

A close-up photograph of two young women. The woman on the right has dark hair tied in a bun and is wearing a dark jacket over a grey hoodie. She is smiling and looking down at the other woman. The woman on the left has dark hair and is wearing a black quilted jacket over a white shirt. She is also smiling and looking up at the first woman. The background is blurred, showing a red garment and a light-colored wall.

CLEAN BREAK

Clean Break's Education Programme Theory of Change and Literature Review April 2017

"This is the most incredible, life-changing experience. To feel inspired for the first time in a very long time. To feel included, to feel important and feel listened to – it all happened at the same time." Student 2016



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Registered Company Number **2690758**
Registered Charity Number **1017560**

Acknowledgements

This Theory of Change has been developed over a number of years through a process of workshops and discussion with staff, feedback from women who participate in the programme, and input from our Trustees, external consultants and specialists in this field.

Particular thanks are owed to **Dr Nina Burrowes** (independent) and **James Noble** (New Philanthropy Capital) for sharing their expertise and getting us started on this journey in 2013 and to **Dr Kate Paradine** (former Trustee) for her guidance. Also huge thanks to **Professor Sarah Colvin** and **Dr Kim Richmond** for their comprehensive literature review which adds depth and rich evidence to our theory base.

All photographs used are by Tracey Anderson.

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Introduction

This Theory of Change has come about through a desire for us to better understand and articulate our work and demonstrate a clear link between the activities we do and the outcomes and impact we aim to achieve.

Alongside this internal driver, there has been an increased expectation from our funders and external stakeholders that we have a clear theory of change underpinning our work.

“A theory of change shows a charity’s path from needs to activities to outcomes to impact. It describes the change you want to make and the steps involved in making that change happen. Theories of change also depict the assumptions that lie behind your reasoning, and where possible, these assumptions are backed up by evidence.”

Theory of Change: The Beginning of Making a Difference, Angela Kail and Tris Lumley, April 2012, NPC

The intended benefits of our theory of change are:

- It is a way to quickly communicate about our work.

- It helps determine what evidence Clean Break should collect to test what we do.
- It highlights the most important activities and aims, so we can assess our strengths and weaknesses.
- Ultimately it will be possible to construct an evidence-based “story” about whether we have made a difference - and what lessons we have learnt.

The process of analysing our activities and identifying the intermediate outcomes has been hugely valuable. It has also been a challenging process as we have attempted to get to a point where it feels ‘finished’. This is because our work is constantly evolving – we have changed our activities in response to changes in need as well as in response to the economic climate and our ability to resource our work.

Whilst key features of our work will remain (women-only, theatre-based, trauma-informed, one-to-one support, long-term engagement – see literature review on page 11 for more detail), we are committed to reviewing and evolving our work. We will continue to examine and improve our Theory of Change, involving the women and other stakeholders in this process.

As such, it is important to view this document as one which articulates our understanding of what we do and how we measure our success at this moment in time. Our work will not stand still.

Anna Herrmann
Head of Education
April 2017

Clean Break

Clean Break is a producing theatre company founded in 1979 by two women in HMP Askham Grange. Through the theatre we make we aim to shine a light on injustice faced by women in the criminal justice system and to enable women themselves to challenge oppression and achieve more fulfilling and creative lives. Our work takes place in theatres, women's prisons, community settings and our London studios, where we provide holistic and joined up learning and support for the women we work with. This Theory of Change focuses on the education programme that we have been delivering over the past two decades.



Clean Break's Education Programme: what do we do?

Clean Break's education programme aims to improve the life chances of women with experience of the criminal justice system and women at risk of

offending due to drug/alcohol use and mental health needs.

We strive to achieve this through offering an annual programme of theatre-based education, personal

development and holistic support in a safe women-only space. Courses have an average of 12-15 learners, led by an experienced tutor, with two volunteers to support the women's learning. Courses vary in length from eight half day sessions to twelve weeks (two days per week) across a term. Some courses are accredited by Open College Network London at Entry Level 3, Levels 1 and 2 (and AQA for literacy) and others are awarded certificates internally or via the partnership organisations who deliver the courses with us.

