in the programme including prison staff, the Sound Training Tutor and the learners themselves, at both baseline and endpoint. Baseline interviews aimed to elucidate interviewees' expectations for the programme (both positive and negative) and learners' confidence, belief in ability to improve and attitude towards education and reading. At endpoint, interviews examined the extent to which expectations had been met, the programme's overall success, what did or did not go well during the programme and a post-programme evaluation of the learners' confidence, belief in ability to improve and attitude toward education and reading.

Learner interviews

The learners were selected for the programme differently in each institution. In prison A - a category B prison in the south of England, logistical issues impacted upon the selection of learners. This led to the selection of some learners that did not have sufficient English to take part in the programme. These learners were subsequently removed from the programme. In prison B – a category C prison in the north of England learners were selected from a group taking part in an undergraduate university Criminology course with the aim of improving their vocabulary to support their studies. A further four learners in this prison were invited to join the pilot to ensure the group number of 20 learners. These learners were individuals who had an adequate reading level to benefit from the programme. In prison C, a category D resettlement prison, learners involved in other education programmes were

selected by staff and asked to attend. This selection process led to some learners feeling frustrated that their participation was not voluntary.

At baseline, we conducted interviews with a total of nine randomly selected learners, three in each prison. The interviews took place following a group session with the Tutor which introduced the programme. Baseline interviews therefore captured learners at a stage where they understood what the programme would involve in general but had not experienced any programme sessions.

At endpoint, we conducted seven learner interviews in total: with four of the nine original interviewees, two from prison A and two from prison B, as unfortunately three learners interviewed at baseline (one from each prison) had not completed the programme and two learners (in prison C) who had completed the programme were not available at endpoint. We also conducted endpoint interviews with three learners who were not interviewed at baseline, one at prison B and two at prison C where none of the original interviewees were available for endpoint interview as the remaining two baseline interviewees were involved in a training course. In prison B the two baseline interviewees available at endpoint were high ability learners so a third learner was randomly selected from the lower ability groups to ensure the range of ability was represented in interviews. In prison C as none of the baseline interviewees were available we randomly selected one learners from the high ability groups and one from the low ability groups, this again ensured a more representative sample.

Tutor interviews

We interviewed the Tutor - the individual who delivered all programme sessions in all prisons, at both baseline and endpoint. The Tutor had also played a large role in the organisation of the programme and was therefore able to comment extensively on the logistics of running the programme in prisons.

Prison staff interviews

We conducted baseline interviews with a member of prison staff from the education departments in each prison. The interviewees were selected as the individual who had played the largest role in organising and running the pilot programme. At endpoint, we interviewed the same interviewee in prison B only. In prison A, the individual interviewed at baseline had not remained closely involved with the programme so a different staff member was interviewed. In prison C, the individual interviewed at baseline was on leave at endpoint so another tutor in the department who had also taken part in the programme was interviewed.

2.2.3 Midpoint session observation

We visited the prisons in week four of the six week programme to observe the learners during sessions. We carried out observations of between two and five sessions in each prison and were able to see a range of ability groupings. The observations examined evidence relating to:

- Learners' confidence
- Learners' self-efficacy
- Learners' attitude to reading
- Learners' attitude to education
- Learners' engagement and enjoyment
- Process factors including the organisation of sessions and prison staff involvement and support

2.2.4 Qualitative endpoint surveys

Sound Training designed an endpoint questionnaire to gather the feedback from learners, based on survey design advice from LKMco. The questionnaire asked learners to comment on the aspects of the programme they had enjoyed or found useful, which activities they liked, possible improvements to the programme and whether the logistical arrangements of the programme enabled their participation.

3 Outcomes

3.1 Impact on reading ability

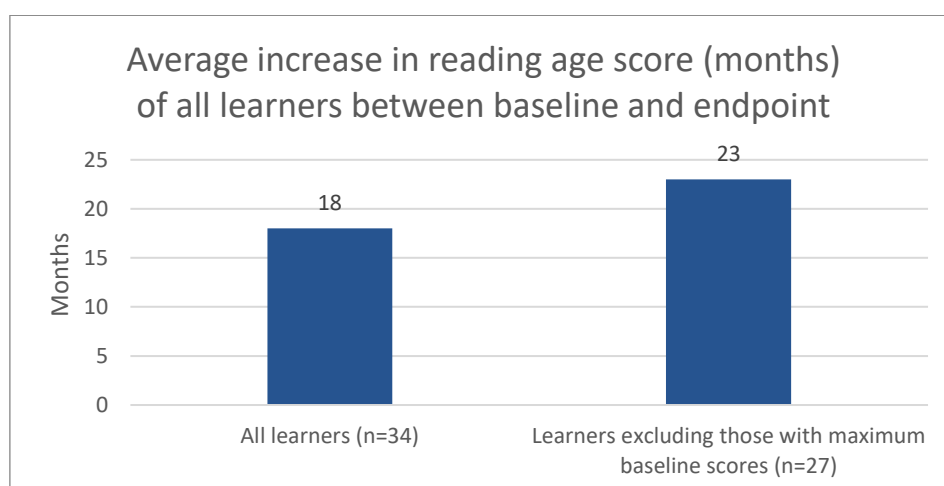
The programme's primary aim is to increase learners' reading ages, however, it also appears to impact on a variety of other reading related skills. Although only reading age was quantitatively measured, both reading age change and self-assessed improvement in other skills were examined to determine the programme's impact on reading ability.

3.1.1 Assessed reading age

The reading ages of all learners, with the exception of one, increased between baseline and endpoint. All learners with a maximum reading age at baseline, bar one, improved their standard score within the highest reading age bracket. This was the case in all prisons and differences between prisons were small.

At baseline, the average reading age of all learners was 15.8. At endpoint the average reading age was 17.3. Learners increased their reading age by 18 months on average (see Figure 1). If those learners who had a maximum reading age of 18.9 at baseline were excluded the average increase in reading age was 23 months.

Figure 1



Of those learners with a baseline reading age below the maximum 18.9, all but one (whose reading age remained 10.4), increased their reading age with notable increases of 65 months in two learners, 60 months in one learner and 39 months in two learners. Of those learners with a maximum reading age of 18.9 years at baseline, all but one increased their standard score within the 18.9 years reading age bracket, with an average standard score increase of 11.2 points.

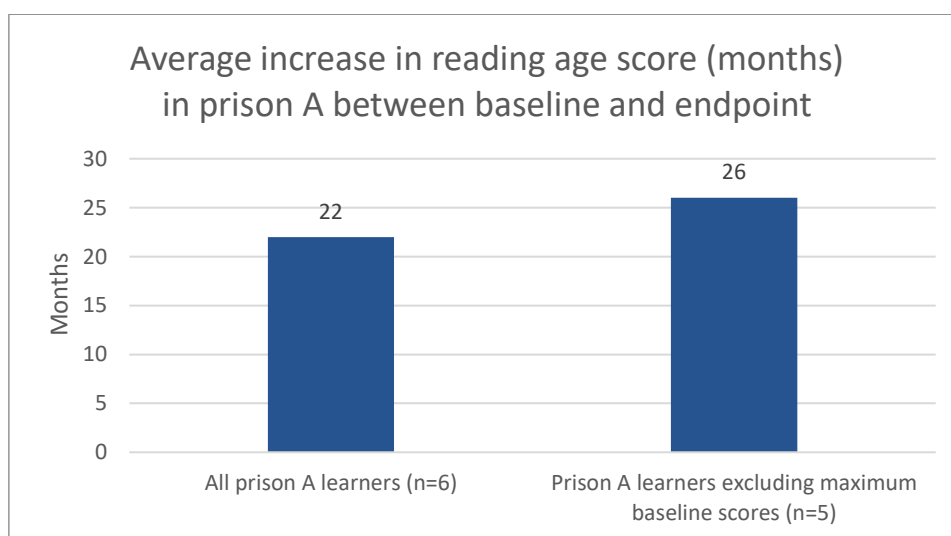
In a school setting a standard score below 85 qualifies a child for additional support during examinations. At baseline, ten learners in this pilot had a standard score below 85. Nine of these improved their reading age by an average of 31 months. Only one learner did not improve his reading age, though he reported in the questionnaire that he had improved other skills.

Given the differences in learner selection, baseline score and institution type across the three prisons we have disaggregated our analysis by prison to establish whether the progress made by learners varied.

Prison A results

- Six learners completed the course.
- Four learners had a baseline reading age score of between 9.4 years and 10.6 years. These low scores were likely due to these learners speaking English as a second language. The fifth learner scored 16.2 years and the sixth 18.9 years, the highest possible score.
- With the exception of the learner with the maximum reading age at baseline, whose standard score did not change within the 18.9 bracket, all learners increased their reading age.
- Figure 2 shows the average increase in reading score of all 6 learners (22 months) as well as the average increase of all learners when the learner with a maximum baseline score is excluded (26 months).
- One learner increased their reading age by 60 months.

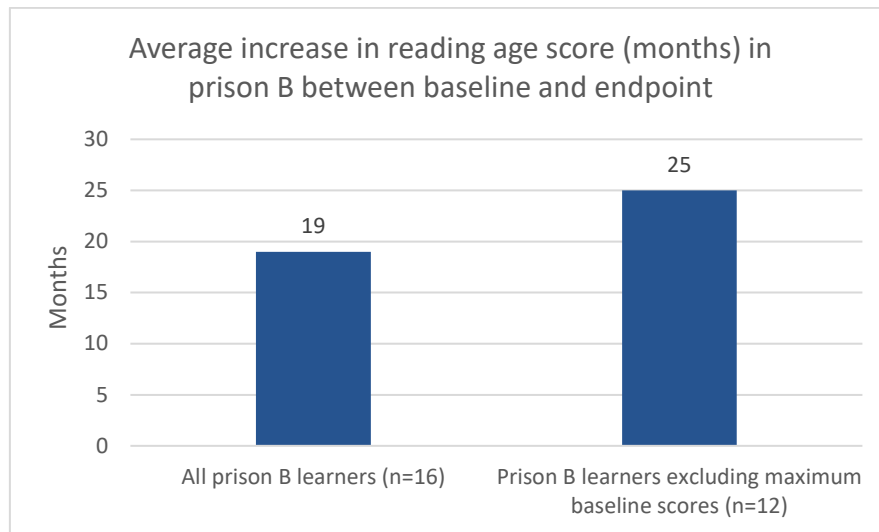
Figure 2



Prison B results

- Sixteen learners completed the programme.
- In the baseline assessment, four learners had a maximum reading age of 18.9 and the reading ages of the other twelve learners varied between 12.9 years and 18.5 years.
- At endpoint fourteen learners had attained the maximum reading age of 18.9 and two had a reading age of 18.2, leaving no learner with a reading age below 18.2.
- Figure 3 shows the average reading age gain of all learners (19 months) as well as the average reading age gain of those learners who did not reach the maximum reading age at baseline (25 months). Two learners made particularly notable gains of 65 months.
- All four learners with a maximum reading age at baseline still improved their standard scores within the 18.9 reading age bracket, demonstrating that progress was made by even the highest ability learners.

