Artists' Care: supervision and care for those working in challenging and complex settings

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1.0   Executive Summary

Artists' Care: supervision and care for those working in challenging and complex settings

This report presents evidence of the ways organisations and individuals seek, offer and engage in care and supervision to support artistic work in challenging and complex settings. The reported evidence provides insights into:

- The nature and impact of funded work for organisations and their artists
- How organisational structures and governance create opportunities for providing care for staff
- Lived experience of being a freelance musician

The report:

- Outlines the project
- Identifies a holistic, integrated approach that supports the development of skills in the practice, ensures standards of practice, and offers opportunities for emotional coping
- Provides an overview of each organisation
- Presents the organisational challenges for providing Artists' Care
- Presents the experiences of artists and staff in relation to their own care and development
- Discusses the implications for policy and practice within the arts and cultural sector more widely
- Proposes a set of principles for Artists' Care
- Outlines the next steps

The Artists' Care project is a collaboration with three partner organisations who provide music and creative arts projects in challenging and complex settings – Good Vibrations, Irene Taylor Trust, and Hear Me Out - and two research organisations with specialisms in researching arts projects in such

settings – the Royal Northern College of Music and the University of Wolverhampton. The research question we pose is:

> How can supervision and care be structured, funded and embedded within organisational structures to ensure that artists and frontline staff are appropriately supported, maintaining the quality of their work and sustaining careers?

This report presents thematic findings from a series of ethnographic studies with each of the partner organisations. Building on a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) (Henley, Caulfield, and Cole, under review), the ethnographies sought to understand how each of the three partner organisations work. This included a focus on leadership and management, administrative structures, organisation, and how each organisation works with both employed and freelance professionals. The ethnographic studies comprised a qualitative methodology, including semi-structured interviews, observations, and participant diaries.

Shared thematic findings across the three organisations (sector and organisational):

Existing training and development:	
•Artists' feedback	•Multi-function meetings
•Recruitment and induction	•External trainers
•Peer support (directed and non-directed)	•In-project support
Organisation challenges:	
•Impact of detention sector	•Funding continuity
Respectful remuneration:	
•Appropriate payment	•Non-financial remuneration
Organisation processes:	
•Policies and procedures	•Preparations for projects
•Strategy and vision	

Artists' Care Principles

Resulting from the findings, the following **Artists' Care Principles** are proposed:

•Artists' care must not be a 'tick box' exercise: need to work towards a cultural shift across the whole arts sector, and with this financially recognising the importance of this as an integral budget line.
•Arts sector needs to support arts organisations to work towards a diversification in the sector workforce as a way to address intersectional inequalities.
•Artists' care needs to recognise, and support, the specialist empathetic and facilitation skills as well as musical skills needed to be a community arts facilitator in complex settings.
•Artists' care is a connected cycle and therefore also means staff care, trustees care, participants' care and must underpin the whole professional approach, including all the working relationships and operations of an organisation.
•Artists' care must recognise that there is no 'typical freelance artist' and cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach.
•A creative approach to artists' care is needed, in which organisations consider how care practices can develop in the context of a challenging funding environment.

In the next stage of the project (for which, at the time of writing, we are currently seeking funding), building directly on the REA and ethnographic research, three bespoke Artists' Care programmes will be designed, one for each organisation, that will be tested in a large-scale action research study. The study will co-produce in-depth research to understand the different ways of supporting artists and frontline staff in each of the three different organisational structures. A process and impact evaluation of each Artists' Care programme will be carried out and we will develop models of practice as well as benchmarks for sector funders that will support them in deciding how best to support organisations. The latter stages of the Artists' Care project will involve working with organisations and funders to embed the outcomes of the research into the policies and practices of the sector.

We would like to thank the Artists' Care Sector Reference group for reviewing and feeding back on the report.

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2.0   Introduction and Context

2.1 Background and Context

2.1.1 The needs of artists working in challenging settings

Over the past 25 years the practices of artists[1] have changed considerably. There has been a growth of socially engaged artistic work (Ravetz & Wright, 2015) with a rise in the number of artists who are working in health, community, and social care; a rise documented by graduate destination statistics and alumni data from universities and conservatoires (see www.graduateoutcomes.ac.uk). One area where significant work is being undertaken by artists is in secure settings such as prisons, young offenders' institutions, secure hospitals, and immigration detention centres. Organisations in these settings operate within the cultural and voluntary sectors and represent a substantial and growing sector: the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance - the representative body for organisations and individuals working in justice settings in England and Wales - currently has over 900 network members. Indeed, the growth in this area of work is acknowledged in the 2020 Arts Council England strategy.

While there is a growing body of research documenting that participation in artistic and creative programmes can lead to an improvement in mental health and wellbeing for people living in secure settings (for a summary see Caulfield, 2021), for many who work in secure settings, promoting the mental health and wellbeing of those they work with may come at the cost of maintaining personal mental health and wellbeing (World Health Organisation, 2014). The client group within secure settings has specific and higher needs than those in other settings and large numbers of those 'in contact with the criminal justice system present significant emotional, personal, and mental health issues' (Caulfield, 2016, p. 217). Anecdotal evidence suggests that the impact of working in settings where there is a risk of experiencing secondary trauma can lead to high attrition rates for the artistic workforce, particularly when there are no stable financial and social support mechanisms. While these issues existed prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the pandemic both magnified and made more visible the issues related to artists' care, with reports of significant loss of income and increased mental health concerns (Lowe, 2020).

Broader sectoral challenges – particularly for voluntary sector organisations – can compound issues around artists' wellbeing. The voluntary sector continues to face significant financial challenges and an increased focus on service delivery (Alcock, 2010; Charities Aid Foundation, 2023; Macmillan, 2010), both of which can exacerbate organisational and individual stress and challenges (Glennon et al., 2017).

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[1] We use the term artist throughout this article as a collective name for community musicians who work in different musical spheres as well as multiple art forms.

Burnout is widely documented in relation to professions such as psychotherapy, clinical psychology and counselling (Simionato and Simpson, 2018) and has been attributed to working environment (Berry and Robertson, 2019). Similarly, healthcare practitioners working in challenging contexts and prison officers also experience occupational burnout (Harizanova and Stoyanova, 2020). Those who work within arts organisations can be impacted by these challenges, including staff working directly with participants but also managers, administrators, coordinators, and directors - who are described as the frontline staff - who often provide emotional support when an artist needs to offload. This type of supervision and care is informal, not consistent across the sector, and there are no mechanisms for these frontline staff to offload themselves, resulting in 'holding' accounts of potentially traumatic experiences that could lead to a deterioration of mental health and wellbeing.

In therapeutic and clinical settings, there are clear mechanisms for the supervision of workers at all levels in the form of service-based supervision, but in arts organisations structured wellbeing support is almost non-existent (Lowe, 2020). The British Psychological Society (2017), for example, recognises that 'it is important that psychologists...look after their own wellbeing. This is not only important for them as individuals, but also for the quality of the care they give their clients' (p.12) and that practitioners 'should seek supervision from appropriately qualified and experienced personnel as appropriate' (p.14). Similar provision is offered within counselling services with recommended amounts of supervision per hours of counselling undertaken (BACP, 2023). Artists who work in secure settings do not have the same access to professional registration and therefore guidance and support for wellbeing is lacking. Added to organisational constraints, the wellbeing of UK-based freelance artists sits within a national mental health care crisis in the National Health Service, with long waiting lists and a lack of resources to support people experiencing mental health challenges (British Medical Association, 2025).

2.1.2 Standards of practice

Relevant to the ongoing development of the Artists' Care project are some existing frameworks and principles from the creative health sector - a sector allied, but different, to arts in criminal justice and detention. A brief overview of some key reports and standards frameworks are highlighted below with connections made to the Artists' Care findings drawn out in this report.

The Creative Health Quality Framework (2023) provides some guiding standards of practice and principles for artists and other professionals working in the creative industries. The Framework is aimed at multiple groups involved in creative health work, including organisations, freelance artists and cultural practitioners, policy makers and funders, and the participants who attend sessions, amongst others. It is underpinned by an ethos of sharing good practice, comprising eight Creative Health Quality

Principles which can be adapted to the programme context, and which aim to cultivate effective working practices that support the best possible experience and health outcomes for participants.

Arts Council England's (ACE) 2020-2030 *Creative Health & Wellbeing* strategy aims to support people in England to live happier, healthier lives through transforming the country's culture and creativity access for people. It sets out three key strands of this work: Partnerships, Place and Practitioners. In relation to practitioners, it aims to foster a network of best practice sharing, and to 'support and champion the protection of health and wellbeing of practitioners working in challenging settings' (ACE, 2022, p.14), the latter connecting to the challenging settings of immigration detention settings, temporary accommodation settings, and prisons, of the arts organisations in the Artists' Care project.

The ACE-funded report *Keeping Safe* (Puebla Fortier & Massey-Chase, 2024) provides a review of psychosocial wellbeing support for creative health and care practitioners. Parts of the review resonate with the findings of Artists' Care, such as: vicarious/secondary trauma, the physical and emotional safety of creative practitioners working in challenging settings, and the risk of heightened stress and precarities that comes from working solo in a freelance capacity. Respondents to the work that informed the report, including freelance artists, reported perspectives of 'good psychosocial support' as including the following key aspects: being part of an organisational culture of care, characterised by 'choice and flexibility', 'regularly and consistently available', 'responsive to personal needs, practices, settings', 'free or affordable', 'accessible', and 'combined with skills and knowledge on wellbeing and specific conditions' (ibid, p.4). The report also referred to 'promising practices' where organisations were offering a menu of support options, for example 'combining skills development with wellbeing support, and providing funding to support pilot support programmes and evaluations' (ibid, p.4): aspects which also aligned to the approach of the three organisations in the Artists' Care project where artists' care was bespoke, dynamic, and diverse.