Strong partnerships have been developed over a number of years, including with City and Islington College, Camden Adult and Community Learning, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, Rose Bruford College, The Place, London College of Fashion, London College of Communications and many more. Partners deliver courses in-kind and some offer progression pathways for our students, which now include bursary places for a small number of women at the end of each course.

Women can study two courses per term, plus access an emotional health and wellbeing group, and literacy and IT classes. Whilst studying, there are

also regular theatre trips, a termly student forum, a student-led newsletter, and artist studios, both for current students and former students to have access to inspirational and diverse female theatre makers, writers and directors. Women who complete courses are also eligible to take part in our Stage Works volunteering scheme and be matched with host organisations to gain employability skills, experience, confidence and networks in the work place. There are two graduation ceremonies per academic year, where we celebrate the women's achievements as a community and award certificates.

"I found Clean Break to be like an article of clothing given to me by my big sister, it was comfortable, warm and I grew into it."
Making Choices student 2016

Over the years, we have learnt that it is vitally important to maintain clear and consistent boundaries, and that



adhering to these supports everyone's learning. As such, we have produced guidance on a number of important themes including equality and diversity, time-keeping, alcohol and drugs, working with personal material, confidentiality, safeguarding and boundaries. Women are introduced to these early on in their study with us, and all staff, tutors and volunteers are expected to work within these parameters.

"I am very grateful for the Drugs Policy here, as someone who is in recovery it's very important to me." Introduction to Drama student 2016

We also have a specialist offer for young women 17-25 years old, Brazen, which enables us to better meet their distinct needs. Young women can take part in accredited personal development and theatre making courses and progress on to the adult programme or gain support to find ways back into education, further training or employment.

Alongside courses, women can access one-to-one support. This includes both emotional and practical support eg. help with court appearances, custody battles, benefit appeals. The student support

team has an open door policy and, although we ask women to book appointments, there will usually be a member of the team available to speak to a woman if her need is urgent. The team is trained in delivering a trauma-informed service, and we are currently undertaking an audit across the organisation to assess the trauma-informed nature of all our provision. We also provide travel expenses for women to attend daily, offer affordable childcare support and provide a hot lunch and tea/coffee throughout the day. Crucially we bring in and make referrals to other agencies to offer advice, workshops and surgeries in areas such as housing, debt, domestic violence and mental health and wellbeing. Our partners for the support element of our work currently include Women in Prison, Solace Women's Aid, St Giles Trust, Mary Ward Legal Centre and Voiceability. We also run weekly art therapy and yoga sessions for a small number of women and are able to give out food vouchers through The Trussell Trust.

"I really enjoy my time at Clean Break and the support system in one of the longest years of my life - losing custody of my daughter and being in prison. Clean Break has helped me so much." Performance student 2016

The education programme has received funding over the years from a range of supportive grant-making trusts and charitable foundations alongside some statutory funding. Larger grants previously from European Social Fund, the London Development Agency, London Borough of Camden, and more recently from The Big Lottery have secured our annual offer over the last two decades.

“I have felt supported, empowered and learnt I can sparkle on my darkest days.” Brazen student 2016

Who do we work with?

Clean Break’s education programme is open to all women aged 17 plus with experience of the criminal justice system and women at risk of offending due to drug/alcohol use and/or mental health needs. This includes women who are current serving prisoners, have had a prison sentence, are or have been on license, been in police custody, had a caution, are in recovery, or have mental health needs and identify themselves as being ‘at risk’ of offending.

In 2015/16 the make up of women who enrolled with us was as follows:

- 49% identified as BME
- 29% identified as White British
- 22% identified as White Irish or White Other
- 76% had experience of the criminal justice system
- 71% had substance misuse issues
- 57% had a mental health diagnosis
- 74% of women had been unemployed for longer than three years
- 50% had housing needs
- 60% had Level 1 qualifications or below.

Alongside these factors stated above, a large proportion of women report past experiences of childhood abuse and/or domestic violence in adult relationships. Trauma features highly.