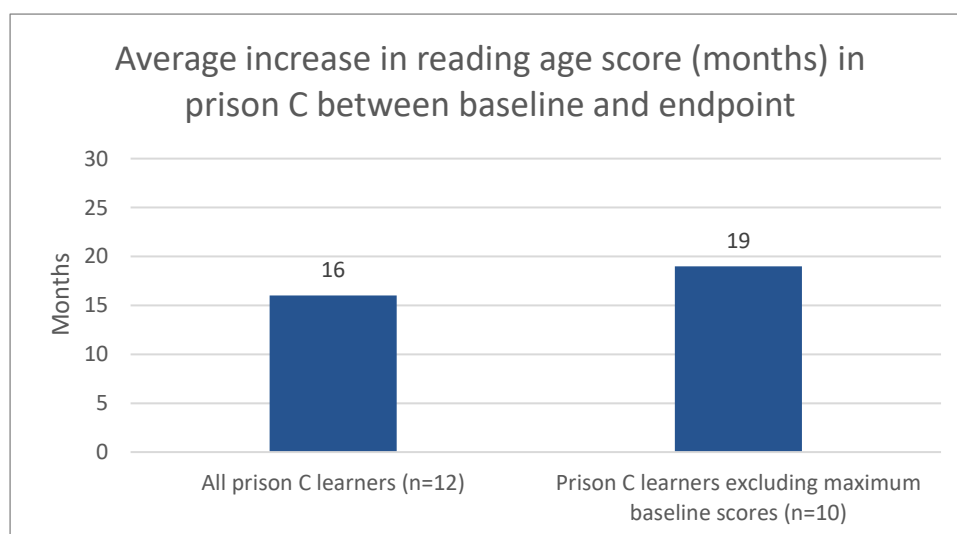
Figure 3



Prison C results

- Twelve learners completed the programme.
- At baseline, two learners had a maximum reading age of 18.9. The reading ages of the other 10 learners ranged between 10.4 years and 18.7 years, with a third of these below 12 years.
- Figure 4 shows the average increase in reading age across all learners (16 months), this average increases to 19 months when the two learners that had the maximum score at baseline are excluded.
- The largest gain in reading age made in prison C was 39 months.
- One learner did not increase his reading age at all and had a reading age of 10.4 at both baseline and endpoint. We did not interview this learner but he did report in the questionnaire that he felt he had improved other skills including spelling and reading and decoding unfamiliar words.
- At endpoint, a total of seven learners had a maximum reading age as five had progressed to the maximum score. Again, both learners with a maximum reading age at baseline improved their standard score on the test.

Figure 4



Comparison of results

The highest average increases in reading age were seen in prison A where the group of learners tended to have low baseline scores and/or speak English as a second language and the lowest average increase were seen in prison C in which the learners were native English speakers, had a larger range of other responsibilities and commitments such as jobs outside the prison. However, the differences in progress made by learners in different institutions are relatively small and furthermore, the small sample size of each prison, especially prison A, makes it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from a comparison.

3.1.2 Literacy skills

The results of the reading age assessment are wholly positive but it is worth noting that the assessment only measured one aspect of reading ability: word reading. Sound Training also aims to impact on a range of other skills and the programme incorporates reading activities with spelling activities, discussion of vocabulary and the origins of words and strategies to decode meaning.

The analysis of qualitative data indicates that the programme was believed to have impacted other reading related skills. Most learners, regardless of their initial ability, reported that they had improved their spelling. Some learners felt their vocabulary knowledge had improved which in some cases had influenced their writing during other educational courses. Many learners also improved their ability to decode words for meaning using Sound Training techniques.

Spelling

The programme aims to help learners develop strategies to improve their spelling. Each session of the programme involved a small spelling test in which the Tutor ‘chunked’ the words into syllables when saying them. After the first marking of the test it was repeated to allow learners to correct previous mistakes.

Five of the seven endpoint interviewees and 69% (20) of respondents to the endpoint questionnaire reported that their spelling had improved. Learners were invited to give feedback about the sessions on a comment card following either session three or session four. Just under a third of feedback comments (10 of 33) made positive comments related to improving their spelling skills due to the programme.

“I feel that the Sound course is helping me with my spelling.”

“Sound Training is pivotal for one to learn how to spell, pronounce words and also know the meaning of words.”

Some learners reported during interviews that they had noticed the effects of their improved spelling in other educational programmes such as their English classes. No learners mentioned spelling during the baseline interviews when they were asked what they expected to gain from the programme so this was considered an unexpected benefit. The comments about the programme’s effect on spelling highlighted the following:

Learners with different ability levels improved their spelling

Though many learners explained that they had always struggled with spelling and the programme had helped them improve, some learners who had not found spelling particularly difficult in the past also noticed improvements.

"I guess it's changed me in terms of spelling. Spelling has always been difficult for me, in the spelling test in the sessions, I found it okay, breaking down the words. I always spelt phonetically before, phonetically but wrong. Now I'm surprised to see I am getting it right in tests. I've always had good vocabulary now I understand structure of words and syllables to help with spelling"

"Yes, [I've changed] my spelling, slightly, I've always been quite good at spelling but this has helped. You can just sound out a word, the syllable and it means you can spell it more accurately."

The Tutor explained how many learners had commented on their improved spelling, including those with high prior reading ability.

"Several of them have said that their spelling is loads better than it used to be and they use those strategies now, breaking the words down so they can sound it out. Interestingly some had a high precourse reading age and yet weren't able to spell and now they can."

However, two low ability learners who struggled particularly with spelling expressed that they felt they need further support beyond the programme.

"With spelling when [Tutor] said the word and meaning and I could spell it, but if asked again now I'd struggle to get it back in my head...I would need more one to one or something more."

Emphasising word structure and syllable chunking helped improve spelling

Many of the learners who suggested their spelling had improved felt that the specific strategies of 'breaking words down' and 'hearing the syllables' had allowed them to spell more accurately where other strategies they previously tried had not.

"I really struggle with spelling and this has helped. I just hear it, break it down, break it down into syllables."

Learners who considered themselves dyslexic improved their spelling

Even learners who experienced considerable difficulty with spelling to the extent that they consider themselves dyslexic or had been diagnosed as such felt they were able to improve their spelling with the Sound Training programme. The Tutor highlighted this in relation to one learner we did not interview:

"One of the Polish learners told me he was dyslexic in Poland and always struggled with spelling. But since doing the programme he can spell fine in English now."

Other learners also noticed the progress made by their peers with particular difficulties:

"I've seen that other people in my group who aren't good at spelling, cos' I know one guy... he is dyslexic, I know he can't spell, but he has done really well on this. I'm like, looking, like 'Are you cheating?!' but no, it just helps him."

Vocabulary

Two of the three prison staff members interviewed at baseline identified improving the learners' vocabulary as a primary aim of the programme:

"To increase the vocabulary and reading capability of the men."

"I think the purpose is to improve the vocabulary and reading ability of men."

At endpoint, 72% (21) of respondents to the questionnaire stated that the programme had increased the extent to which they 'understand of a wide range of vocabulary' and 66% (19) felt that this allowed them to 'access reading material at a higher level than previously'. During the interviews, some learners referred to improvements in their vocabulary and knowledge of English words.

"I can understand more of the English vocabulary though there is more I could learn."

"I enjoyed it and it's just been building my knowledge of vocabulary."

Often, learners explained how their improved vocabulary and knowledge of English impacted on their writing.

"You can get better because it helps vocabulary, with words I wouldn't even look at before."

"I look for better words when I'm writing now."

"When I'm writing and spelling, use better words so come across more clever. I only used to use words I knew when writing."

Decoding for meaning

A core aim of Sound Training is to develop the ability to decode the meaning of unfamiliar words. Learners are taught the meanings of prefixes, suffixes and root words and strategies to 'break down' words in order to decode the meaning of unfamiliar words. Many learners commented on their improved ability to break down words and understand their meaning in both the endpoint interviews and during group discussions about the programme. In the questionnaire, 90% (26) of learners reported that their ability 'to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words' had increased and one learner explained how this strategy had changed his behaviour when reading:

"I now find myself breaking down words as I read them and words that I am not familiar with I am working out the definition of without the use of a dictionary. Great stuff – very practical."

As with spelling, learners highlighted that even if they have a good vocabulary and understanding of English they could still benefit.

"This course is very interesting as it teaches you how to break down simple and complicated words in the English language and allow you to understand the full meaning and even if your English is fairly good there is still lots to learn and understand."

"You might have a fair understanding of what the words mean but it's knowing all the parts. You can even make up words that you won't find in the English dictionary but you would know what it means anyway because you know all of those parts."

In prison B, learners were selected because they were taking part in a level 6 university module, 'Inside Out', and it was felt that they required additional support to help them understand the complex vocabulary in their academic reading.

"[I learnt] how to break down words and words that I didn't know. Sometimes with the Inside Out programme and the reading, it's helped me with that. I look at words differently now, think about

what the parts mean or where they come from, I didn't know about the depth of words and where they come from before."

Staff interviewed also highlighted that the learners had gained understanding as a result of their newfound ability to break words down into their component parts:

"[They've gained] a deeper understanding of how words are constructed, particularly prefixes and suffixes and what they mean and how they impact on words."

Staff believed these strategies were having a beneficial impact on learners' reading behaviour and ability:

"They've gained a lot of decoding skills and they are more able to look at an unfamiliar word and have a good go at deciphering what it means. I know that some of them use a dictionary to check which is a real positive in terms of lifelong learning because you need to check what you are doing and use a variety of methods or sources."

In summary:

Almost all learners of varying ability levels, with the exception of one low ability learner and one high ability learner, increased their ability to read words and thus, their reading age. The average increase in reading age of all learners was 18 months, which rose to 23 months when those with maximum scores at baseline were excluded. Some learners increased their reading age considerably by 60 and 65 months.