Also informing the ongoing evolution of the Artists' Care project is a wider body of connected work. Trauma-informed practice is expanding in societal dialogues. In the nation of Wales, for example, a society-wide framework aims to reach all members of the public in a collective approach to developing and implementing trauma-informed practices in daily lives and work lives (ACE Hub Wales, 2022). At regional levels, progressive changes are happening to support systems-level and organisational level changes and to reach diverse workforces. For example, some of the Artists' Care research team are involved with programmes with statutory criminal justice agencies where trauma informed training has been implemented (e.g. Chopra, Puttick, et al. 2024), which demonstrates important changes in the wider sector.

Other connected work includes research on the particular somatic and psychological impacts on dancers, theatre makers, and other practitioners whose work involves physical engagement when working with individuals and groups whose words and personal stories might invoke vicarious trauma (e.g. Collard-Stokes & Irons, 2022). This is particularly relevant given that the organisations in the Artists' Care project often work with interdisciplinary artists alongside their artist-musicians.

Of additional relevance is research that connects to the measurement and management of wellbeing. For example, Seligman's (2011) 'PERMA' framework, developed from empirical evidence, suggested that five key elements including 'positive emotions', 'engagement', 'relationships', 'meaning', and 'accomplishments' may be a robust approach for the measurement, management and development of wellbeing. Seligman later clarified the value of PERMA not as a theory of wellbeing but as a framework for measurement. Since the original framework, Seligman has called for its expansion with consideration of four additions based on organisational contexts, including physical health, mindset, physical work environments and economic security, in response to recent meta-analyses and systematic literature reviews (Donaldson et al., 2022). The factor of economic security is particularly relevant to the freelance artists in the Artists' Care project.

Also connected to organisational factors to artists' wellbeing, is research specifically focused on leadership in cultural organisations. The Clore Leadership Report (2024), for example, brings to the fore issues around the burnout of leaders, an important finding for the Artists' Care project which took a holistic, whole-organisational view of interconnected care.

2.1.3 The Artists' Care project

The Artists' Care project is a collaboration with three partner organisations who provide music and creative arts projects in challenging and complex settings – Good Vibrations, Irene Taylor Trust, and Hear Me Out - and two research organisations with specialisms in researching arts projects in such settings – the Royal Northern College of Music and the University of Wolverhampton -, and seeks to address the following problems:

- For artists, promoting the mental health and wellbeing of those they work with may come at the cost of maintaining personal mental health and wellbeing;
- The impact of working in settings where there is a risk of experiencing secondary trauma can lead to high attrition rates for the artistic workforce;

- Mechanisms for providing supervision, support and care for both artists and organisational frontline staff who facilitate artistic work are informal, not consistent across the sector, and not in line with other professions;

- A lack of clear and structured mechanisms for providing such care could impact the quality of artistic work;

- Those who fund this kind of work need to be confident that the quality of work is high and that their resource is being effectively directed so as to maintain this quality and ensure the sustainability of the workforce.

Therefore, the research question we pose is:

- How can supervision and care be structured, funded and embedded within organisational structures to ensure that artists and frontline staff are appropriately supported, maintaining the quality of their work and sustaining careers?

The Artists' Care project has been designed to address this question through a series of work programmes:

1. A Rapid Evidence Assessment to find out what evidence there is for best practice in supporting health and social care professionals within professions registered with professional bodies.

2. To carry out detailed ethnographies of the three partner organisations so as to understand how each organisation works. This includes leadership and management, administrative structures, organisation, and how each organisation works with both employed and freelance professionals. This will result in three models of organisational practice.

3. Apply the findings of the REA to each model of organisational practice to design three different Artists' Care programmes that will work for each model.

4. Implement these Artists' Care programmes as part of a detailed research project to evaluate their effectiveness and understand how they work within each organisational structure.

5. Develop Artists' Care resources for organisations, practitioners and funders:
   - A 'Guide to Artists' Care' pack for practitioners.
   - A practitioner facing event to introduce the guide and invite feedback.
   - A pack of materials to assist implementation.
   - A set of benchmarks to aid funders in understanding whether sufficient Artists' Care has been designed and budgeted for in proposals for projects working in challenging and complex settings.

Work programme one sought to explore the field through a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) of existing research articulating best practice in the care and supervision of those working in registered health and social care professions, providing a wider research evidence base (Henley, Caulfield, and Cole, under review). The researchers carried out 15,840 searches across 12 databases. From these searches, 8677 abstracts of research articles that fitted our criteria were reviewed. The quality and the content of the articles was then assessed, before carrying out a critical analysis to provide a framework of best practice in supervision and care.

The findings of the Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) do three things. Firstly, they point to a matrix of supervision comprising a holistic model of care. Acknowledging that practitioners need to draw on multiple sources for supervision and care, this matrix combines the functions of the supervisory process, as outlined by Davies and Nagi (2017):

- formative: to develop skills in the therapy

- normative: to develop and maintain standards of practice

- restorative: to support emotional coping

With the ways that practitioners access supervision and support:

- self-management
- peer support
- professional services

The inter-relationship between skills development (formative), the establishment of excepted standards of practice (normative) and emotional coping (restorative) is made by Barron and Mitchell (2019), who found increases in knowledge, skills and confidence alongside increased ability to cope emotionally and ongoing support was needed to underpin effective service-delivery. This was reinforced further through the findings of three more studies: Brighton et al. (2019), Brown et al. (2019) and Billings et al. (2021).

A synthesis of the findings of studies of individual professions and the sources of support they sought strengthens the case that practitioners need to draw on multiple sources of support – one type of support is not enough. Brighton et al. (2019) demonstrate how self-management is important, but Brown et al. (2019) articulate the challenges when it fails and points to the need to also have support from peers. However, as Billings et al. (2021) found, this can also lead to potential secondary trauma and needs to be offset by formal professional support. Gillen et al. (2022) reinforce this need for professional support but go further to suggest that in order for support to be effective, it needs to be encapsulated in policy.

What emerges is that to provide holistic care that supports the quality of the practice as well as the personal and professional development of practitioners is a supervision matrix, as shown in Figure One.

Figure One: The Supervision Matrix

	Formative	Normative	Restorative
Self-management			
Peer support			
Professional services			

(Henley, Caulfield, and Cole, under review)

Secondly, these findings reinforce the need for our research into Artists' Care. References to the potential to experience secondary trauma, the impact on the sustainability of careers, and the need to maintain quality of care run throughout the literature analysed as part of the REA. Brown et al. (2019) refer to Johnson's (2017) research demonstrating that secondary trauma results from experiencing other people's traumatic experiences through conversations. Artistic practice within challenging and complex settings often involve pedagogical processes through reflection (Henley and Parks, 2020). In these reflective discussions, trust is built between facilitator and participant and conversation is the key vehicle for reflections on the artistic process. Research has found that artistic development is symbiotic with social and emotional development, and the personal conversations that happen within the pedagogical moment of reflection are as important as the artistic conversations (Henley, 2015).

Finally, the findings of the REA show clearly that there is a paucity of research into best practice within supervision, care and support for registered healthcare professions as much as for those working in professions without professional bodies that require the provision of supervision. Indeed, much of the research reviewed as part of this REA, including those excluded from the final stage, calls for such research. Therefore, the Artists' Care project has implications for the wider health and social care workforce as well as any practitioner working in complex and challenging settings.

The research presented in this report followed this REA and involved detailed ethnographic studies of the three partner organisations who provide artistic programmes and projects within secure environments. This provides the detailed understanding of each organisation needed to design Artists' Care programmes that can be tested through a large-scale action research project as the next stage of research.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Design and approach

The ethnographies sought to understand how each of the three partner organisations work. This included a focus on leadership and management, administrative structures, organisation, and how each organisation works with both employed and freelance professionals. The ethnographic studies comprise a qualitative methodology, including semi-structured interviews, observations, and participant diaries.

Interview questions for both the staff and artists were based within the same four main sections, with variations in the questions according to whether they were a staff member or freelance artist: personal career journey with the arts; support structures (developmental); support structures (individual); and support structures (broader sector context).

The diary entries comprised the same format over the three-month period, with artists asked to comment on two prompts for that month, including an insight into what their freelance work had looked like during that month, and what support had looked like for that month as part of their preparation (pre or post) for their freelance work.

The synthesis and write-up phase of project findings from this stage of the project involved ethnographies of each organisation, shared with them in November 2024. This current overarching thematic report places the findings of the ethnographic studies within the context of the Rapid Evidence Assessment, which also allows us to test the emerging Supervision Matrix reported above. Project partners will then discuss the findings and learnings and use these to inform the development of next phase of the project where an Artists' Care Framework will be developed for each of the three music organisations.

3.2 Participants

Across the three studies, the following activities were undertaken:

- Semi-structured interviews: A total of 21 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted across the three music organisations. This involved five artists in each of the three music organisations (15 in total) and two members of staff in each organisation (six in total).
- Diaries: A total of 13 freelance musicians kept a diary, from which data were collected by the research team at monthly intervals for a three-month period between May to July 2024.
- Observations: Two participatory observations of CPD sessions and programme delivery within each of the three music organisations (six in total).
- In addition, follow-up Teams calls and emails for clarification as appropriate.