A woman may come into contact with us in the first instance by:

- meeting our outreach worker at a London based referral partner, the courts, police custody or in a prison in the South East
- word of mouth
- attending one of our bi-annual information days
- reading our prospectus online or at a referral agency or prison.

Although a woman may be referred by her probation officer or offender

manager, her attendance and participation is voluntary. A woman making a choice to attend is an important feature of our offer. After this initial introduction and an expression of interest, she will be invited to attend a one-to-one enrolment session with a senior member of the student support team, where her history, needs and interests will be discussed confidentially. Following this, she will enrol on a number of courses, and then return for a welcome session as part of a group, where she can meet other learners and staff, and a second stage learning assessment, preferably prior to actually starting her course(s). Once this is complete, she will attend her course(s) and be entitled to access all the support on offer. A small percentage of women who enrol never make it to a class, and

some may not complete the course. Generally this is to do with changes in their circumstances, including relapses or a deterioration in their mental wellbeing. Sometimes this is because they have been offered employment, or because they decide the course is not right for them.

Approximately 75% of women who attend will complete a course. A large proportion of women who join us stay for a second and third year of learning, progressing through courses, raising their aspirations and planning their futures beyond Clean Break - onto Higher Education, employment or volunteering. This long-term engagement, and ability for women to return if they need some further support, is part of our unique offer and helps to establish a strong relationship based on trust and care.



A woman's journey through Clean Break: a case study



When Michelle first came to Clean Break in 2014 she had been clean for two years, with a long history of substance and alcohol misuse. She was suffering from anxiety and panic attacks on a regular basis, coupled with poor self-esteem and lack of confidence but was not in contact with mental health services. She described a number of previous "breakdowns". She was distrustful of all relationships, particularly with men, following domestic violence over many years.

She was trained as a fitness instructor and was interested in acting but had never done any.

Michelle learned a lot through the group work at Clean Break around interacting and relating to others. Her communication skills and self-confidence grew tremendously. The Emotional health and wellbeing courses were particularly beneficial to her in terms of self-care and recovery from addiction. When she did the Voice and Singing course she described the joy in doing things for herself that gave her real pleasure. She completed all our drama-based courses and went onto the Discovering Higher Education programme. She then auditioned and was selected to take part in our graduate production of a new play we toured in 2016 called *Spent* by Katherine Chandler which explored issues of debt and poverty as they affect women in the criminal justice system. She then toured with Clean Break to conferences and universities performing in the play and taking part in the accompanying workshop.

Michelle has always used the student support service at Clean Break effectively. Initially this often involved

disputes and misunderstandings with fellow students and Michelle was often angry. Over the past year however this changed significantly and when she seeks support now she wants to reflect on emotional issues sensitively and discuss her options.

Michelle has completed most of the courses at Clean Break now from the acting to the backstage and the additional support courses.

She is happy and well in herself, no longer getting into destructive relationships and staying sober. She is awaiting a housing mutual exchange due to on-going neighbour issues. She has not been involved in re-offending in any way since 2011. She is having on-going counselling support in relation to her mental health and long term psychological issues.

"I came here just sober but didn't realise how far I still had to go. I had no social skills and I had 'keep away' written on my head. My self-confidence was on the floor. I didn't realise that Clean Break was a proper drama school and when I started doing the acting courses it was amazing and felt like healing therapy. I learnt how to touch people emotionally and physically in appropriate ways. I started to realise I was good at acting and taking on different roles, I felt my love of acting returning. I have real friends here and I have learnt healthy boundaries here. There are women here that I really love and are close friends - I trust people more."

Measuring Evidence of our Impact

In this section we highlight the tools we use to measure the outcomes identified in our Theory of Change diagram on page 10.

We intend our evaluation procedures to be thorough, consistently applied across all courses and participants, and transparent. The information we

currently gather falls into the following categories:

Demographic data and initial need

- This is gathered during initial enrolment and assessments with Clean Break. Demographic data is gathered to ensure we are targeting

the women we intend to and also for equality impact assessment. Initial needs are assessed for risk assessment purposes, and to ensure appropriate support can be put in place. At this stage we identify offending, mental health and drug/alcohol history, experience of trauma and abuse and other needs including housing, learning needs and disability.