Staff and learners agreed that learners, including those who did not make reading age gains, had improved other reading related skills including spelling, vocabulary knowledge and decoding ability over the course of the programme. Learners of all ability levels, including those who were dyslexic, found the Sound Training strategies beneficial when spelling. Improvement in vocabulary and decoding ability had a positive effect on reading and writing behaviour in other education programmes as learners understood and attempted to use more complex language.

3.2 Confidence and Self-Efficacy

3.2.1 Confidence in reading ability

Although baseline confidence was high for many learners, the programme positively impacted on learners' confidence. Improvements in confidence were seen in relation to general reading ability but also in relation to spelling ability and presenting skills.

Confidence in reading ability at baseline

Learners' confidence levels varied. It was not necessarily the case that learners had particularly low confidence at the start of the programme: some learners were aware of their relatively high reading ability and were therefore confident. Others with lower ability also generally appeared confident in their reading ability but often acknowledged that they could improve further. Some learners were less confident, especially with regard to their ability to read more complex or lengthy material. However, very few appeared to be facing extreme struggles in relation to their reading confidence and many had made considerable improvements since coming to prison.

In baseline interviews, some learners felt that reading, spelling and other literacy skills were not their strong suit, perhaps indicating that they did not feel particularly confident in this area.

"I think even though I'm intelligent in the head and I'm good with machines...not really with education stuff and reading...I wouldn't read a big book, like Lee Child, it's 1,000 pages and there'd be words I don't understand. It'd be nice to understand."

"I can read and write and spell in English but when I'm reading, to be honest, I understand 90% but I can always find words that I can't understand."

However, those individuals who lacked confidence or proficiency in reading tended to feel that it would not affect their engagement or their ability to progress:

"I like to see the progress I'm making but if I don't see it immediately... if I struggle I'll overcome it... I'm up for the challenge."

Others were highly confident in their reading ability, occasionally to the extent that they did not feel they needed to improve and did not think the programme would improve their ability. However, these high ability learners were sometimes reading mentors in other programmes and felt that the course could provide strategies they could use to support their mentees.

"It makes quite big claims. I get that the majority of their audience in schools and stuff will make substantial gains but I doubt I will feel like that...I've got a decent vocabulary already, I've got good grammar."

"My thinking is more that it's something I can learn that will complement what I do in the reading programme as a mentor."

Prison staff were aware of the variation in confidence levels among learners as the start of the programme, but highlighted that both low confidence and high confidence could be a barrier to learning:

“You’ve got the older ones, maybe the mentors, they have more self-confidence and a higher level of verbal communication. Then others that are not confident to verbalise in groups and that holds them back. Some of the younger ones are confident, even bolshy, they don’t see the need to improve, even when in fact, they do.”

Two members of the prison’s education department explained that not only did confidence levels among the learners vary, but some have an unrealistic sense of their own ability:

“There’s a real mixture there, some are very confident, some aren’t...some will be very confident about their abilities because they ran successful, multi million pound ‘businesses’ on the outside. But at the end of the day they are still in here and they don’t have any qualifications and they need to get them.”

“We need to acknowledge that some are more able and some are less able. But they need to acknowledge it too, some are actually less able than they think they are and some are actually more able than they think they are.”

Staff also acknowledged that confidence varied depending on the situation and the reading material, which may explain why most learners felt confident in their ability but would struggle during other educational programmes, especially in the case of the prison B learners on the level 6 programme:

“There is a lot of variation. Also because of what they read, they might feel confident when they are reading the Daily Mail but then give them an academic paper and they don’t know what to do with it... [so this will] facilitate the Inside Out programme because...they have problems understanding the texts they have to read for that so hopefully this will help them.”

All staff said that they wanted to see learners improve in confidence through the programme and one highlighted that confidence was a precursor to improving ability:

“[The best programmes are] the ones that improve confidence first because then they can get on with actually improving their ability with whatever it is. You see it then...their viewpoint can change about what they can do and what they want to do.”

Confidence in reading ability during the programme sessions

Varying levels of baseline confidence were likely to translate into varying levels of engagement and motivation in the sessions, especially during the first sessions. As learners’ confidence varied depending on the level of reading material, the programme aimed to balance instilling confidence in learners whilst using materials that would challenge their ability. Therefore, in the midpoint observation we assessed the level of engagement and willingness of the learners to ‘have a go’.

Almost all learners appeared comfortable and confident during the session, and this was evident through their relaxed and open body language and their willingness to try or ‘have a go’. The learners were not worried about making a mistake and were often eager to share which things they struggled with or got wrong. Some learners were quieter or more reserved and although this sometimes initially seemed as to be a result of low confidence, it often became apparent that these learners were simply concentrating harder. Conversely, over-confidence seemed to have a more detrimental effect on progress. A small number of learners concentrated less well because they felt something was ‘easy’, projected a ‘bravado’ and were less willing to highlight or discuss their mistakes after saying they would find things easy. This often resulted in them performing less well than their peers. The conclusion of these observations was that the programme created an environment were less

confident learners were able to engage and participation was high, however, over-confidence which perhaps did not reflect ability had a more negative effect on performance.

Confidence in reading ability at endpoint

Staff members at two of the prisons commented during endpoint interviews learners had increased in confidence.

"I think they developed a fair bit of banter and they have become more confident to discuss their need, less reluctant to say I struggle with this or that, or to try."

The increase in confidence of the learners positively impacted on their approach to reading other materials and in other education programmes. The staff, the learners and the Tutor remarked on these improvements and in prison B improved confidence had a particularly positive impact on the learner's approach to the academic texts in their level 6 course.

"They're much more confident. For those that are on the Inside Out programme their confidence decoding academic text has really increased."

"[There's been] massive changes in all of them. All of them talk about how much more confident they are now and that they use the strategies they learnt on the course when they are reading other reading materials."

"I...feel more confident to pick up the more advanced books."

The learners identified two main areas where their confidence had increased:

1. Reading aloud and presentations

"If I ever had to do a presentation before this I wouldn't be confident to just read out notes, I would learn it, word for word so I don't have to read but now I would be comfortable [to read notes]".

"I'm fairly confident but I don't like reading things out. I'm quite reserved, but in the group I'd hear the other guy read the words and think 'oh, I can do them' sometimes I would still stumble over some words but I'm surprised how easy I found it."

"I guess I'm more comfortable reading aloud. In Bible study, I go to Bible study and we have to read in the group. I'm better now, I can pronounce words and I don't think I am going to stumble over words."

2. Spelling

"The course really helps me with the use and spelling of words. It is very enjoyable and worth doing."

"My spelling is better and I know how to write words I've never been trying before."

Two of the learners interviewed at baseline with the lowest confidence did not continue the programme, one was withdrawn because he continued to feel very negative which affected the sessions for the other learners and one could not continue because he had other commitments in the prison. Because data from these learners would have offered the most insight into the programme's potential impact on learners with low confidence, we are unable to draw conclusions about the programme's impact on such learners.

For some learners, the course clearly improved their confidence in particular areas, namely spelling and reading aloud. Comments from staff also suggest that the programme did have a positive impact on general confidence. However, because most learners felt confident prior to the course it is not possible to draw strong conclusions about the programme's impact on low confidence learners. In future, it would be useful for Sound Training to work with learners who have lower confidence in order to more robustly assess the impact on such learners' confidence.

3.2.2 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is the extent to which an individual believes in their ability to 'complete tasks and accomplish goals'. In this case, we refer to self-efficacy with reference to the learners' belief in their ability to improve their skills and abilities.

The learners were asked at both baseline and endpoint 'Do you believe you can get better at something you are not good at now?'.

There is evidence that although many learners had high self-efficacy at baseline, learners' belief in their ability to improve was reinforced by their improvement over the course of the programme. Though some learners believed, at baseline, that there were certain skills they could not improve, they often changed this belief as they began to make progress.

Self-efficacy at baseline

At baseline, almost all learners agreed that they could improve any skills or abilities, often through practice.

"I'm always self-improving. I never think that learning and knowledge stops. It's not concrete. I'm flexible in my views as well."

"There is always space to learn. You're never too old to learn."

"Yes, I can get better at anything, my past experience has shown me that...I'll have a go at anything. A lot of it is mindset."

The only learner that did not believe this did not complete the programme because he felt so negatively about it. Though this may indicate that low self-efficacy presents a barrier to learning which the programme did not overcome, it is not possible to draw a strong conclusion on the basis of a single learner's experience.

When asked why they believed in their ability to improve, most learners provided examples of things they had improved in the past. At baseline, the examples given did not relate to reading and often did not relate to education, although at endpoint the examples given did relate more to reading and education (as discussed below).

Interviews with staff suggested that although many learners had a high degree of self-efficacy, some did not, and low self-efficacy - or in some cases the belief that improvement is not necessary, were identified as a potential barrier to learning.

“There are two categories, some who believe in ability to improve, others who don’t...those with a positive attitude see programme as a route to improvement.”

“Some do and some don’t [believe they can improve]. It’s more of contrast between those who know they can improve and those that don’t think they have to rather than those who believe they can and those that believe they can’t. There is an element of self-awareness when they are thinking about improving themselves. The age range of 22-32 tend to not have that self-awareness.”

The low self-efficacy of some learners, as mentioned by some staff, was not captured in the learner interviews. Therefore, we assume that there were varying levels of self-efficacy and varying levels of motivation to improve among the learners but that many had high self-efficacy and were highly motivated.

Self-Efficacy during programme sessions

Observations of the programme sessions revealed that most learners did feel they could improve and that this self-efficacy facilitated learners’ progression. Learners’ belief in their ability to improve was evident in the following behaviours:

- **Willingness to try and to participate in all activities:** all learners took part in all activities, often with a high degree of enthusiasm. During the ‘spelling test’ activity all learners attempted all spellings even when they felt they would not get a word completely right.
- **High degree of effort:** all learners concentrated well and did not attempt to distract themselves or other learners at any time.
- **High degree of perseverance:** all learners were always willing to repeat activities such as saying ‘syllables at speed’ or the ‘spelling test’ with a view to improving their previous attempt. Where they made mistakes, they were willing to try again, often taking opportunities to practise beforehand.
- **Willingness to discuss mistakes:** learners were comfortable and open in discussing which elements of an activity they had struggled with or got wrong. This generated support as well as ‘banter’ from the other learners.

“It’s just that sĭ, sĭ, she, sound [that we get wrong]!”

“We’ll get it next time.”

- **Awareness of progress:** learners often commented on improvements in their scores and some suggested that they had improved more than they thought possible demonstrating that they were aware that their ability was improving.