3.3 Data analysis

The analysis included a thematic analysis of interview data; inductive analysis (i.e., analysing data without applying preconceived theories) to raise themes; deductive analysis of diary data (application of interview themes to diary data).

3.4 Ethics

Ethics approval was granted by the University of Wolverhampton on 20th December 2023 and the Royal Northern College of Music on 11th March 2024. All participants were given full details of the project in advance with a detailed participant information sheet and given a period of time to consider the details and ask questions before being asked to confirm consent during an informed consent process.

In agreement with the organisations, all artists names and organisations have been kept fully anonymised. The names of staff member participants are anonymised, with their job roles and organisations specified as part of the ethnographies.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Brief profile of each organisation

Each organisation has its own characteristics, structures and priorities with organisational structures that are at different levels of maturity, i.e. some more long-standing, others recently undergoing transition, as detailed below. However, we found the following commonalities that are pertinent to Artists' Care:

- Each organisation has a well-developed and stable governance structure responsible for the legal and ethical running of the charity.
- Each organisation is vulnerable to the precarious nature of the funding landscape, and this impacts their freelance artists.
- Each organisation has a dynamic project model that can respond to the context and funding environment, i.e. a mixture between one-off specialised events, intensive weeks, and weekly projects.
- The facilitation model of projects, i.e. co-facilitation, single facilitation etc., impacts emotional coping.

4.1.1 Good Vibrations
*Context and Organisational Structure*

Good Vibrations (GV) first started in 2003, under the leadership of a larger charity. In 2008 it became an officially registered independent charity. 21 years on, the charity now has a Board of Trustees, an elected body that is legally responsible for the ethical running of the charity, as well as five core staff members, with two full-time roles including Head of Delivery, Project Officer (1.0FTE) and three part-time roles of CEO (0.8FTE), Training and Development Manager (0.6FTE), and Fundraising Manager (0.6FTE). Two of the staff members are relatively new to the organisation, with the CEO joining in mid-March 2024 and the Project Officer joining at the beginning of 2024, whilst two of the staff, the now Head of Delivery (and former interim CEO), and Training and Development Manager, having been at the charity for a long period of time: 14 years and 19 years respectively. Prior to the new CEO starting, it was a particularly challenging few years for the organisation so at the time of the Artists' Care project there had been a number of changes in the organisation and the charity was transitioning into a new chapter in their history.

The GV team currently work with 12 freelance artists, with some having very regular work with GV, and some doing occasional week-long projects. Whilst some of GV's freelance artists only work in

community settings, 80% of their artists currently work or have previously worked in prisons and secure hospitals. GV's artists are a uniquely specialised workforce due to the majority of GV's delivery using gamelan, an unusual and specialised musical art form from Indonesia. Many of the artists have been traditionally trained in Indonesia, whilst a small number of the musicians practice more traditional musical forms and are not trained in gamelan.

Programme of work / projects

In terms of more continuous programmes of work that GV currently run, this includes ongoing weekly gamelan sessions at HMP Wormwood Scrubs, London, and ongoing weekly sessions in two secure hospitals in London. Additionally, GV runs two regular weekly community-based 'Resonate' programmes in Glasgow and Sheffield. Additionally, they run week-long intensive projects in Glasgow with a small team of facilitators working with community members who are excluded from the arts sector, such as people with profound learning disabilities and/or mental health needs. The other regular programme of the work is the 'Resonate' project in Sheffield working with people isolated in the community who may have mental health issues. (see Vignette One). There was also a new community gamelan project about to start in Glasgow in November 2024, with a group of people who have dementia. On the GV website, they summarise the format of their work with the following image:
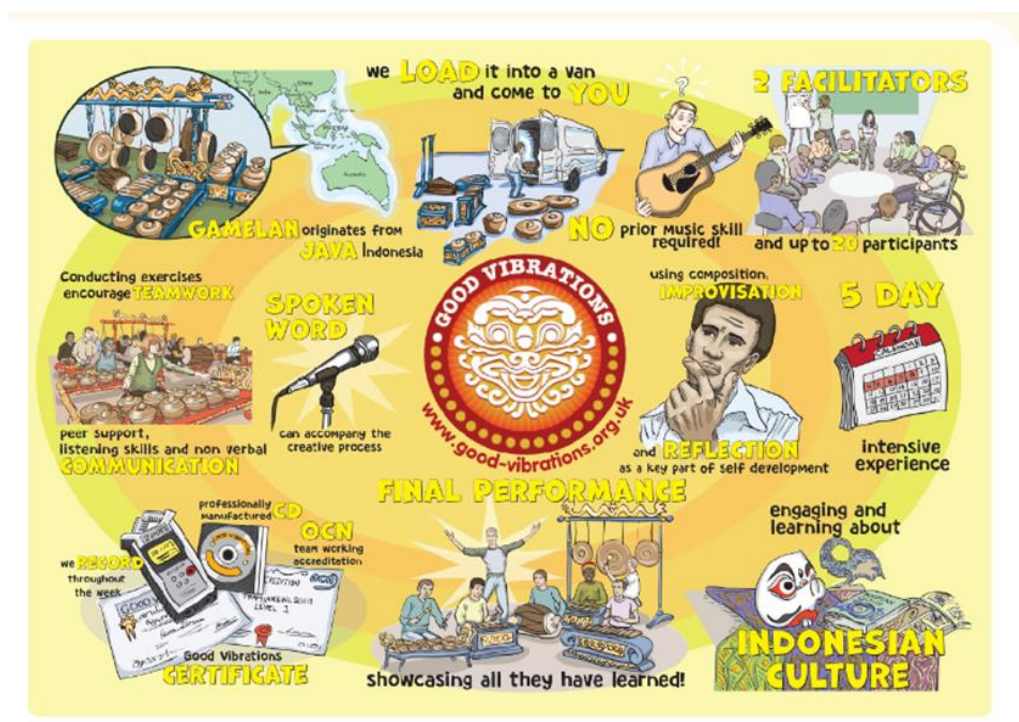
GV's week-long intensive prison projects include an accredited element for prison-based participants. In terms of frequency, at the start of the Artists' Care project the charity's prison delivery was

approximately one per month up until June 2024 and they were awaiting outcomes of funding applications for week-long projects in Nottingham and Sheffield. However, an update from the Training and Development Manager in September 2024 (email correspondence), explained that unfortunately the charity had just had three prison projects cancelled, and other projects postponed: highlighting the in-the-moment precarities and knock-on effects of funding issues on small charities like GV.

Prior to one of the research team visiting a Resonate project in Sheffield, GV's Head of Delivery had explained some more about this programme of work, and more about the benefits of the gamelan instrument itself:

> 'It's a wonderful co-created project that the facilitators have built from the grassroots up. In Sheffield Resonate we run a half-day session in a beautiful community space in a church. It brings through lots of people who identify as having particular mental health needs. It's about creating a community together for people who may feel isolated and may be struggling with their mental health. Gamelan is really inclusive and that's the beauty of it. The wonder of gamelan is that it's an art form that is completely accessible: you don't have to have any musical experience or knowledge whatsoever to play.
>
> As soon as you start, if you're able to hold a beater and hit a gong, you start playing and someone responds to you and you begin to create this musical conversation. We work with people who would might never get that opportunity to experience something like that, it's amazing the breadth of people that are able to access it' (Interview, May 2024).

Vignette 1: an insight into the Resonate Sheffield project – July 2024

'Arriving at the Highfield Trinity church, I made my way into the basement, off a little side street. As I walked into the room I was struck with the presence of the beautiful instruments and the layout of the space, with the large instruments arranged in an enclosed square. I was invited to take my shoes off, in respect of the Balinese ritual, and to come and sit in the space at an instrument of my choice.

There were eight of us in the group, including the facilitator. It was a free drop-in session that was part of Good Vibrations community 'Resonate' programme: open for anyone to join at any point with no obligation to commit to attending every week. Most of the group were there for the whole time, and a few people came in and left at different points of the two-hour session.

Like me, there was another person for whom it was their first time in the group, and their first time playing the gamelan. The facilitator and the group were so welcoming and reassured me that despite me saying I had very little musical playing experience, to recognise that this comes in multiple forms and in fact I had. In the break, over a cup of tea, two of the group (unprompted) shared with me when and how gamelan and the facilitator had first come into their lives, with one man telling me about his chronic depression and how much the group and the instrument itself helps him.

We played both spontaneously and, for some of the session, in a more directed form, the latter connected to the group's forthcoming performance that they were preparing for up in the main church the following week. Towards the end of the session, we played to a song which had been written by one of the women in the group about Sheffield and its industrial history. For those two hours I felt part of the community they had created and went away inspired to find out about similar groups in my city of Manchester.'

(Researcher field notes, 17 July 2024) (Photo credit: Johnathan Smith)

4.1.2 Hear Me Out
Context and Organisational Structure

Hear Me Out (HMO) first started in 2006, originally under the name of Music in Detention and was rebranded as Hear Me Out in 2021. The charity was started in memory of Helen Tetlow, a teacher, musician and activist, who was passionate about standing up for, and working with, refugees to support their empowerment (HMO, 2024). The charity has a Board of Trustees who are legally responsible for the ethical running of the charity. The trustees include a variety of people, many of whom have been with the organisation for a long time. The trustees also include people with refugee/detainee lived experience as well as people who work with those from refugee-backgrounds. For example, in 2019 Lamin Joof became a trustee on the board: this was a significant point in HMO's history as Lamin was held in the immigration detention system where he first became involved as a participant in HMO's

workshops (HMO, 2024). HMO's board meetings happen every three months, with full activity updates from the HMO staff to the board occurring every six months. Many of the trustees also visit the sessions 'so they're able to understand fully what's going on, on the ground' and so that they continue to be 'well informed and engaged in HMO's work' (interim Programme and Evaluation Manager).