Qualitative and quantitative data during participation

- Each course is evaluated by all learners on completion and this data is gathered and analysed for us to make continuous improvements as well as to demonstrate outcomes. See Appendix One for an extract of the data collated in 2015/16.
- A learning journal is completed by all learners, with comments made by tutors and course managers. This is used to identify suitable progression at the end of the courses and to identify learner goals and skills learnt.
- Case studies are used to illuminate the personal journeys of change made by women participating in the programme and to identify key factors in supporting change.
- Numbers of qualifications achieved are recorded to illustrate hard outcomes and evidence of improved prospects of further education and employment.
- The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being scale (WEMWB) enables the monitoring of mental wellbeing in projects which aim to impact positively on wellbeing. WEMWB is a 14 item scale with 5 response categories. The items are all worded positively and cover both feeling and functioning aspects of mental wellbeing. The scale has been introduced as part of Clean Break's initial assessment stage and is repeated at various intervals during participation on the programme.
- The Intermediate Outcomes Measurement Instrument (IOMI) is a toolkit designed to identify intermediate outcomes for projects working with offenders. The tool was commissioned by NOMS and is due for publication in 2017. We were involved in piloting the tool in 2013 and have continued to use it, with women responding to a set of statements at the start of their engagement with us, and repeating

"Rules around timekeeping keep me on my toes: my decision-making skills improved greatly." Student 2016

again at regular intervals. In 2015 we worked with a PhD researcher and combined the WEMWB and IOMI tool into a Health and Wellbeing questionnaire that women are asked to complete when they meet with the student support worker for their learning reviews.

provides an analysis which assesses the impact of that programme against various reoffending measures.

“I learnt new skills such as great teamwork, improvising, communication skills and time-keeping.” Student 2016

Longitudinal data gathered after completion on the programme:

- All learners who receive certificates at our July or December graduation and do not return to study with us for the following two terms are tracked six months after the date of graduation by a student support worker. This takes the place of a phone call, where the worker establishes progress and any challenges faced. Information is gathered on our database and used to identify progress beyond Clean Break. Most recent tracking indicates that 70% of women who complete courses with us move on to positive outcomes in relation to further study, volunteering and employment.
- At the time of publication, we are compiling data to enter to the Government's Justice Data Lab. The Justice Data Lab gives organisations working with people with convictions access to central reoffending data. It

What we do

Annual programme of theatre based courses & qualifications, gender-specific personal development, mental health support, art therapy & literacy

Outreach and initial engagement across London (probation, prison, police custody, drug/alcohol agencies and mental health settings)

Enrolment interview & initial assessment of needs

Personalised package of one to one support, practical assistance and referrals to other services

Employability training and volunteering & progression pathways made with HE/FE

Programme of specialist provision for **young women** 17-25 years old

How we do it

WOMEN ONLY TRAUMA INFORMED SAFE SPACE

Consistent boundaries, respectful relationships between staff and women to engender trust

Holistic, inclusive and empowering with a focus on learning, creativity and expression

Voluntary engagement to suit the woman ranging from 2 hours/ 2 days a week from 8-12 weeks and remaining engaged over a number of years

Our Theory of Change

Personal

Achievement & pride
Meaning & purpose
Hope & optimism
Coping skills
Positive choices
Positive shifts in personal narratives & self-identity
Confidence/ belief in own abilities
self esteem
self-efficacy
Learning to learn

Intermediate outcomes are

Interpersonal

Healthier relationships
Improved team work
Flexible thinking
Communication
Decision making
Pro-social
Problem solving skills

Community

Feeling valued
Sense of trust & belonging
Stronger networks of support
Contribution to cultural & community life

Contributing to ...

Improved emotional health and wellbeing

Improved education/ employment prospects

Desistance from offending

Improved life chances for women

Measuring evidence of our impact

- Monitoring demographics of women enrolled
- Monitoring levels of need and risk factors
- Post course evaluations
- Assessment of skills learnt by tutors and staff
- Case studies and qualitative interviews
- Numbers of and levels of qualifications gained
- Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)
- Intermediate Outcomes Measurement Instrument (IOMI) toolkit
- Tracking of circumstances six months after graduation
- Justice Data Lab

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Improved life chances for women?