“It’s amazing what you can learn in a short space of time.”

“That’s the first time I’ve got 10/10, I’ve been getting 8.”

Occasions where learners were more negative than the behaviours described above were rare, but when they did occur it appeared to have a detrimental effect on learning. Therefore, it is important that the programme continues to encourage a high degree of self-efficacy, which it does successfully, and future tutors should be aware that low self-efficacy may negatively impact progress and should therefore be addressed.

Self-Efficacy at endpoint

At endpoint, as at baseline, all learners interviewed believed that they could improve skills and abilities.

“I’m arrogant to say this but I’m quite smart so when I put my mind to it I can do something.”

Given that self-efficacy was high at baseline, especially among the learners selected for interview, it is difficult to draw strong conclusions about the programme’s impact on self-efficacy, other than the fact that it reinforced or did not diminish this self-belief.

A more noticeable difference from our baseline assessments of self-efficacy emerged when we asked for examples of times learners had improved at things they were previously not good at. At endpoint, some learners referenced skills they had improved through the programme such as spelling or their ability to break down words, suggesting an awareness of their progress and potentially stronger self-efficacy in relation to reading. In comparison, literacy skills were not mentioned in answers at baseline.

In Summary

Levels of confidence were fairly high at baseline, with the exception of a minority of learners. Despite this, the programme had a positive impact on confidence in relation to reading ability and other literacy skills especially spelling and reading aloud/presenting. Improvements in confidence also had a positive impact on learners’ approach to other education programmes.

Self-efficacy was high among the learners and this had a positive impact on engagement and success during the programme as self-efficacy seemed to support positive progress. The programme was effective in promoting and reinforcing this self-efficacy. As levels of self-efficacy were almost uniformly high at baseline it was difficult to draw strong conclusions about whether the programme could improve low self-efficacy, though it was clear that self-efficacy was not diminished during the programme. However, learners’ awareness of the progress during the course may have resulted in stronger self-efficacy specifically in relation to reading and literacy skills.

3.3 Attitude to reading and education

3.3.1 Enjoyment of reading

Learners' enjoyment of reading varied, and evidence suggests that although the programme improved learners' attitude towards reading for pleasure, as many reported they were now more likely to do so, it did not alter their reading behaviour immediately after the programme.

Reading behaviour at baseline

In both baseline and endpoint interviews learners were asked if they read for pleasure. About a third read regularly for pleasure, a third read for pleasure but not regularly (usually due to time constraints) and the final third did not read for pleasure.

"Not regularly. When there is only reading for pleasure available as something to do then I will but not often."

"Yeah I do [read for pleasure]. Not the big books because realistically I read them and I'm goin' to get bored. Whereas short books I can read it on Sunday and I will read it and read it all on the Sunday."

"I do but it's quite strange. I've never done a book start to finish. Now I'm reading the bible. It will give me the motivation."

Most, though not all, of the learners said they chose non-fiction over fiction, with many saying they found fiction boring or would never read fiction. Some learners said they struggled with their concentration when reading.

"I'm a terrible reader. I struggle with my focus. I do academic reading but I haven't read a novel or fiction for years."

"I'm not into fiction. I want a true story. Like 'Harry Potter' and 'Game of Thrones' and all that. I don't like that. I do read sad stuff. I read 'A Child with No Name'. The fact that he was still there and still fighting and he had his own son."

"I find a lot of things interesting fiction and non-fiction. As long as it's got an exciting storyline or something I don't know about in it."

Reading behaviour at endpoint

After the programme, a few learners interviewed said they had increased the amount they read or intended to do so:

"When I came to prison, I was 50 and I'd never picked up a book, just never had the interest. Then I did start reading a bit and now [after the programme] I would try to read more and read more books."

However, most of the interviewed learners did not express a change in their reading behaviour, with those who read regularly continuing to do so and vice versa.

"I still don't love reading a whole book. I have always had a large vocabulary so it's not that, I just find it boring."

"I've always read a lot anyway, I enjoy reading and now I'm looking at words and thinking about words too."

The findings from the interviews contradict those in the endpoint questionnaire. Despite the apparent lack of change in the learners' behaviour expressed in the interviews, in the questionnaire 69% (22) of learners reported that they were 'more likely' to read for pleasure since taking part in the programme, perhaps representing a shift in attitude but not behaviour. Longer term investigation would be needed to determine whether such intentions translate into changes in reading behaviour. The other seven learners said they were neither more nor less likely to read for pleasure since taking part. Three said this was because they read a lot anyway, one had no time to read and another struggled with his attention span but 'might try'. The open comment section of the questionnaire also suggested that learners were often more likely to read for pleasure because they had improved their ability:

"As I find it easier to read now so I get more pleasure from reading."

"Yes, a little more likely as I believe after the course, I can read and understand more complicated words."

"I would more likely to read for pleasure because it is easier for me to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words."

3.3.2 Attitude to education

Attitudes to education varied between learners. Most felt positively about the value of education but negatively about many prison education programmes. Throughout the programme learners held highly positive attitudes towards Sound Training but negative attitudes regarding other education programmes remained. However, despite the perseverance of some negative attitudes, the positivity surrounding Sound Training seemed to positively affect learners' intentions to take part in education in the future.

Attitudes to education at baseline

Although learners were not asked directly about their involvement in other education programmes during the baseline interviews, learners often shared their experiences of other education programmes, or lack thereof. At baseline, some learners said they had taken part in multiple education programmes since coming to prison and while some were positive about their experiences, some felt negatively about the purpose and value of education.

"Education in prison has already helped me a lot. I've gone from Entry level 1 to level 2."

"I'm always willing to learn. I have done two distance learning courses."

"I wouldn't say I'm overjoyed about it [doing the programme]. Say this education we do is all for jobs. Everything we do is about jobs. Trying to use these words is about getting jobs. But against all the things you could see about me if you google me...lists of crimes...it wouldn't help."

Other learners had not previously been involved in prison education programmes and these learners tended to feel positive about starting an education programme now.

"I haven't had any education programmes since I got in two months ago so I want to get out of my cell. I can read and write but English isn't my strong suit so I would like to get better at that. It's always better to get knowledge so this might help me."

The staff interviewed at baseline emphasised that the learners' attitudes to education varied. In prison B, staff suggested that the selected learners had a more positive attitude to education than is average among the prison population, which was reflected in our interviews with those learners.

"This programme is different because the group are different. The men are very on-board, most are involved in other high level education. This is not always the case with other educational programmes and in some, they [the learners] are forced to do it."

However, in other prisons the pilot programme included learners with a range of attitudes. In prisons A and C, the staff explained that the attitudes of learners selected varied more widely, it seemed that on the whole attitudes were more negative than in prison B.

"There is a lot of peer pressure. Taking part in education willingly can be viewed as negative. It takes a strong person to say 'I'm gonna do it anyway and ignore that peer pressure.'... Their maturity has been suspended at about 13 years of age for a lot of them. So they've got that view of it's 'not cool'... They want to be out and doing. I am generalising here but they are very kinaesthetic and they're just not used to classrooms and office environments."

"They're quite suspicious, they believe that the prison only does education to get money from the government."

"The sceptic in me is concerned that the guys are only engaging because it's something purposeful and different and gets them out of their cells. I'm not sure they are doing it because they are intrinsically motivated to get education. With that in mind, I'm cautiously optimistic about whether it will achieve its goal."

Staff also felt that the learners' attitudes to education and the programme were likely to affect their progress and their learning and therefore it was seen as important that any negative attitudes were overcome, something which staff said was often achieved.

"[What they get out of it] remains to be seen. It depends on what they are willing to give it... There is a mix of positive and negative. And they are quite negative at the beginning but we are quite good at winning them over."

Attitude to education during sessions

During the midpoint observations the learners' attitudes toward the Sound Training programme and other education programmes were often apparent. All learners were positive about Sound Training but often more negative about other education programmes, especially in the case of prison C. They often compared Sound Training to other programmes.

"Everything else in education programmes is shit but I like this. I'm actually learning things I don't know, actually learning stuff."

It was clear that many learners had positive attitudes to Sound Training, even if they still had negative attitudes to education more widely. However, at endpoint these critical attitudes to education appeared to have softened slightly, with some learners expressing intentions to take more

education courses (as discussed below), and this may be linked to their positive experience of Sound Training.

Attitudes to education at endpoint

Interview and questionnaire responses at the end of the programme indicate that although attitudes to education in general still varied somewhat, and comparisons between Sound Training as positive and other education as negative were frequent, Sound Training may have had some positive effect on attitudes to education as most learners were keen to engage with education in the future.

Learners who were positive about the course and education in general at baseline maintained those positive attitudes at endpoint.

“In the first session, it seemed quite intriguing and I was looking forward to it. I could tell it would be useful and it has been useful.”

The interviewed learner who had particularly negative attitudes about the value of education at baseline did not complete the programme. Although this may suggest that a highly negative attitude is a barrier to engagement with the course and therefore a positive attitude is a prerequisite for success it is not possible to draw a strong conclusion from one learner’s experience and conversely there is evidence that some learners who initially had negative attitudes and expectations changed their mind as a result of enjoying the programme. Staff confirmed that the programme was able to ‘win round’ learners who were wary or more reluctant to engage.

“Thought it would be shit because it’d be ‘another jail course’ and most of the things in jail are shit but it was actually good.”

“It’s not at all what I thought it would be. I thought it would be awful, I was like, what have I got myself into?...but it was fun, there was a positive energy.”

“They were naturally wary but they came round. They didn’t find it too challenging, each task is short, it’s not daunting...It was also in a non-threatening environment.”

On the other hand, despite learners’ positive attitude toward Sound Training as an education programme it seemed that many negative attitudes about other programmes remained.

Factors contributing to a positive attitude towards Sound Training

Learners highlighted some common differences between Sound Training and other programmes and Sound Training was seen favourably in these comparisons. The following common themes were identified:

- **Less pressure**

Two learners mentioned that the relaxed atmosphere of the course and the fact that there was no homework meant they felt Sound Training was less ‘pressured’.

“There is no homework and it’s less pressured. There was no pressure in this.”

- **No official accreditation**

Two learners and two members of staff highlighted the fact that the programme differed significantly from other education programmes in the fact that it was not accredited. Despite

this potentially being a disadvantage it was in fact consistently mentioned as a positive factor:

“There is no pass [or] fail and that’s a good thing, you just focus on learning. There was no pressure. It made it easier to learn really. Sometimes with pressure, those nerves take over, that didn’t happen here because it was relaxed.”