The charity has ten core team members including the Director who has been leading the charity since 2008, an Artistic Director (who is also one of HMO's lead artists), a Programme and Evaluation Manager (at the time of the data collection this was an interim position, with a permanent post filled in May 2024), a Participation and Safeguarding Manager, a Communications Manager and Grants Fundraiser, a Support Worker, an Administration and Finance Coordinator, a Finance Officer, and two freelance fundraisers. All of the core team, bar the Director, work part-time. Seven of the team are salaried, and three are employed on an ongoing freelance basis (the two fundraising roles and the finance role), doing a fixed number of days per month. HMO have had some staff turnover in the past two years so have had to do quite a lot of new recruitment.

As of October 2024, HMO currently work with 23 freelance artists, having previously had a larger number on their books. Of these, 12-15 artists carry out regular work for HMO, whilst others do occasional work for HMO. Originally Music in Detention/HMO's artists were bought-in through other arts organisations until five years ago when there was a transition in the organisation, and they decided to change the model to bring in their own artists. Many of HMO's artists have been with the organisation for a long period of time (but originally through a third party) and have 'lead artist' positions with the organisation in which they provide guidance to newer artists and participants who become HMO freelance artists.

Current delivery / projects

HMO's work takes place in detention centres, asylum accommodation (which it considers to be akin to detention centres), and community/public settings. In terms of more continuous programmes of work that HMO currently run, this includes continuous weekly programmes that run in seven-week blocks. For their ongoing provision, the HMO artists work in pairs and the team try to maintain regularity in artists, although this may vary slightly for some work: this model means that there will be a small 'artist subgroup' based around one block of work/project.

For 2024, HMO have been running three ongoing programmes: two in asylum hotels in London with adults, children and young people (see Vignette Two) and one with single men living at Napier Barracks. However, an update from the Programme and Evaluation Manager in September 2024 (email

correspondence) explained that unfortunately HMO have had an extended pause in delivery for this ongoing programme of work (since August) due to funding issues, and therefore the next block of provision will begin in December for three weeks, followed by three weeks in January: highlighting the in-the-moment precarities and knock-on effects of funding issues on small charities like HMO and their freelance artists. In email correspondence with HMO's Director in November 2024, he explained that the funding for the hotel work comes from external grants and individual donors. The grants and donations are either core funding, some of which HMO applies to this line of work, or they are project funding for the hotel work as a whole.

Vignette Two: an insight into an HMO asylum accommodation project – August 2024

'Today I had the pleasure of visiting an HMO session in one of the hotels where families from newly arrived backgrounds are living in Ilford, London. This was a 4-hour drop-in session from 11am-1pm and 2-4pm with three artists: two who work regularly in this hotel and who mostly focused on the music side, and another artist who was new to HMO and was there to shadow the session. The new HMO artist had set up a mask making station, an activity which I was invited to help with- much to my delight as someone who loves arts and craft activities! The artists told me that they worked on different themes for a number of weeks and the one they were currently working on was 'summer', with a particular focus this week on 'carnivals' in the lead-up to the Notting Hill Carnival which was coming up the following week.

When I first arrived, there were mostly men there who were sitting chatting. Soon after two of the lead artists began playing some music and singing and a few of the men came over and joined in. As the morning session continued a few children came down to say hello and were clearly happy to see the artists that they recognised. At first a little shy, it didn't take them long before they were encouraged to join in. One little boy aged 6 from Afghanistan and a little girl from Bangladesh who was 9 sat and made masks with us whilst the little boy's older brother picked up one of the instruments and wanted to play some music. A little while later we found out from the boy's mother that it was the older boy's 10th birthday today so we all gathered together and sang [a very funky version of] happy birthday to him.

In the break I sat with the artists and a few of the workshop participants. After lunch the activities with the two lead artists encouraged people to come and try some of the many instruments they had. They also had recording equipment. One of the artists taught a young woman to play some chords on the guitar for the first time and she was clearly so happy about this. The new HMO artist and I spent some of the time chatting to the children and parents and welcoming people into the space to sit and socialise. The artists then did some activities to lead up to a little group performance, helping two of the children to make up a Carnival song in a Calypso style and at the end everyone sang it together. Overall, it was a joyous atmosphere amidst what was clearly a highly challenging and complex time for the people living in the hotel'

(Researcher journal notes – 17 August 2024). (Photo credit: The Clermont)

Connected to their work with immigration detention centres, HMO also carry out community exchange work. This work is explained on HMO's website as a process by which they: 'link up people who are held inside immigration detention centres with community groups who may find themselves shut off and stigmatised by society, such as mental health settings and youth groups. Unable to meet in person, they connect through music. Walls are broken down as both groups use music as a channel to understand each other better and together create an original album of their own music' (HMO, 2024).

Another main strand of HMO's work is in supporting their two bands. One of the bands, the 'HMO Band' band is a collective of different members from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds, some of whom had spent time in detention centres, along with some of HMO's artists. The other band 'The Unknowns' is predominantly made up of people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds, and was born out of the work HMO were doing in the asylum hotels. HMO supports the bands to record EPs, reach an audience, launch gigs/events, to develop their repertoire, and to provide general business development support. In the first half of 2024, HMO was supporting The Unknowns band to launch in April at an event at the Union Chapel in North London and had built a programme of work around that. One of HMO's funding proposals that they were developing in August 2024 was to provide further support to both bands to support them to get on the gigs circuit and to become independent artists.

HMO also does lots of different special one-off projects and events. For example, in Refugee Week (June 2024) they had a series of events, including an exhibition, and supporting a pop-up band 'Band from the Barracks' of men living in Napier Barracks to perform at City of Sanctuary's festival in Hastings. In July 2024 the HMO Band played at the Leyton Carnival (see Vignette Three).

'Today I went along to the Leyton Mas Carnival to see the HMO band performing. One of HMO's lead artists Delroy and Artistic Director Jo introduced the band and the background of Hear Me Out and how the band formed. Three of the refugee-background musicians were playing with two of HMO's lead artists – a great mix of styles with reggae, rap and beatboxing, with powerful lyrics speaking out about injustices in the immigration system. There was a real buzz from the crowd and they received a great reception at the end. They were definitely the highlight of the carnival for me and left me wanting to hear more of their music and got me thinking a lot about the power of music to heal and empower voices that are suppressed in so many other realms of society'

(Researcher journal notes, 21 July 2024).

Maryrose Puttick @mary_R... · 24/07/2024 ···
Brilliant to see the @hearmeoutuk band at the Leyton Carnival on Sun, amazing musicians with band members from refugee backgrounds. @ICRDwlv are working with HearMeOut on the ArtistsCare project to develop support for musicians working in prisons&immigration detention contexts.

4.1.3 Irene Taylor Trust
Context and Organisational Structure

Irene Taylor Trust (ITT) was established in 1995 in memory of Irene Taylor, whose family had invited Artistic Director to set up a music charity in her memory. Irene Taylor was a woman who was interested in the interconnections of music and prison reform and who had nominated ITT's Artistic Director for a Butler Trust prison award in recognition of her inspiring music work working in the prison sector for 11 years at HMP Wormwood Scrubs. The first programme that ITT's Artistic Director set up for the charity in its first year was the *Music in Prisons* programme, which is now almost in its thirtieth year of operation.

The charity has a Board of Trustees who have overall legal and ethical responsibility for the organisation, and six core staff members. This includes three full-time roles: an Artistic Director who is the head of the organisation, a Creative Programmes Director, and a Projects & Progression Coordinator, as well as three part-time roles working in the areas of fundraising and communication, including a Funding and Communications Director (0.9 FTE role), a Finance and Operations Manager (0.8 FTE

role), and a Business Development (0.4 FTE role). The Artistic Director and the Creative Programmes Director work closely together to bridge the artistic side with the operations, funding, and communications areas.

ITT also has an Advisory Board, made up of current and past participants from ITT's community programmes, *Sounding Out* and *Making Tracks*. The Creative Programmes Director explained the role of this group is not one of legal responsibility, but rather to act as 'the bridge between our work on the ground and the board of trustees'.

The ITT team currently work with 21 freelance artists, four Young Workshop Leaders, and three Sounding Out support musicians. 80% of ITT's freelance artists will have worked in prison settings. There are three main areas of work for ITT with opportunities to work in all three areas open to all artists: prisons; people who have been released from prison; and young people in community settings who have experienced particular challenges. Some of ITT's artists work as musicians in residence in the same prison on an ongoing weekly basis, and some artists are nomadic, working all around the UK. As the Artistic Director explained:

> 'We've got two distinct kind of teams of artists: we've got the project team, they're the ones that would usually work in teams of three, and then we've got the musicians in residence who work solo' (Artistic Director, 7 May 2024).

Programme of work / projects

As referred to above, the *Music in Prisons* project was the first programme of work that was established at the outset of ITT. This comprises week-long creative music making projects, with the aim of each project 'to support a group of prisoners, who rarely get the chance to engage in the arts, to form a band and generate their own original and innovative music' (ITT, 2024). In the first half of 2024, ITT delivered this project in HMP Littlehey (Feb 2024).