Clean Break's theory of change in the context of the research literature

Professor Sarah Colvin (University of Cambridge) and Dr Kim Richmond (Edinburgh)

Executive Summary

Background

Clean Break is a well-known women's theatre company. Its education programme for women with experience of the criminal justice system or at risk of offending is the focus of this review. Education and skills are crucial for life chances. Clean Break's programme faces the challenge of enabling learning for people who have often lacked access to, or have not succeeded in, conventional learning environments. A further challenge is that they have often experienced victimisation, violence and abuse.

Clean Break engages in outreach and pro-active recruitment across London.

The education programme has five

key features:

- theatre-based
- personalised
- trauma-informed
- gender-specific
- long-term

Theatre-based courses and qualifications are accompanied by gender-specific personal development, art therapy, and mental health and literacy support; personalised needs assessments and holistic one-to-one

support; women-only, trauma-informed provision; a specialist programme for young women aged 17-25; and employability training, progression pathways, and long-term engagement.

The programme has three **long-term goals**, namely:

1. improved emotional health and wellbeing
2. improved education and/or employment prospects
3. desistance from offending

Clean Break's Theory of Change shows its long-term goals emerging out of **intermediate outcomes**.

Personal outcomes include enhanced openness to education and learning, a sense of achievement, of meaning and purpose in life, of hope or optimism, as well as coping skills and the capacity to make positive choices, positive shifts in personal narratives, confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. *Interpersonal* outcomes include healthier relationships, teamwork skills, flexible thinking, communication, decision-making and problem-solving, and a will to *give back* – to help others in response to having been helped. Other outcomes are *community-oriented* and include

feeling valued, a sense of trust and belonging, stronger support networks, and a will to contribute to cultural and community life.

This short study reviews recent relevant research literature in order to assess whether and how the **intermediate outcomes** are enabled by the five **key features** of Clean Break's provision on the one hand, and enable the programme's three **long-term goals** on the other.

Summary findings

The personal, inter-personal and community-oriented intermediate outcomes in Clean Break's Theory of Change link clearly to the five key features of the education programme, and form a coherent basis for achieving the programme's three long-term goals. In summary, the indications are that, in the context of the high-quality programme delivery for which Clean Break is known:

- *Theatre-based learning builds confidence to learn, and human and social capital*

Theatre-based learning provides a way into education for people who have not succeeded in conventional learning

environments. It is also associated with empathy, anger management and better mental health, and with interpersonal and teamwork skills. Role-playing (imagining being someone else) opens up alternative personal narratives. Participants learn about their capacity to support others – their *human capital*; while *social capital* or a sense of community connectedness (strongly associated with a reduction in offending) is developed by public performances and community cultural engagement.

- *Personalised provision with one-to-one support enables better outcomes*

Supportive one-to-one relationships in the context of a broad education programme empower adult learners to “co-produce” positive change.

Personalised provision sees the “whole woman”, not just the “offender” or “addict”. It supports coping, self-esteem, and better educational outcomes. One-to-one support is associated with: better employment outcomes and a better housing situation; confidence and self-efficacy; communicative, decision-making and problem-solving skills; feeling valued; trust, hope and optimism; and healthier relationships – all of which link to lower

rates of offending and less substance abuse.

- *Trauma-informed, gender-specific provision enables a safe space for learning*

Women who have experienced violence, or whose offending and/or substance abuse are linked to relationships with men, need a safe space for learning. Trauma-informed provision helps self-esteem and confidence, contributing to emotional health and well-being, and better life chances. Self-esteem feeds positive identity narratives, which are associated with better mental health, reduced substance abuse, a will to “give back”, and desistance from offending.