- **Activities**

About half the learners mentioned that the type of activities in the Sound Training programme were more enjoyable and more beneficial than those they had experienced elsewhere. They were less likely to get bored with these varied activities and two learners felt that the different ‘learning styles’ included made the Sound Training course accessible to all.

“I thought it would be like college, English courses, just sitting and reading and writing. After the first session I saw what it was and I saw it wasn’t like that, it’s more active, practical, verbal. Each session we do each of the activities, they are different but we do them all. It helps me learn, I prefer practical work, just the way I am, I learn better.”

“This is completely different, that [the other programme] is all working from a text book. This is not, in a good way, this has different ways of learning, audio, visual, practical, whatever your learning [style] is you can do it. It hits them all.”

- **Structure and timing**

Some learners suggested that the structure and timing of the Sound Training sessions made it easier to concentrate and learn compared to other education programmes where sessions and activities are longer.

“Each bit it’s short and sweet, just enough but you’re not overloaded, a lot of other things are overloaded. You didn’t feel like it was too much.”

“Different to standard English and Maths courses as it’s more intense and one hour rather than three hours which I think is by far the best way to learn, 3 hours doesn’t work.”

- **Unusual topic**

Some learners highlighted how the unusual and perhaps unexpected focus of the programme had made it useful and interesting.

“It’s different because of breaking down words, English (programmes) aren’t usually about spelling.”

“I thought it would be boring...but actually it was the opposite...I was amazed finding all that you can learn about words.”

In a few cases learners were especially negative about other education programmes, but remained positive about Sound Training.

“Usually education in here is poor. Repetitive. Maths and English are pointless when you’ve been to school – you’re not learning anything ...it’s useless. This is learning something new and enjoyable and useful.”

Attitudes to future education at endpoint

It is notable that most comments about other programmes highlighted differences which reflected positively on Sound Training. However, it also suggests that the positive experience of taking part in Sound Training may not necessarily change negative attitudes towards other education programmes. Despite the persistence of such attitudes, participation in Sound Training did appear to shift learners’ behaviours: most learners interviewed at endpoint and 93% (27) respondents to the questionnaire reported that they were more likely to take part in education in the future since taking part in the programme and a few expressed specific plans to do so.

“Definitely motivated to learn more and to participate in higher education. Problem is still my spelling” but “will get better because I’ll keep trying” “I want to do my GCSEs or some type of education/training... I’ve got two kids and don’t want to not be able to spell something” “I’ll see what courses are available to me and participate in any course that will help me.”

I am going to take part in other education i.e. college.”

However, learners were more keen to take part in future education specifically if it was similar to Sound Training, often because they felt there was more to learn.

“Yes, I would take part in something like this again, I think it should be longer and I would take part in another...there is definitely more to learn.”

The contradiction between negative comments regarding other education programmes and learners’ desire to participate in education in the future may show a genuine motivation to be educated but a frustration that many education programmes are not useful or interesting to them. It seems that in the majority of cases, with notable exceptions discussed above, negative comments pertained to specific programmes learners had not enjoyed rather than to education itself. Comments also suggest that learners felt Sound Training was a useful and interesting programme, and therefore the comparisons learners drew between Sound Training and wider education opportunities may reveal factors which would increase learners’ motivation to take up those opportunities.

In summary:

The learners' enjoyment of reading varied, with some reading regularly, some occasionally and some not at all. Although questionnaire responses suggested that the majority of learners were more likely to read for pleasure since taking part in the programme, the interviews indicated that few learners had changed their reading behaviour. This suggests a change in attitude that has yet to translate into behavioural change.

The majority of learners felt positive about the value of education but negative attitudes in relation to prison education courses were common. Although learners developed a positive attitude to the Sound Training programme they did not necessarily become more positive about other courses, often comparing the two. Key differences included the fact that Sound Training is:

- A less 'high pressure' course
- There is no official accreditation
- The activities are fast-paced and incorporate a variety of learning styles
- The sessions are short and punchy
- The topic is unusual and interesting

Although negativity about other education courses remained, learners' positive attitude to Sound Training seems to have positively impacted their intentions to take part in future education courses.

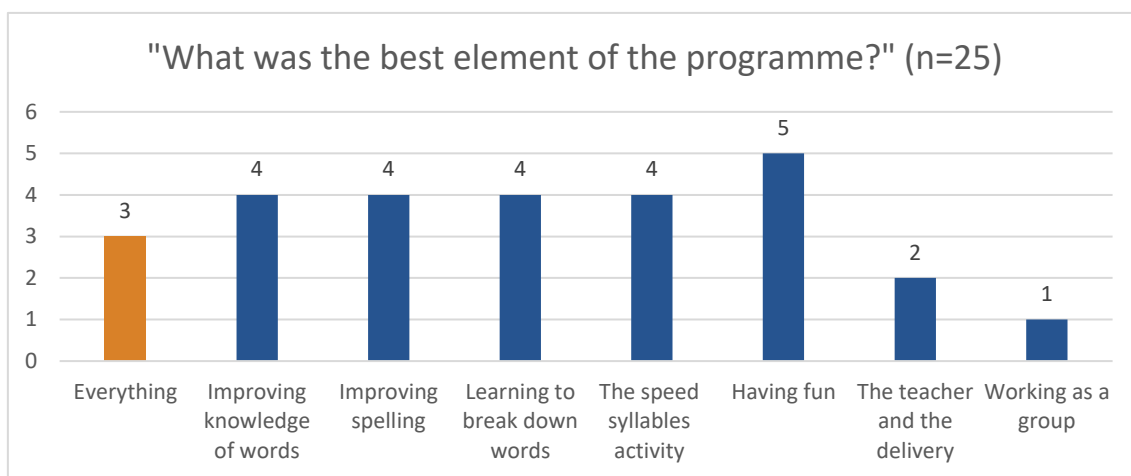
4 Overall reflections on the Sound Training programme

The endpoint questionnaire asked 'What was the best element of the Sound Training programme?' (see Figure 5). While the most common response (5) was 'having fun' - demonstrating learners' enjoyment of the programme, 12 respondents reported that the best part of the programme was improving skills and abilities such as breaking down words to decode meaning, improving spelling and knowledge of words:

"Learning to break the words down and understand them."

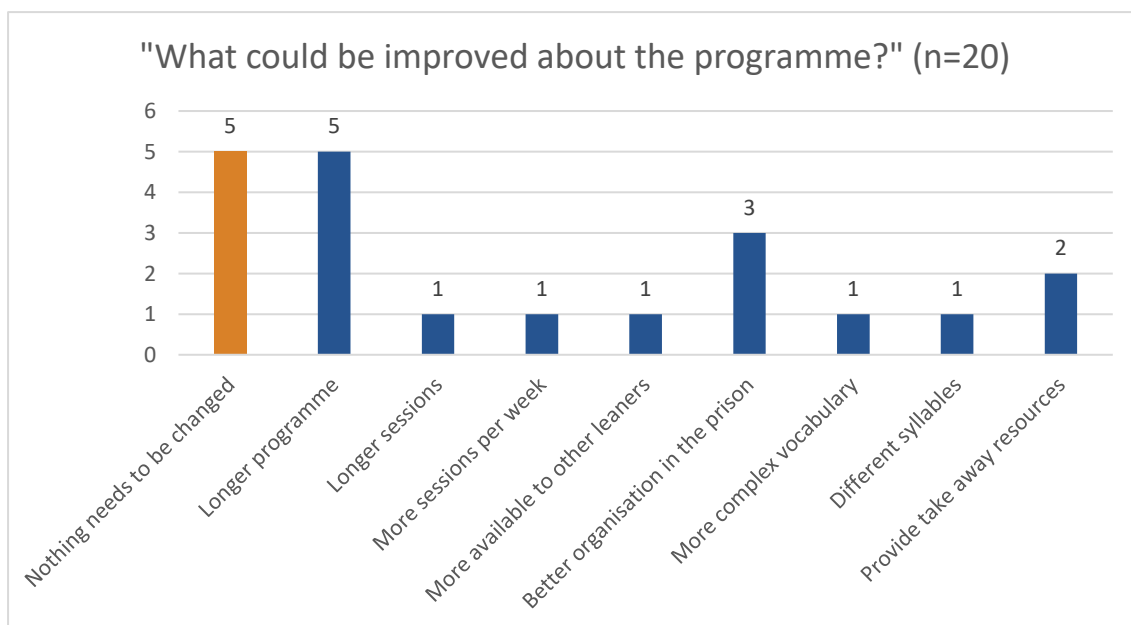
"Having more knowledge about the origin of the English language [and] the connections with Latin and French."

Figure 5



When asked what part of the programme needs to be changed the most common responses were 'nothing' and for the programme to be longer (see Figure 6).

Figure 6



5 Process Evaluation

As this programme was a pilot we evaluated the factors which supported and hindered the programme's success and investigated if any part of the programme needed to be changed for future initiatives. Some such factors were influenced by the design or logistics of the programme itself and were therefore consistent across all institutions, whereas other factors were dependent on each individual prison and thus varied more widely. Section 4.1 explores programme factors which influenced the learners' enjoyment, engagement and motivation. Section 4.2 explores how each prison organised and delivered the programme and the impact that the differences between prisons had on the overall success of the programme.

5.1 Programme factors

5.1.1 Enjoyability, engagement and motivation.

Almost all learners, including some who were initially reluctant to be involved in the programme, enjoyed the programme and were motivated and engaged during sessions. The following programme factors meant the programme was enjoyable and this in turn supported learners' engagement and motivation: fast-paced activities, the delivery style, visible progression programme structure and the timing of sessions.

Enjoyability, engagement and motivation of learners must be high in order for a programme to be successful. These factors are also highly interrelated: enjoyability of the programme is likely to impact on motivation and engagement and vice versa. Furthermore, learners' enjoyment of and engagement in the programme will affect their recommendations to others and will therefore have implications for further recruitment of learners in future programmes run by learners themselves. We examined whether learners enjoyed the programme, how engaged and motivated they were and how this changed over the course of the programme. We then identified which programme factors affected learners' enjoyment, engagement and motivation.

Baseline expectations of enjoyability

As the baseline interviews took place after introductory session with the Tutor the learners had some idea of the programme tone and content and the majority of interviewees felt they would enjoy the programme, often because the introductory session had sparked their interest.

"Yes it will be [enjoyable]. It seemed fun, brainstorming, it caught my attention while we were doing that [examples during the introductory session], that's promising, I have attention problems, a short attention span so hopefully it will grab me."