The *Musicians in Residence* project is ITT's weekly ongoing prison provision, with one musician having a placement at each prison. This programme of work started in 2013 to run alongside and sustain the impact of the Music in Prisons projects. Currently, ITT have seven Musicians in Residence projects running in HMP Wakefield, HMP Spring Hill, HMP Gartree, HMP Five Wells, HMP Pentonville, HMP Wormwood Scrubs, and HMP Brixton.

The *Making Tracks* project is aimed at young people aged 16-25 who are 'facing barriers from not being in education, employment or training, and/or on a community sentence/prevention programme run by a Youth Offending Service' as a way to 'inspire, engage and empower young people to aspire and achieve

via creating original music…and to guide their future progression' (ITT, 2024). For this work, there is a team of four people with one person doing the administration and supporting the young people with an arts award. In the first half of 2024, ITT ran the *Making Tracks* five-day projects in Bristol (January), London (April), Manchester (May; see Vignette One) and Kent (July 2024).

Vignette Four: An insight into 'Making Tracks Manchester', May 2024

'Walking into the Prince's Trust area of Beehive Mill, I was struck by the brightness of the space and its welcoming atmosphere. I sat in one of the booths at the side and listened to the musicians warming up in the next room and got chatting to one of the parents who had also come for the performance. As well as chatting about the building which had previously been a well-known Manchester club, he told me his son had been involved in the music project and shared that he was feeling excited, nervous and proud in equal measures at the prospect of seeing him perform with the other young people following a challenging time in his son's life.

This was the final performance from the Making Tracks project, where three musicians and a poetry/spoken word artist from Irene Taylor Trust, had worked collaboratively with The Prince's Trust to support young people experiencing challenges to write songs and music about their experiences and feelings.

Once we visitors were called through to the main space, the set-up looked and felt like going to a regular gig. The young people were sitting at different instruments, with one of the ITT musicians playing the drums, one playing the guitar and one on the recording desk. The event was being recorded for a live digital audience. A woman from The Prince's Trust introduced the young people and gave an overview of the Making Tracks project.

As soon as the performance started, the music and the interactions between the young people made it look and sound like a band who'd been playing together for a long time. Upfront were a duo of a young woman singing with a young man, the son of the parent I'd been chatting to, who rapped. The whole thing was so impressive and professional. I was blown away by the fact they had only come together in the space of a week. There was such a joyous buzz in the air and the young people received a great response from the audience who at the end were invited to join the young people, artists, and project staff for refreshments.'

(Researcher journal notes, 24 May 2024) (photo credit: Place North West)

ITT's *Sounding Out* project was developed as a progression route for people who had participated in a *Music in Prisons* project, designed 'to support ex-prisoners to get their lives back on track following release, through a combination of live music performances and paid training placements' (ITT, 2024).

The *Meet Up and Play* sessions run by the *Sounding Out* group ran for half a day once a month in East London from January to June and have continued after the summer 2024.

One of ITT's newest projects, which is currently in a pilot phase, is their *Emerging Artists* project in collaboration with Drake Music. This brings together a selection of four artists from their community programmes *Sounding Out* and *Making Tracks*, over two-years to work with 'professional musicians from ITT and Drake Music to further develop as artists and music facilitators, receiving individual mentoring support, as well as engaging in opportunities to work collaboratively and share learning', and to be supported to 'record, release and perform their own original material' (ITT, 2024).

Lullaby is a project that was originally devised by Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute in the US and ITT initially became involved in it through a commissioning by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to co-deliver the project in Chicago. The UK iteration of the project (see Vignette Five) started in 2017 and is now in its third phase and is a partnership between ITT and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's 'Resound' programme. The project aims to 'strengthen the bond between parent and child through a creative arts activity' with participants invited to write a personal lullaby for their child/ren (ITT, 2024). In the first half of 2024, ITT ran the Lullaby project at two prisons, HMP Hewell and HMP Styal, with each comprising three days spread across four weeks.

Vignette Five: An insight into the 'Lullaby project', HMP Styal, Manchester, June 2024

'Attending this afternoon's Lullaby project performance was such a privilege and one of the most moving musical events I've ever been to. It was at HMP Styal women's prison in the mother and baby unit, and I later learnt that it was the first time that the Irene Taylor Trust musicians had carried out this project in a women's prison. The project was a collaboration between ITT and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO). Two of ITT's artists had visited the women in the weeks leading up to the performance to help them in the process of writing a song for their young child/ren. For many of the women this meant writing about children who they were currently separated from. Musicians at the RPO had then composed a piece of music for each of the women's songs, to be performed for their children and invited family members.

After explaining the process of the Lullaby project to the audience, Sara Lee (ITT's Artistic Director) introduced each of the women in turn and the inspiration for their song before each was performed. Some of the women sang the lullaby themselves, whilst for others a musician from the RPO sang it on their behalf. It's safe to say everyone in the room was in tears at some point of the hour's performance, that is all but the babies and children who appeared mesmerised seeing their mothers up in front of them and by the beautiful sounds.'

(Researcher journal notes – 12 June 2024)

(Photo credit: Manchester Evening News).

For over ten years ITT have also collaborated in a variety of special one-off projects and ongoing projects in Chicago, US. This work started off with the Artistic Director and one of the original ITT musicians invited to carry out some consultancy work there with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and projects connected to juvenile detention, which the Artistic Director explained they continue to do:

> 'That's an important part of our work actually, because I do believe another thing that we should all be doing is sharing our expertise with others' (Artistic Director, 7 May 2024).

This was followed by ITT's collaboration in the *Lullaby Project* with teenage parents. Since 2017, ITT have been working there on another songwriting project started by cellist Yo Yo Ma, called *Notes for Peace*, with a focus on the extensive gun violence situation in Chicago. In March 2024 ITT worked on this project for three weeks and are now there again in October 2024 and, for the past three years, have incorporated a training element into the project for young musicians.

In summary of the expansion of the ITT's programme of work and underpinning principles, and the entirety of the organisation's work as a whole, the Artistic Director shared:

> 'It'll be 30 years of the organisation next year and it's developed from an organisation that was just working in the prison system to one which kind of completes the circle I suppose: working with people when they're released from prison, working with young people in challenging circumstances, and working with other marginalised groups. The centre of the work is always about creating new music and we love partnership because we feel that it adds something to the offer we can give to the people we're working with. So, we're always seeking out other musical partnerships or other artistic partnerships, because it's great to learn from other artists and also to make sure that the offer we're able to give the people we work with is consistently high' (Artistic Director, 7 May 2024).

4.2 Thematic findings

4.2.1 Understandings of 'artists' care': sector and organisational

The thematic analysis brought to the fore important understandings of, and learning about, artists' care in terms of the structure of the organisations, their operationalisation, and the ways in which their values were embedded and realised in practice by staff and artists. Shared themes across all three organisations are presented in Table One, including: existing training and development; organisational challenges; respectful remuneration; and organisational processes. This is followed with a three-part summary to draw out some of the details of the findings that were interwoven across all three organisations, as well as two vignettes to give capture insights into the organisations' training and development offerings.

Table One: Shared thematic findings across the three organisations: sector and organisational

Existing training and development:	
•Artists' feedback	•Multi-function meetings
•Recruitment and induction	•External trainers
•Peer support (directed and non-directed)	•In-project support
Organisation challenges:	
•Impact of prison / immigration detention sector	•Funding continuity
Respectful remuneration:	
•Appropriate payment	•Non-financial remuneration
Organisation processes:	
•Policies and procedures	•Preparations for projects
•Strategy and vision	

Summary: organisational challenges

The organisations recognised the impact of both the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. They understood the pressures on their artists to have to take on more freelance work outside of the organisation, compounded the fact that the organisations were themselves operating under increasingly constrained funding capacity so did not have as much regular work to offer. They identified challenges with this in terms of artists' care, such as:

- communication difficulties in getting feedback from the artists outside of projects, such as their ideas on the strategic direction of the organisation;
- how it could hinder their artists' knowledge of what support mechanisms were available to them through the organisation, and:
- potential impacts upon team cohesion.

Added to these factors, constraints in the wider prison and immigration sectors were also highlighted as potentially heightening the vulnerabilities of the participants they work with, which in-turn had an impact on artists' care:

> 'When we work in prisons, there's a lot more kind of asks and expectations on our musicians to do stuff that shouldn't really be done by us…and that's I'm sure because of them [prisons] being stretched and them not having [enough] resources, but then if the expectations are higher and the people they're working with are more vulnerable, the chance of burnout for our musicians is going to be higher…' (Creative Programmes Director - ITT, 8 May 2024).

The three organisations recognised and highly respected the specialist skills of their artists for working in such complex settings and wanted this to be acknowledged within the arts sector more widely to ensure that organisations could respectfully remunerate their artists in accordance with the contexts they were working in.

> 'There's not enough budget to pay people adequately for the work that they're doing. That happens, I guess, because going into those settings and being able to work creatively within those settings is a particular skill that has to be developed over time, and I think that comes to the next issue, which is about the understanding of the role…there's a lack of understanding of how it's all of your musical and creative talents and skills, but also combined with a whole plethora of other skills that are needed to be in in those settings like patience, compassion, flexibility, intuition….you know all of these things that make you a good facilitator in that space and not necessarily just a good musician' (interim Programme and Evaluation Manager – HMO, 8 May 2024).

> 'Facilitators are amazing at what they do. They work in really difficult circumstances…they've got these incredible skills that are not just their musical skills and their gamelan skills, but they're able

effectively facilitate sessions, to take creative risks. That's really special. And we're looking at their freelance rates as well…' (Head of Delivery - GV, 1 May 2024).

Indeed, respectful remuneration was a key theme across all the organisations, with organisations already offering, or working towards, payment for artists to attend meetings and supervision sessions. Each of the organisations' established artists were a key part of their support processes, with all using different forms of mentoring and communication with existing artists to support their newer artists, and recognition of this expertise expressed with additional payment for lead artists by two of the organisations.

Summary: organisational processes and commitments to artists' care

All three organisations demonstrated a strong commitment to the care of their artists, viewing this as an integral part of their organisational values and operationalisation, with artists' care brought to the fore in multiple forms. HMO discussed the way they were on a journey with their artists' care, having only brought their artists in-house within the last five years. For all three organisations, artists' care includes their work on a larger scale to address gaps in the diversification of the art sector's workforce, as well as for one organisation a priority in addressing gender imbalance in the community arts prison sector. For all, artists' care also included add-on care support, such as external supervisions, as well as in-house processes such as role modelling, mentoring, and wide forms of peer learning. In terms of the former aspect, all organisations offer different forms of external individual or collective supervision. For GV this was work-based counselling as a reflective practice provision, for ITT this comprised drama therapists working in individual or group clinical supervision formats, and for HMO this included an organisation of psychotherapists that specialised in trauma-informed practice which was offered to staff and artists as a form of group supervision.

Importantly, all three organisations, in different ways, referred to how their approach to artists care was interconnected with the care of their staff and participants as one integrated cycle, including day-to-day practice, leadership and communication models, and specialist external care provision:

> 'Artists' care is about the whole relationship...it's the way you do everything with them [artists], how you pay them, how you brief them, how you involve them in planning the work and so that it's not a line on a budget, it's the whole kind of way you operate and so this really interests me as a way of taking stock of that and looking at how we can improve... it should just be holistic, and as part of whatever anybody does...it should just be a part of what we do' (Director- HMO, 9 May 2024).

> 'I want to bring the best out in people and also to help support the leaders of the future. We want good rounded, solid human beings that understand all the intricacies of our organisation. And you need emotional intelligence doing this work as well because of the different levels of

communications you have with people, if you're talking to a governor, another organisation…or if you're talking to a participant or a teammate or whoever….you've got to know how to do that properly' (Artistic Director – ITT, 7 May 2024).

An important part of this care cycle is supporting future artists to develop. In differing ways, all three organisations were working to support former participants to develop as artists and/or with wider work skills, such as ITT's 'Emerging Artist' programme for young people, GV's involvement of some of their former participants in their programme delivery, or HMO's programme of work based on supporting their two bands to become professional recording artists, the members of which had been, or were currently, living in detention centres or hotels. Difficulties with funding continuity made it challenging for the organisations to maintain opportunities for the future workforce:

'We make space for those things to happen when they can [work placements]...I'd love to offer more opportunities to more people. But financially it's really hard. We don't have that kind of buffer for cash and it never sits with me really well to ask people to do stuff for nothing.... but I do think you know that artists should be paid…compensated well for the work that they do.' (Artistic Director- ITT, 7 May 2024).

Effective communication was also a key part of artists' care. All the organisations maintain regular project-specific internal communication with the artists, with GV having a unique role of a Facilitator Representative (FREP) acting as an intermediary channel of communication between the artists and the staff and board of trustees. For the two prison-based organisations, GV and ITT, this included logistical preparations pre-project, regular telephone check-ins during week-long projects, and forms of reflective practice post-project. For HMO, this comprised an 'artists subgroup' format with a lead artist and sessional artists wrapped around the 7-week blocks of hotel provision, including group meetings with the Programme and Evaluation Manager before and after projects, and an aftercare process where artist subgroups feedback and reflect together. In this way the HMO artist subgroup meetings have become a loose form of group supervision.

Summary: organisations' training and development opportunities

As well as specialised mandatory training, such as safeguarding training that was specific to the contexts of prisons or immigration, all three organisations also have annual or bi-annual development days that bring together all the staff and artists, usually with an externally sourced training aspect as part of it. This was viewed by all organisations as an important form of team cohesion and of sharing challenges and good practice in response to current contextual issues from their work. Vignette Six gives an insight into the annual staff and artist development day of GV, in which a new initiative around supporting artists' and staff neuro-divergences was introduced.

Vignette Six: an insight into the Good Vibrations staff development day – April 2024

'As I arrived at the Cavendish Arms pub in Stockwell, London on a cold April morning, I was greeting warmly by a group of people sitting outside and offered a hot drink. As well as it being my own first in-person meeting with the GV staff and artists, it was also the first time the new CEO had met lots of the artists. It was also the first time that one of the newer staff members and one of the artists had met the rest of the GV community in person: so, I soon realised that it was a big day for everyone.

After introductions we all went inside where chairs had been set up in a circle in the back 'ballroom' of the quirky pub where two of the artists worked and lived above. First, the CEO got us doing an ice-breaker activity. This was followed by a break-out session where small groups spread out around the pub and discussed the question of 'How would you like to see GV grow?' and when the group came back together and fed back, she shared her own vision for the growth of GV, underpinned by a 'permaculture' approach to expand and grow in the right areas where the organisation is already working best and spoke about the importance of her having a conversation with each of the facilitators individually as part of this process.

After lunch, the Training and Development Manager, led us through a practical 2-hour neurodiversity workshop which responded to feedback and requests from artists he had gathered in advance of the day. Based on the responses of 14 members of staff, he shared that at least 50% of GV staff identified as being neurodivergent, including autism, dyslexia, ADHD, and dyspraxia. Some of the artists had shared in advance their experiences, including some barriers, in working with people in prisons and hospitals who had different neurodivergences. As part of the workshop, he then shared with the group an editable Google spreadsheet, which he had named 'an access needs rider' which had the purpose of making working together (and during prison projects, living together) easier and more inclusive.

The final part of the day was an informal support process. It was suggested that the artists might want to break up into smaller groups, but they decided that they wanted to do it as a whole group. Some artists shared concerns or practice-based challenges: everyone listened, and it became a group support session. As an outsider in the group, it was clear how that the artists and staff were keen to support one another and felt comfortable speaking out in the group.'

(Research field notes, 17 April 2024) (Photo credit: Mono-max Ltd, 2024)

As well as their annual and bi-annual events, the organisations occasionally offered one-off training and development opportunities at different times of the year. For example, ITT's Creative Programmes Director in September 2024, gave an update on the Diversity Equality and Inclusion work the organisation was about to start with a consultant which would include some training that would be open to all staff. The first workshop was for the Trustees and Advisory Group members, with a focus on

Inclusive Governance, and the second and third workshops were open to all staff, including the artists. Workshop Two focused on 'Equitable Practices and Empowerment' and Workshop Three on 'Building and Embedding Anti-Racist and Anti-Oppressive Practices' (see Vignette Seven).

Vignette Seven: An insight in the 'Anti-Oppressive, Anti-Racism' online training, October 2024

'This was a 2-hour online training session run by Sterling Insights Consultancy, the third in a series of training programmes, with this one titled 'Building and Embedding Anti-Racist and Anti-Oppressive Practices'. There were 17 ITT attendees, including both core staff and artists. The session explored meanings and applications of/for being anti-racist and understandings of systemic discrimination, using presenters' content, videos, book references, key historical events and important reports to stimulate further reading beyond the workshop and with an overall impetus on being active and courageous in applying anti-racist practices.

It was an interactive session with us being split into breakout rooms at two points of the workshop, with discussion in the small groups guided by a key question, including: 'why is important for those with privilege, especially white people, to use their voice to advocate for vulnerable groups like those impacted by the criminal justice system?' and 'what connections can you make between these events [referring to content on racism in US and UK contexts] and the overrepresentations of Black and other people of colour in UK prisons?' Towards the end we were invited to input onto an interactive Menti board reflections on the question, 'why do you think the criminal legal system is still racist?'

At the end everyone in the group shared their key takeaways and it was clear that the training had been thought-provoking, challenging, and useful for people, with people sharing how they will now go away and use it in their work practice and everyday lives'.

(Researcher journal notes, 16 October 2024) (photo credit: Mark König)

4.2.2 Understandings of 'artists' care': artists and staff

The thematic analysis revealed important understandings of, and learning about, artists' care in terms of the staff and artists' day-to-day work practices and the impacts of wider societal and sector issues on their work. Shared themes across all three organisations are presented in Table Two, including: the positives and challenges of being a freelance artist; artists' processes; and the wellbeing practices of staff and artists, including their engagement with internal and external support. This is followed with a three-part summary to draw out some of the details of the findings that were interwoven across all three organisations.

Table Two: Shared thematic findings across the three organisations: artists and staff

Being a freelancer:	
•Juggling work	•Financial commitments
•Confidence in approach	•Impact on health
•Working beyond immediate job	•Drawing on other professional experience
Challenges for artists:	
•Pandemic	•Cost-of-living crises
Artists' processes:	
•Preparation for projects (logistical / emotional / pedagogical)	•Self-support
Wellbeing:	
•External provision	•Internal provision
•Peer support	•Challenges of working with particular participants

Summary: the joys and challenges of being a freelance artist

Artists across all three organisations shared positives and challenges that came with being a freelance artist. Artists across the organisations shared benefits in terms of the flexibility the freelance world gave them to work around their other commitments such as childcare or, for many, in managing commitments from their own performing career. For some artists they saw this type of short-term projects as supporting aspects of their neurodivergences:

> 'Short bursts of projects and different things, and work changing and being different and me adapting actually really work to my strengths and my personality….it works quite well, like every week, kind of having something different to do' (Artist interview).