Only three learners said they may or may not enjoy the programme. One learner had low expectations on the basis that he often did not enjoy education programmes but expressed the hope that he would be engaged by a fast-paced, hands on activity.

"I'm hoping. To be honest learning is not enjoyable. But if something comes out then that's good...My attention span isn't that good. When I've done the English education programme before, I just get bored. This might be more hands on and then I won't get so bored."

Enjoyment of the programme

Throughout the programme and at endpoint, all learners, without exception, reported enjoying the programme: often they were extremely enthusiastic about how 'fun' and engaging it had been, and many were disappointed that it was ending.

"It's the best course I've done in the prison. I enjoyed it because of the way it was conducted, it made it interesting...I'm gutted it's finished."

"This is a fantastic, fun, accessible and easy way to increase your understanding of words and their meaning. I have enjoyed Sound Training hugely and would encourage anyone to have a go."

At baseline, two learners stated that they would only enjoy the programme because there was nothing else going on in prison. However, after completing the programme these learners reported that not only would they take part again, they would do so in or out of prison.

"If the chance came up to do this again or do it outside, because there is more to learn...it's fun and positive...then I would be motivated to do it."

Engagement and motivation at baseline

Interviews with staff and learners suggested that levels of motivation and engagement varied. Where motivation was apparent, engagement was likely to follow but it is also important to consider whether learners with low motivation were engaged by the sessions and subsequently became more motivated.

Most learners reported at baseline that they were motivated. Their main motivations included 'bettering themselves', improving their employability and life chances and making good use of spare time.

"If it helps me get better when I am doing the other qualifications and stuff that's good for helping me like when I get out."

"Very motivated. I've got a lot of spare time. I want to fill it. Especially if it's learning. I've got grandkids now so that's important and a motivation."

"I'm quite motivated to do the spelling thing, it will probably matter in the future, the kind of career I want will probably involve writing."

Staff in prison B explained that the selected learners were, mostly, highly motivated individuals but highlighted that this was not always the case throughout the prison population. The learners in prisons A and C were more varied in terms of their motivation as this staff member from prison C explains:

"Some not very [motivated]. Again it's not seen as cool. And because the expectations for levels at other prisons is lower then they feel 'Why was it good enough before but not now?' Some are very motivated from the off, they arrive and come to me straight away to see what they can do."

Two learners, from prisons A and C expressed that they had limited motivation. One felt that the course would not be useful for him and another clearly felt demotivated by the circumstances.

“There is no point. It’s just so the prison can get funding when they put us on programmes. I don’t think anything that is really important because in an interview or ever you don’t speak like that with those long words.”

“At the moment to be honest I am not very motivated. Maybe 6/10. I get fed up with this place. I’ve been trying to get work or education [for six months] ... I didn’t get anything. They said I have been on a waiting list but I don’t know.”

Motivation and engagement during the programme

As only two learners interviewed were especially low in motivation it is not possible to draw strong conclusions from their experiences on the programme. However, it is notable that neither of these learners completed the programme, suggesting that low motivation can persist and eventually impact on success. Conversely, the Tutor reported that other learners, not interviewed, initially had low motivation but became more engaged with the sessions over time, suggesting low motivation can be overcome.

“One of the learners was particularly reluctant at first, didn’t think it would be good...but he has come every single week, he was always early or on time and after that first week always came in with a smile and at the end he had really, really enjoyed it.”

Learners were highly motivated during sessions. It was evident through our observations that almost all learners who remained in the programme in week three and four were engaged and motivated. They displayed a high level of effort and seemed to enjoy activities. This motivation was especially evident in prison C as learners were not escorted to sessions and therefore their consistent attendance suggests a high degree of motivation and commitment to the programme, as the Tutor explained:

“Attendance was good and they attend on time which is great...particularly in [prison C], that’s an open prison and they get themselves there, no one will prompt them they are not relying on someone else to get them there...it was their level of engagement that brought them every week.”

Motivation at endpoint

At endpoint, the learners who expressed positive motivation at baseline continued to feel motivated to learn and improve their skills. Some learners who had low motivation levels at the start of the programme had become more motivated and had engaged well. Some were motivated especially to continue learning about words and improving their reading skills.

Factors affecting enjoyment, engagement and motivation

Overall, learners enjoyed the programme, even when they did not expect to. Most learners were also engaged and motivated in programme sessions, including some that initially were not motivated to take part. Based on the interviews, surveys and observations we conducted throughout the programme, we identified a set of programme-level factors that staff, the Tutor and learners linked with learners’ enjoyment of the programme and their motivation to engage with the programme:

- **Fast-paced, fun and interactive activities**

At baseline, both staff and learners stated that the programme would need to be fast-paced, fun and practical in order to motivate and engage learners.

“It has to be engaging for them. It has to have a clear benefit and be interactive.”

"I would say consistency, the teaching, a positive learning environment, a good positive teacher, good quality resources and activities are important [for their motivation]."

"It has to be active and not laborious."

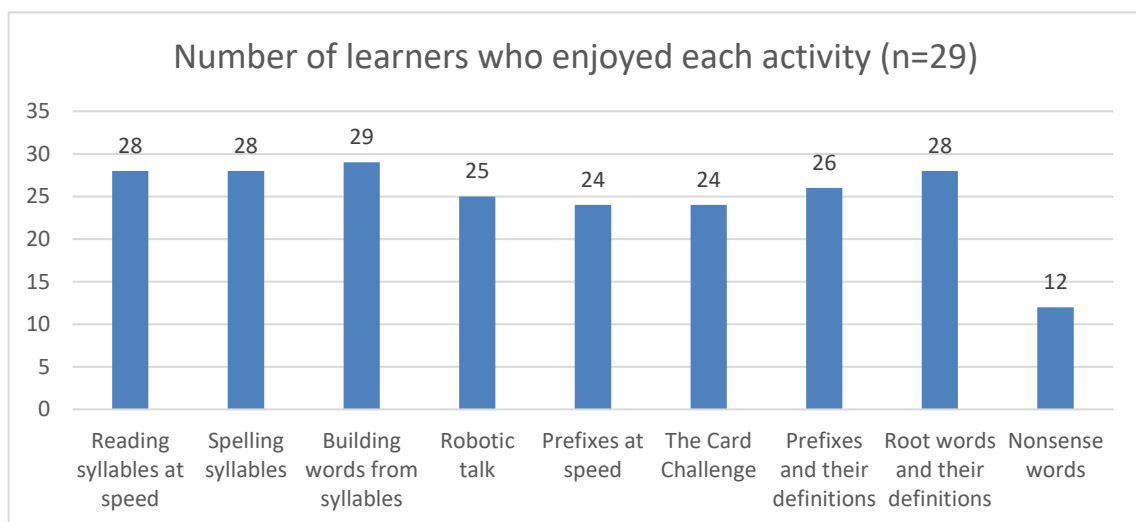
Observations suggested that learners enjoyed the interactive, practical activities and learners confirmed that they valued the 'fun' and 'positive' atmosphere and that they had not felt bored in the sessions. In turn, this enjoyment led to engagement:

"Yes I enjoyed it. It was quite a fast pace and that keeps you engaged. I like to learn anyway, Knowledge is Power, but it wasn't laborious. I would take part again."

"Yes I enjoyed it. We had a laugh and it were fun because of the vibe she [the Tutor] gave off...an hour went by like that."

The endpoint questionnaire asked learners which activities they enjoyed and the results showed that almost all learners found almost all activities enjoyable (see Figure 7).

Figure 7



The fast-paced nature of activities also improved engagement amongst learners who struggle with their concentration, allowing learners that may not have engaged in education in the past to take part and enjoy the course.

"My problem is my attention span...I just get distracted and bored, but this kept me gripped."

The teamwork and competitive elements of these activities were especially popular and heightened learners' enjoyment of the activities and the competition especially kept them motivated.

"I'm enjoying the teamwork mentality – working together."

"It's that competitive thing in the group and having a goal and racing to it."

- **Delivery style and a pleasant, enthusiastic Tutor**

The Tutor established an effective rapport with the learners. Learners enjoyed spending time with her in sessions and said this created a positive atmosphere and motivated them to engage with activities.

“Yes, it was a lot of fun. The Tutor is really good, very engaging and obviously loves what she does.”

“Her personality really added to it and we all just had a laugh but were learning as well.”

One learner felt that the effect of the Tutor’s personality and delivery were so integral to his enjoyment of the course that he was unsure whether he would enjoy the programme delivered by someone else if they were ‘less enthusiastic’. Although this is a positive comment about this programme, as Sound Training moves to a ‘train the trainer’ model they must ensure that future tutors maintain this positivity and effective delivery.

- **Seeing progression**

Staff emphasised that visible and rapid progression is likely to increase motivation and engagement. Some learners agreed, though some also mentioned they would be willing to persevere if they did not see progress immediately. During sessions, learners were clearly aware that they were making progress, they enjoyed discussing previous mistakes and improved scores during the activities. The Tutor noted that even during tumultuous circumstances for some individual learners remained motivated and ‘seeing progress’ was one factor which supported this. Comments from learners after the programme often mentioned that they had noticed an improvement and this seems to have motivated them positively.

“The best part is how much I have improved. I remember in the first session breaking down a word, I remember it, it was ‘depression’ from that moment something just clicked and I thought, I just get this. Then I just got it from then on.”

“I found it absolutely excellent. Noticeable improvement from the first session.”

- **Programme structure and logistics**

Certain elements of the programme logistics were highlighted by staff and learners as factors which had improved the programme’s success and made it possible for learners to engage well in sessions. These included the small ability-matched groups, the differentiated resources and the fact that the programme was not accredited.

Learners felt that the small groups allowed them to learn from others and avoided the disruption that they had experienced in larger groups. The small groups had been matched by ability which allowed the Tutor to differentiate vocabulary and activities to suit learners needs. This was clearly effective as some learners noticed that groups had been matched by ability and felt this had enabled everyone to make progress.

“It felt like everyone was on an even keel, with what they knew. Nobody was holding anyone up or anyone getting bored. It was well matched.”

The final element of programme logistics which supported learners' enjoyment and avoided nerves and distraction was the fact that the programme is not accredited. As this staff member explained:

"The fact that it's non-accredited works really well as there is less pressure to perform. When you've got an accredited programme, there is that fear factor because you could fail it. This is not about pass or fail, it's about improvement so they do improve. There is no 'line' they know they can't fail so they don't worry about it they just enjoy learning."