Another shared commonality was the passion connected to working for the three organisations specifically, where they could see the social impact of the work, the mental health and wellbeing benefits of community music programmes, and the ways in which such work breaks down hierarchies and gives people who are excluded from some sections of society opportunities to achieve and build confidence both socially and musically:

> 'I see my work in prisons as being about breaking down hierarchies of who can achieve' (Artist interview).

> '…many of the group struggle with lack of self-confidence, mental health issues, depression…also just a sense of feeling a bit lost…. through the programme I love seeing the group increase in confidence socially as well as musically' (Artist diary, May 2024).

More generally, a strong sense of enthusiasm also came across from being offered work in multiple and diverse music-based projects that ignited the artists' interest and passions, combined with aligning to their social values:

> 'I love working in this environment. I love working, doing anything to do with music… and I think the thing about [name of organisation in this project] is that the ethos is so fitting with my beliefs and it's why I'm so happy to have taken on this work' (Artist interview).

> 'I think the thing personally that I struggle with the most is saying no because I want to do it all. I love all the work. I love all the projects, but sometimes I can be quite prone to overdoing it and then having little bits of burn out' (Artist interview).

As highlighted in the second quote above, the positives of accepting work were sometimes juxtaposed with taking on too much work and experiencing physical consequences such as burnout: an aspect shared by artists across all three organisations. Artists across all organisations also shared pressures which led them to taking on a large amount of work, such as around the sporadic temporal nature of freelance work, with less project-based work at certain times of the year, such as the summer months, which meant they had to frontload their work to accommodate this financially. This was set within a financial context of the post-pandemic combined with the current cost-of-living crisis: the latter referred to across all three organisations. For some artists, frontloading work was also part of their special preparations for taking holidays which they viewed as 'unpaid leave'. Unpaid aspects of the work were similarly shared in relation to the extensive preparation time inherent in this type of work, an aspect which one artist saw as a sector-wide issue:

> 'I think everybody knows the problem is a sector industry problem because all the people also the directors, the programme staff, they all work more than the work they are paid for…everyone is

working more…It's just a chain of bad practice of thinking that because we're doing music, we should be passionate and go the extra mile' (Artist interview).

In further relation to sector-wide issues, artists alluded to a culture of fear in the freelance world about saying no to work due to anxieties of not being asked back for repeat work. Whilst this was an aspect shared by both newer artists as well as those with more established practice in community music projects, there was an indication that this fear was stronger for those who were either newer to their practice, or younger artists, and indications that autonomy in decision-making deepened as people became more familiar with the nature of the freelance world. For example, artists from two of the organisations shared differences in how they now view freelance work compared to when they were younger and cited examples of what they inferred to as invisible forms exploitation in the sector, such as the amount of pressure they used to put on themselves, and their inability to set boundaries: 'working until 4:00am' and 'there was an awful lot of just assuming if I wasn't running myself into the ground, I wasn't working hard enough' (Artist interview).

In light of the sector, organisational, and personal contexts of the artists, overall, they summarised that their decision-making processes for taking on work was rooted within the following main factors: interest in the work; its fit around childcare and other commitments; and financial necessity. Two artists summarised their decision-making as follows:

> 'Whether I have either developed personal relationship with the people, or if I believe in the project, whether it's with some interesting people, the environment and what I can bring to it….' (Artist interview).

> 'There's the triangle, when you're offered work- it has to fulfil two of the three things….'income', 'enjoyment', 'exposure/development'' (Artist interview).

Summary: the challenges that come from being an artist in complex settings

In terms of sector-wide challenges for artists working in complex settings, for the artists working in the two prison-based music organisations, ITT and GV, such challenges included the impact of financial constraints in prisons, high staff turnover which meant there was less understandings of the value of their work, less support for recruitment for the programmes, and more responsibilities placed on artists outside of their music practice, such as to be keyholders without a member of security in the room.

> 'Every contact we have in the prisons, they're all overworked -they're doing the job of like three people and you know, it's a running joke… You know they have the budget to bring us in for a week, but not year-round…And that to me is just tragic… And it's all down to the head governor, whether they believe in creative therapies to help people and a lot of the ones that are supportive of what we do, get moved on' (Artist interview).

'The young offenders work has been quite tricky recently, difficulties with lots of children turning up and not being able to do much for a few weeks…it's that classic thing in prison work of us coming to do our thing but then we can't organise it because of issues in the prison…so you need that person inside the prison who gets the work and helps organise it…it's hard to find those people now, they are very busy and their shifts change, which makes it challenging…' (Artist diary, May 2024).

Macro, societal-level challenges impacting the work of the artists working in immigration-based settings were particularly raised in relation to the UK Government's policies around immigration. For the artists at HMO, this was often due to the complicated logistics of supporting people who are experiencing vulnerabilities because of the immigration system, such as connected to them living in a hotel, or having to attend Home Office appointments, or doing exploitative shift work. Challenges also arose in relation to artists' dealing with the 'violent environment' of detention centres as well as the after-effects of violent public behaviour following the UK riots in the summer 2024, during the time of the research: the latter having a heightened resonance for the HMO artists as they all had personal and/or intergenerational lived experience of immigration.

Artists across all three organisations expressed aspects of secondary or vicarious trauma arising from the vulnerable situations of the people they were working with. For some this was connected to wider freelance work outside of the three organisations, particularly in relation to children and young people. In connection with the three organisations, artists' interactions with people's trauma manifested in different ways, including: sharing their concerns around the exacerbated mental health impacts on people in prison who were already mentally unwell; or sharing concerns about what happens to the children and families once they get moved on from the so-called 'asylum hotels' with no notice; or sharing feelings of sadness when working with bereaved families who had lost family members to gun crime; or their challenging of the labelling of people placed in detention centres as 'criminals'; or sharing their contrasting feelings in mentally processing the 'beautiful musical connections' they had made with people in particular categories of prisons, such as sex-offenders prisons which one artist in their interview described as 'deep and challenging work psychologically'.

Given the complexities of their work for the three organisations, all artists shared different forms of preparation, with many also sharing how they prepared for their wider freelance work as a comparison. Forms of preparation included logistical, emotional, and pedagogical aspects. For artists working in the two prison-based settings, some shared their preparation in terms of tangible or metaphorical boundaries:

'I still need to keep those boundaries, so often it's things like this that I'll wear, I call it protective clothing, but I'll optimise quite thick, masculine [clothing]…trying to make myself feel kind of covered and safe….' (Artist interview).

'I've noticed I do a mental preparation in terms of setting my boundaries, e.g. imagining putting on a suit of armour, or being surrounded by a golden light...similar to what I do when I go into a prison or a secure setting for the first time: I need to set boundaries and not bring my vulnerabilities in' (Artist diary May 2024).

For artists working with children, both for the organisations and outside of the three organisations, there was a strong focus on logistical and pedagogical aspects:

'It's nice when you recognise familiar faces and pick up from previous weekends and say, 'oh, I know that you can dance or draw beautifully'…and some of those children are so talented, it's beyond belief… I get so emotional…They have these little memorabilia of the work they've done themselves [in the sessions] and that helps ease their hardship, so that's really important' (Artist interview).

'I have been mindful of the children with additional needs, for example putting them in dance/movement groups rather than a lyric writing group if language is difficult for them' (Artist diary, June 2024).

Summary: staff and artists' wellbeing and engagement with support

Overall, there was an overriding sense that the artists across the three organisations recognised the organisations' concern with, and commitment to their care, sharing insights in terms of feelings of general safety, specific care initiatives, as well a general feeling of the approachability of staff members and sense of being part of a bigger-whole:

'I feel like [organisation name] values the safety and welfare of the facilitators over completing the project and getting the outcome' (Artist interview).

'It has been a difficult few weeks for me personally as a very close friend/colleague died of this is the most profound experience of grief I have experienced...The project managers and director for [organisation name] have checked in with me and I haven't yet taken advantage of their offer of a funded yoga/massage session per block but will do...' (Artist diary, July 2024).

'...Once you know the people running it [organisation name], then you see that level of space for emotions to be shared and to be vulnerable' (Artist interview).

'The good thing is you've got that feeling of being part of the network - of a bigger thing that's going on…' (Artist interview).

In terms of engagement with forms of support, a connection across all three organisations was the importance of peer support in formal and informal capacities. For artists in the two prison-based organisations which had week-long projects, this was especially important given the co-habitation set-up which accompanied the nature of this work. Living together for a week gave artists across the two organisations a chance to 'decompress' after being in prison, and to relax over dinner in the evening. For artists across all three organisations the co-facilitation model was important with individual facilitators negotiating distinct roles within the spaces, whether this to be to focus on accreditation aspects (GV), to manage behaviour of the children in the hotels (HMO), or to focus on recording the participants' creations (all three organisations). Artists also shared the importance of peer support in terms of a shared empathy during periods of an intense workload, as well as learning from peers, either in a formal mentoring capacity or informally such as through the overall co-facilitation in-the-moment within the settings:

> 'it's one of the reasons that I sort of enjoy working for them [organisation name], is that it puts you in a in a position where you're working with peers and there's a flow of energy, there's discussion, there's reflection, and it's very playful…and that's great that you can rely on the experience and the integrity of the people that you're working with…' (Artist interview).

All of the staff members had utilised the organisation's external supervision support and shared different reasons for accessing this, including supporting them in their leadership role during challenging times in the organisation or the sector, or as an extra support when safeguarding issues arose in the settings which they found hard to switch off from. Artists across all three organisations also engaged to different extents with either the organisational external supervision individual or group support, although on the whole, there was a preference for self-organised forms of therapy which came in different forms, including psychotherapy, retreats, group therapy, and learning from plant medicine healing approaches. All artists and staff members also shared wider forms of self-care practices, such as exercise, nature, and social activities that were important to them.

4.3 Discussion of findings in relation to the Rapid Evidence Assessment

There is clear evidence throughout the findings of supervision activities in each of the nine areas of the Supervision Matrix that emerged from the Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA). The artists sought care from multiple sources and combined self-management with peer support and support from a variety of professional services. Sometimes these professional services were provided by the organisations, but we found evidence that as part of self-management processes, artists self-refer to different types of counselling, therapy and supervision as their needs required. The co-facilitation model adopted by all

organisations offers a significant opportunity for peer support as professional development and mentoring (formative), to establish and maintain standards of practice (normative) and for emotional coping (restorative). Often, these three were constructed and consolidated within reflective conversations between staff during projects, and points to not only the presence of each function of supervision within those reflective conversations, but, in agreement with the REA, that they are inter-related. On further interrogation of the detailed thematic analysis, there are traces of evidence that development within these three areas might be symbiotic – one cannot develop without the other. This needs to be tested in further research.

Applying the outcomes of the REA to the findings of this project further strengthens the argument that a holistic approach to care does support quality of delivery and sustainable careers. The organisations were committed to supporting their staff emotionally, socially and professionally and a recognition of the highly specialised skillset needed to work in such contexts drove approaches to recruitment and ongoing training underpinned by the fundamental necessity to keep their staff well. Furthermore, we found evidence that freelance musicians accessed different types of support to enable them to cope emotionally with the demands of both the challenging contexts that they worked in and freelance work in general in order to ensure that they could maintain their freelance work. Bringing these together, we arrive at the suggestion that emotional coping is the linking factor between an organisation's ability to provide a high-quality service delivered by a skilled and sustainable workforce and the individual personal and professional development needed to fulfil that organisational need (figure 2).

Figure Two: the place of emotional coping in organisational needs and individual development
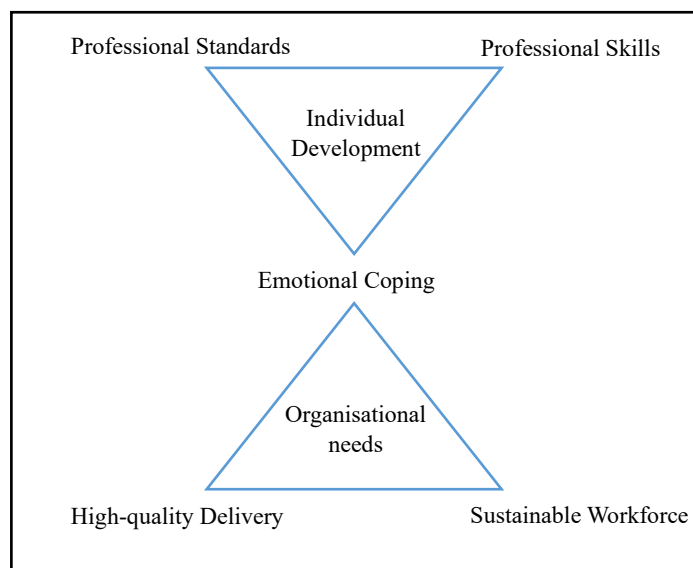
What is striking are the efforts that the organisations go to so that care in all its forms – formative, normative and restorative, is embedded in their structures and is a fundamental part of their operational values, and this is where this study differs from those analysed as part of the REA. Professional isolation was found as a common theme amongst the studies reviewed, articulated by Brown et al. (2019) as the feeling amongst practitioners that 'we are out here alone'. Whereas each organisation differs in many ways, the community of practice both within and between organisations provides a network of support for those who work with and for the organisations. Our experience as researchers co-creating this study with the organisational leaders suggests that this extends to the leadership as much as it does to the permanent and freelance staff they work with. Therefore, not only does this project show evidence that staff are accessing each of the nine sections of the Supervision Matrix, the organisational structures enable this access to take place, whether formally through planned events, implicitly through the project models, or informally through the communities that the organisations create.

This is not without its challenges. Research into the coping mechanisms of health and social care practitioners across the employed and agency/freelance workforce conducted by Gillen et al. (2022) highlights the need for policy to encapsulate the support needs. At present, the organisations do their best to ensure the highest level of care that they can offer their staff is given whilst navigating the challenges of the sectors that they are nested within. Organisational policy can only go so far to provide the conditions for Artists' Care needed to ensure quality provision and a stable, sustainable workforce, and we found evidence that the nature of charitable organisations as reliant on funding makes the provision of Artists' Care vulnerable to external forces beyond the control of the organisations. This reinforces the need for the next stages of the research to understand how those vulnerabilities can be mitigated and, ultimately, for the research to inform policy decisions relating to how organisations are funded, what they are funded for, and that funding provides organisations with the means to provide Artists' Care programmes which, in turn, will ensure that the intentions behind the funding can be fully realised (i.e. high-quality, equitable arts-based projects for hard to reach people delivered by a skilled workforce)

To this end, we present a set of principles for Artists' Care arising from the current study, and outline the next stages of research that will test these principles and develop models of practice that can act as benchmarks for sector funding of Artists' Care.

5.0   Principles for Artists' Care

Table Three: Artists' Care principles coming out of the project / thinking ahead to Artists' Care framework

•Artists' care must not be a 'tick box' exercise: need to work towards a cultural shift across the whole arts sector, and with this financially recognising the importance of this as an integral budget line.
•Arts sector needs to support arts organisations to work towards a diversification in the sector workforce as a way to address intersectional inequalities.
•Artists' care needs to recognise, and support, the specialist empathetic and facilitation skills as well as musical skills needed to be a community arts facilitator in complex settings.
•Artists' care is a connected cycle and therefore also means staff care, trustees care, participants' care and must underpin the whole professional approach, including all the working relationships and operations of an organisation.
•Artists' care must recognise that there is no 'typical freelance artist' and cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach.
•A creative approach to artists' care is needed, in which organisations consider how care practices can develop in the context of a challenging funding environment.

6.0   Conclusion

Building on the REA (Henley, Caulfield, and Cole, under review), the ethnographies undertaken in this stage of the research sought to understand how each of the three partner organisations work. This included a focus on leadership and management, administrative structures, organisation, and how each organisation works with both employed and freelance professionals. The ethnographic studies comprised a qualitative methodology, including semi-structured interviews, observations, and participant diaries.

As well as revealing the organisational structures that enable Artists' Care, along with the external forces that pose organisational challenges in sustaining supervision activities, the studies have revealed an insight into the lived experience of freelance musicians. Many of those involved in this research work in multiple contexts, and the research documents experiences beyond work for the three organisations in this study. This raises considerations of capacity: in terms of the capacity of the artists to take up what is on offer in terms of care; and the capacity of the organisations to provide the support, combined with considerations around what can be considered as the bare minimum for support.

Evidence is shown of the power of peer learning and network building ways to reduce isolation and anxiety, raising questions of how both can be supported further. Additionally, the research showed the ways that the supervision provided by organisations and sourced by the individuals supports work across multiple contexts. Furthermore, there is evidence that freelance musicians and organisational staff draw personal resources from other work, be it performance, education or community music.

Although not prominent in the research, other dimensions of lived experience in terms of shared experiences between artists and those the artists are working with warrants some thought, for example artists who have had lived experience of immigration detention or the criminal justice system. This is an important additional consideration in terms of the amount of organisational care support that artists may need; potentially added in an additional layer of risk and complexity in providing support. The ethnographies brought to the fore the values of having lived experience artists in the sector, and the shift in this workforce having mostly come from solely the professional sector previously. As such, an important further consideration for organisations and the wider arts sector is to nurture and open up the sector further to support artists with diverse forms of lived experience.

This research provides a snapshot of a web of practice across multiple funded educational and arts contexts and that the artists' care provided by the organisations potentially impacts the quality of work far beyond the organisation itself. The implication of this is that there is potentially a significant added value for funded artists' care provision that reaches other funded and non-funded work across the arts

and cultural sector. Furthermore, this may model how other sectors reliant on a freelance or agency workforce may support the emotional coping of practitioners through personal and professional development. This would warrant further research.

In the next stage of the project (for which we are currently seeking funding), building directly on the REA and ethnographic research, three bespoke Artists' Care programmes will be designed, one for each organisation, that will be tested in a large-scale action research study. The study will co-produce in-depth research to understand the different ways of supporting artists and frontline staff in each of the three different organisational structures. A process and impact evaluation of each Artists' Care programme will be carried out and we will develop models of practice as well as benchmarks for sector funders that will support them in deciding how best to support organisations. The latter stages of the Artists' Care project will involve working with organisations and funders to embed the outcomes of the research into the policies and practices of the sector.

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