- **Timing of sessions**

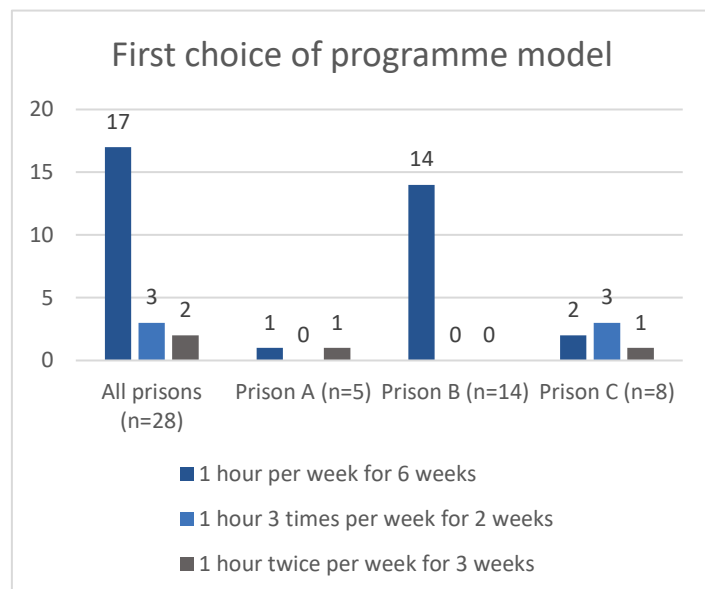
The six, hour-long sessions were conducted over six weeks, with one session per week. Some learners suggested that sessions should be more frequent so the endpoint questionnaire asked learners whether a more intense two or three week course would be preferable. Most disagreed, favouring the original model (see Figure 8), often because it gave them the whole week to process learning and it was something to look forward to:

"It gives you the week to take it all in and learn it."

"Gives you something to look forward to on a weekly basis."

However, some learners and two staff members emphasised that for learners with concentration and memory deficits, a more intense course would be beneficial and would allow greater engagement and progress.

Figure 8



"I feel 1 hour two times a week would be best as it would keep it fresher in your mind over two sessions but lasting 3 weeks it would still stay engrained in your mind."

Furthermore, the results of the questionnaire were skewed by the large number of learners in prison B, few of whom have any concentration or memory deficits. Therefore, it remains an important consideration for the future of the programme. Learners did reach a consensus that regardless of the timing of sessions and the programme length, sessions should continue to be one hour long as this was beneficial for their enjoyment and their ability to maintain concentration and engagement.

In summary:

Enjoyment, engagement and motivation were high among all learners who completed the programme, including the few who did not expect to enjoy the programme or did not initially feel motivated. Two learners who had particularly low motivation at baseline did not complete the programme, however, it is not possible to draw strong conclusions from the experiences of so few learners.

The following programme factors were identified as influencing the programme's enjoyability and learners' subsequent engagement and motivation:

- **Fast-paced, fun activities:** the learners enjoyed all session activities as they were interactive and appealed to what they described as 'all learning styles'.
- **Delivery style of the tutor:** the tutor built strong rapport with learners and was enthusiastic and supportive.
- **Visible progression:** learners were motivated by being able to see and understand their progress from one session to the next. The programme's design and the activities meant learners made rapid, visible progress and so remained engaged and motivated.
- **Programme structure and logistics:** the small matched ability groups meant the tutor differentiated resources effectively and learners were not distracted and stayed engaged in the sessions. Learners enjoyed the fact that the programme was not accredited and staff suggested that this contributed to their motivation and engagement.
- **Timing of sessions:** most learners felt that the short one hour sessions were preferable to longer sessions as they could maintain concentration. Most learners also preferred having only one session per week, however, it may be beneficial for some future learners to take part in a shorter, more intensive programme.

5.2 Prison factors

Some factors which affected the programme's success were determined by the logistics and staff within the prisons. Logistics and organisation varied between the different institutions and a comparison of these processes will allow Sound Training to work with future partners to make programmes consistently successful.

5.2.1 Organisation

Detailed organisation was essential to the smooth running of the programme and the learners' success. The nature of prison logistics meant it was highly likely that some logistical issues would arise. Although these issues frustrated learners, they did not become less motivated as a result, in actuality their frustration at losing session time was due to the high level of engagement in the programme.

Conducting the programme in a prison rather than a school presents a particular set of organisational challenges. Official timetables were often rigid and activities were conducted in morning and afternoon blocks, rather than in hour long slots as the programme requires. Learners' movement was also restricted, especially in prisons A and B. In prison C the learners were 'unlocked' for the whole day and therefore charged with arriving at their sessions without a staff member to collect or escort them. These challenges were recognised by staff and the Tutor at the start of the programme, and planning was critical to ensure the sessions went to plan as much as possible.

"I just think the logistics of pulling people for an hour a day [are problematic] usually things are done in a block full morning or afternoon so I think this will be difficult."

"It's much more dependent on the staff in the prison than it would be in a school setting because the learners' movement depends on them so much. A lot of careful planning has gone into it."

It was evident from the introductory session that the logistics of assembling the learners on time could present some issues. Staff and learners alike highlighted that poor organisation or logistical issues which resulted in waiting around or shortened sessions could make learners feel less motivated. During the programme, some such issues were encountered. These included learners being 'unlocked' late, last minute changes to available classroom space and staffing disruption which resulted in one day of sessions being cancelled. Three learners highlighted the need for the improvement of organisation in the prison when asked what they would change about the programme.

"The only thing to change is not the programme but the prison. It's frustrating when they change things or there is late movement."

"We were unable to attend all our sessions because of disruption from the prison. This should improve."

Despite the disruption caused by the above logistical issues, learners' motivation remained largely unaffected, as the Tutor explained:

"The logistics frustrated them sometimes but it didn't demotivate them, in fact it indicates how motivated they were because they didn't want that time infringed upon."

Nevertheless, future programmes should dedicate staff and organisational resources to ensure that sessions are well organised to allow maximum engagement and time for learning. Two main factors were identified as being most important in ensuring good organisation and smooth running of the programme: staff support and selection of appropriate learners. We explore these factors in the sections below.

5.2.2 Staff Involvement and Support

Staff support was crucial to the programme's success both in terms of organisation and support for learners. A comparison between prisons revealed that when institutions dedicated one member of staff, who knew the learners well, to the organisation of the programme the programme was organised more efficiently, communication was better and learners appreciated staff's support.

The programme ran most effectively in prison B and the Tutor attributed this success to the fact that a member of the education team who knew the learners well was dedicated to the organisation of the programme and involved in all aspects of decision making. This meant both the Tutor and the learners had a single point of contact and communication was easier.

"Logistically at [prison B], it's not a coincidence that that was the institution where we retain the most learners because they dedicated a member of staff who liaised with me and the prison officers and made sure the men were where they needed to be."

In other institutions staff agreed that having this single point of contact would be ideal but felt they were unable to dedicate this resource due to staffing issues.

"I think this is where you need a critical single point of contact and resources in the prison...but I do not have the capacity to do it...we need additional support to run interventions like this... this is not business as usual and it's potentially resource heavy because of the way the programme is run in the hour slots and the multiple numbers, it doesn't align naturally with everything that goes on in the prison...I think the solution would be that we align it much better with the education department, the learners in there, use this as another way of teaching them."

One staff member felt that the staff support they had provided was key to the programme's success:

"The cooperation of staff on wings [made it successful] for unlocking the men and making sure they got there on time...The education staff, the team, contribute a lot, it's quite a heavy workload to do it but our way of working, our collaborative working went well."

However, in this particular institution the programme faced comparatively more organisational issues and communication was more difficult. This comparison suggests that despite best efforts of staff in all institutions, a single dedicated member of staff rather than full team involvement allows the most effective delivery.

As well as providing organisational support, a single member of staff, who knows the learners can also provide support for learners throughout the programme, as the staff member in prison B explains:

"In my role, there is a pastoral element and that context where they can come to me, you have to be approachable and non-threatening so they can come to you and tell you if something is wrong or something is difficult [part of why it was successful was] because I was there and the guys know I'm not going to judge them."

5.2.3 Learner selection

Although Sound Training aimed to work with middle to high ability native English speakers, in practice, not all learners selected by the prisons fulfilled these characteristics. Nevertheless, all learners including EAL learners, low ability readers and very high ability readers made progress.

Sound Training aimed to recruit learners with the following characteristics:

- Middle to high ability readers
- Native English speakers
- Learners who had volunteered for the programme with high motivation to be involved

Selecting on this basis allows learners to benefit from the fast-paced activities which focus on more complex vocabulary. The course is not designed for learners who speak English as a second language (EAL learners), and a separate branch of the Sound Training programme, not included in the prison pilot, delivers sessions for these learners. Sound Training anticipated that selecting appropriate, motivated learners would keep the dropout rate low. However, Sound Training relied on prison staff to promote the programme and recruit appropriate learners and there was variability in learner selection across the different prisons.

Ability level of selected learners

Although Sound Training aims to target only middle to high ability readers the actual ability level of learners varied considerably. In prison B, the learners tended to be of a higher ability, in the other prisons there was a wider range of ability and initially there were concerns that some learners' ability was too low.

Some staff members did not agree with the approach of targeting learners with functional reading skills. One staff member explained that targeting higher ability readers did not align with the wider needs of the prison population and its education system; she felt that low ability readers were more in need of education and support:

"If I'm honest I would much prefer if it was targeted at our lower level readers because if you look at the need of the prison population, the guys that are functionally good at reading seem to be functioning fine and the guys that aren't need that extra support."

However, learners of all ability levels did make progress and in the endpoint interview the Tutor reflected that although they had aimed to target learners with a specific ability level they would review this in the future as the pilot results indicated that learners with a range of ability levels had benefitted, instead the most important factor to ensure is motivation:

"I wouldn't change the level of the learner selected, we had that range but it's just about choosing those that want to do it. Even those that had a top reading age to start with gained something so I wouldn't exclude them in the future."

EAL learners

The course requires a good level of spoken English and is not appropriate for those learning English. However, in prison A many learners selected spoke English as a second language which meant some had to be excluded, resulting in a low number of learners beginning the programme. Some EAL learners with relatively good spoken English were selected to continue the programme.

Despite these initial reservations, all four EAL learners made progress, improving their reading ages between 13 and 60 months. As mentioned in section 3.1.2, one Polish learner found the programme particularly useful for both reading and spelling. This indicates that as long as EAL learners have a good level of spoken English they can make good progress on the course.

Voluntary recruitment

Sound Training hoped that learners would have been informed about the course and offered the opportunity to volunteer to take part as volunteers would likely be more motivated. In reality, in two institutions some learners were not given much information from staff about the programme prior to the introductory session and although they were not 'forced' to take part they were selected by staff rather than through volunteering.

In prison B, this was not a problem as staff selected learners who were motivated and already taking part in a variety of education programmes. In contrast, in prison C most learners felt pressured into taking part and motivation was low. This, combined with the availability of other work in prison C, resulted in a higher dropout rate (see Figure 9). However, many prison C learners who were not initially interested in the programme and not motivated to take part changed their minds as the programme progressed.

"At first [I was] not sure I wanted to be involved. They said it was voluntary and then said I had to do it...it weren't what I were expecting but enjoyed it... I realised after a week where it was going and realised I could get something out of it."

A staff member in the same prison explained during the endpoint interview how the recruitment of learners could be improved, but ultimately that the delivery of the introductory session overcame this issue:

"It would have been better if it were voluntary. Prisoners felt rail-roaded. On the first day there was a lot of resistance. But the Tutor handled it well- she explained it three or four times, which was good because they need repetition and she emphasised the pilot nature of the programme and opportunity to be involved in that."

In future, the most effective way to encourage voluntary participation would be to provide learners with more information about the programme content before sign up as the Tutor suggests here:

"In future, I think what we would probably need to do is a series of taster sessions to show what the course is about and only then, after that, ask them if they wanted to sign up."

Learner drop out

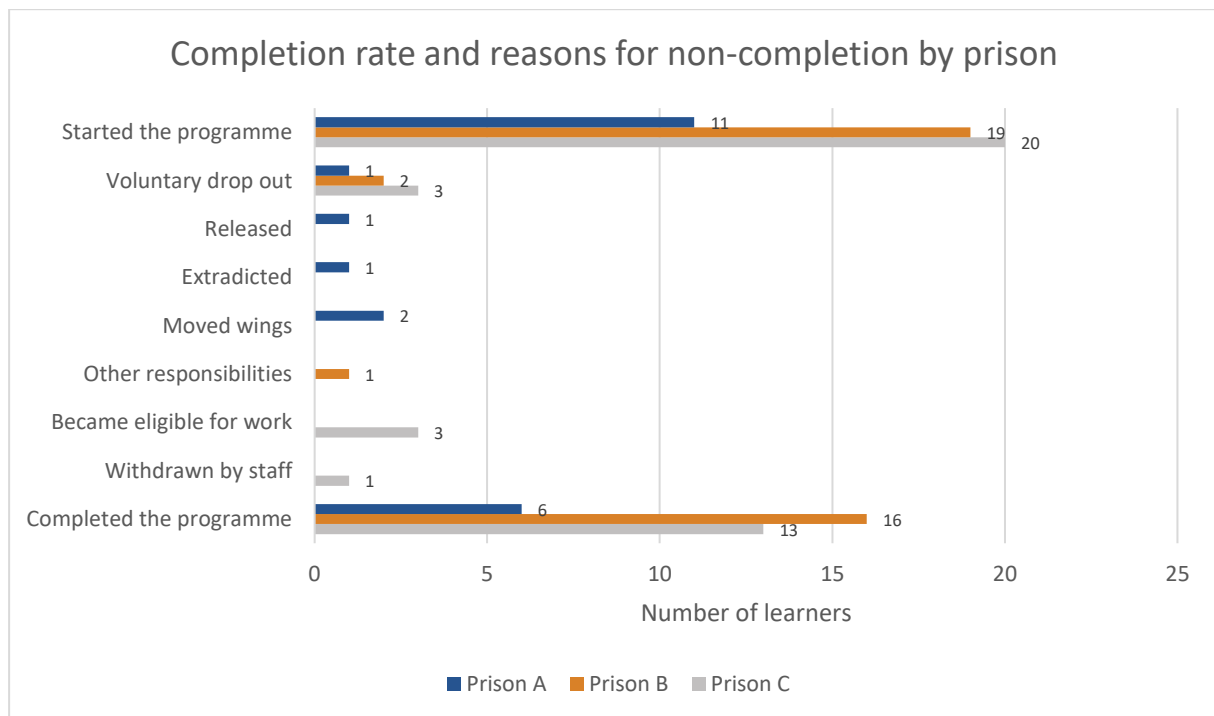
Despite the initial issues with selection in some prisons the programme ran successfully in all settings and although there was a small cohort in prison A, voluntary drop out (where learners themselves chose to stop attending sessions) was rare (see Figure 9). This suggests that the programme is able to overcome issues where selection is not ideal.

The dropout rate was highest in prison A, primarily because the programme was conducted on a remand wing in prison A meaning that many learners were at risk of being moved or released during the programme. However, one staff member explained that although this was problematic it allowed those who have no other education opportunities to take part:

“With the movement of the men you can’t guarantee that they will stay on the wing. It’s because of the type of wing it is, but I think it was worth it to do it there anyway because they don’t do free flow with the other wings so they don’t have access to education. It was worth it for the fact we could offer them this which was really valuable for them.”

The voluntary drop out rate was highest in prison C. This may have been due to learners feeling pressured into taking part, highlighting the importance of voluntary recruitment, but was also potentially influenced by the fact the prison C learners had more additional responsibilities such as jobs.

Figure 9



In summary:

Organisation, staff support and learner selection all impacted on the programme’s success. Running the programme in the prison environment presented some logistical issues, some of which are likely to be common across institutions. Learners were frustrated when logistical issues infringed on their session time but managed to remain motivated in the face of these difficulties. Effective planning and good communication between Sound Training and the prison helps the programme to run more smoothly and reduce this frustration.

Staff involvement also influenced the organisation and overall success of the programme. When prisons dedicated one member of staff to manage the programme logistics, communicate with tutor and support learners the programme ran more smoothly and was more successful. Although Sound Training aimed to recruit learners with specific characteristics as volunteers. In reality, recruitment was driven by staff and some learners did not match the appropriate characteristics. However, the results of the programme revealed that learners of all abilities can benefit from the programme and non-voluntary learners often increased their motivation during the session as they enjoyed the programme. Therefore, in future, Sound Training could widen the type of learners it targets for this programme.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Programme recommendations

Programme timing and length

Sound Training should offer more flexible delivery models in order to meet different learners' needs. These options could include shorter courses of two or three weeks with more frequent sessions, standard six week courses or longer programmes with additional sessions. In new partner institutions, where a tutor delivers the programme, different programme models could be discussed and offered. As Sound Training moves towards the 'train the trainer' model, it should consider promoting flexibility in the delivery models so that in future trained staff and prisoners could adapt the timing of session to suit the needs of each group. Although a programme with more than six sessions would incur additional costs for the prisons, offering different programme models will allow Sound Training to be flexible in its offer without forcing prisons to spend more.

If Sound Training implements this recommendation it would be valuable to evaluate the impact that different programme models have (see section 5.2) to examine whether progress is enhanced or reduced by these changes.

Post programme resources

Sound Training should provide additional resources that learners can keep in order to support further learning. Numerous learners requested additional resources throughout the programme and, especially, after the programme so that they could continue their learning beyond the sessions. Resources could include: audio resources and a glossary of terms including common prefixes and suffixes. Sound Training should investigate the logistics and costs of providing this additional resource as it is likely to support learners in maintaining the progress they have made throughout the course and could therefore have implications in evaluation of long term impact.

Targeting all ability levels

Although sound training originally aimed to recruit only middle to high ability learners, the results of the pilot demonstrate that the programme can help learners with a wide range of ability levels, including those who speak English as a second language, provided they have fairly good spoken English. Therefore, Sound Training should consider targeting the programme at a wider range of learners. Sound Training may wish to target promotion of the programme to different groups depending on each institutions' needs, as in this pilot, different prisons had different requirements and preferences in terms of which learners would benefit most. However, for this wider targeting to be successful Sound Training will need to continue with the practice of grouping learners by ability and adapting session resources to suit each group's ability, both of which were successful throughout this programme.

Programme promotion

Given that motivation often increased once learners understood what the programme would involve, Sound Training should disseminate more programme information and allow learners to take part in an introductory session before signing up. Some learners did leave the programme voluntarily, essentially wasting spaces that could have been used by other learners. Sound Training should reduce the voluntary dropout rate and ensure motivation is high from the first session through more effective promotion and information. The use of testimonials from this pilot programme will provide effective marketing materials. A taster session, similar to the introductory session, should be

designed and delivered to large groups of learners, as many learners in this pilot found the introductory session useful and reassuring.

Working with a dedicated member of staff

The contrast between prisons which had allocated one staff member to liaise with Sound Training and support learners, and prisons which had not done so, instead involving a whole team of staff, was stark in terms of organisation, learner dropout and the overall success of the programme. Therefore, in future, Sound Training should emphasise the importance of dedicating a member of staff when recruiting new partners. Although some institutions may be initially reluctant to do so due to staff shortages, the programme will run more smoothly and therefore save staff time if managed by one dedicated staff member.

6.2 Evaluation recommendations

Assessing other literacy skills

In the evaluation of this pilot only word reading ability was assessed using a formal assessment tool however, there is qualitative and anecdotal evidence that the programme impacted on wider skills such as spelling, comprehension and vocabulary. Improving reading comprehension and a learner's ability to access and independently learn from complex texts is also a primary aim of the programme. Therefore, Sound Training should measure these skills in future. A disadvantage of administering tests such as the comprehension section of the WRAT4 is that they are time consuming, however, this issue could be mostly overcome by randomly selecting only a subgroup of learners to take part in this element of the assessment. This would allow Sound Training to strengthen claims about its impact on wider literacy skills as well as allowing it to hone aspects of the programme to increase impact.

Long term impact

Sound Training should evaluate the longer term impact of the programme by assessing learners 6 months to a year after the completion of the programme. Such an evaluation should include another reading age assessment as well as some qualitative research into whether the programme has resulted in any long-term changes in behaviour or ability. It will also establish whether the immediate benefits identified in this evaluation are sustained. Carrying out research in the context of a prison population will inevitably be challenging but options should be explored with prison partners.

Compare different programme models

If Sound Training implements the recommendations in section 5.1 to offer different delivery models (including two or three week programmes with more frequent sessions and longer programmes), they should ensure they evaluate the impact of altering the programme in these. This will allow Sound Training to hone and make accurate claims about delivery models.