- *Long-term engagement supports social integration and enables “giving back”*

Abstinence from addiction, desistance from offending, better interpersonal relationships, increased self-esteem and success in education and employment are not achieved in a single moment of change; they require the development of a new sense of self for the long term. “Giving back”, or working for the benefit of the community, can provide a

“redemptive bridge” to a long-term normalised identity. The ongoing support and progression pathways for students are likely to be key to achieving Clean Break’s long-term education goals.

Literature review

Introduction

Clean Break’s education programme, which is the focus of this review, provides theatre-based courses, qualifications, training and “whole person”, trauma-informed support for women with experience of the criminal justice system or at risk of offending.

Accredited and non-accredited courses include acting and performance, singing, dance, stage management, theatre make-up, techniques for running a drama workshop, and performance poetry. Writing courses develop playwriting skills with a professional writer. An English course at Levels 1 and 2 supports literacy, and there are courses addressing anger, emotional well-being, and practical skills for employability. A specialist strand offers personal development and theatre-based courses for young women aged

17-25. There are post-graduation volunteering and progression pathways.

The building in Kentish Town is a women-only space, and all students have access to one-to-one educational and personal support; issues that can impact on learning and wellbeing include eg. access to children, parenting and personal relationships, applying for welfare benefits, drugs and alcohol, concerns around violence and safety, anxiety, depression, self-harm and vulnerability, homelessness, and access to affordable safe housing. The support is long-term over a number of years.

Clean Break engages in outreach for its education programme in police custody, prisons, probation, approved premises, drug and alcohol projects, and mental health settings. Potential students meet one-to-one with a member of the student support team to assess their needs across Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (formerly the National Offender Management Service) nine pathways to reducing re-offending (accommodation; employment, training and education;

health; drugs and alcohol; children and families; finance, benefits and debt; attitudes, thinking and behaviour; women affected by abuse and violence; women involved in prostitution). The intention is to provide information, advice, and guidance (IAG) and to co-design a responsive, holistic, individual package of learning and support.

Over 70% of the women studying at Clean Break go on to further education, training, employment, or volunteering. Clean Break has partnerships with a number of London's theatre companies and arts organisations; the Stage Works programme offers current and former students theatre-based voluntary placements for hands-on work experience.

Clean Break's **theory of change** aims to show how theatre-based learning underpinned by long-term, holistic, one-to-one support in a women-only, trauma-informed environment creates improved life chances for women. This short study reviews the research base underpinning the theory of change. To do justice to the breadth of Clean Break's activity, the review synthesises

a range of research literature addressing (a) gender-specific, trauma-informed approaches to at-risk groups and the demonstrable and likely outcomes of one-to-one support; (b) theatre-based education in the context of mental health, addiction withdrawal, and desistance from crime; and (c) long-term engagement, progression, and generativity or “giving back”.

**Different lives, different paths:
the evidence base for
“what works” with women**

Many women in the criminal justice system have a history of traumatic life events including abuse (Ministry of Justice 2013; Flynn et al 2016). The UK Social Exclusion Taskforce’s *Short Study on Women Offenders* (2009) explicitly recognised the need for better support for women offenders, and better recognition of the breadth and complexity of women offenders’ needs. New research indicates that women who have committed offences have more complex histories of trauma and victimisation than men, and that women in the criminal justice system suffer disproportionately from post-traumatic stress disorder (Saxena et al 2016; Salina et al 2016); also that

women with substance addiction have often experienced violence and other kinds of abuse (Covington 2012). Women’s experience of violence makes **trauma-informed** services particularly important (Covington 2012, 2015).

While class and ethnicity also play a role, there is strong evidence that women are more likely than men to be socially and economically disempowered. Women lack social power relative to men, and are disproportionately affected by poverty (Carlen and Worrall 1987; Carlen 1990; Cabinet Office 2009; Fawcett Society 2009). Personal relationships are a risk factor for women more than for men, and women and girls are much more likely to be victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse, which often trigger alcohol and drug misuse (Petrillo 2008; Radcliffe and Hunter 2016). Women in the criminal justice system are more likely than men to have a history of drug or alcohol addiction or of mental health problems, and to be primary carers for children (where women are at risk, children are also at risk; there is a knock-on effect for the next generation; Cabinet Office 2009). Pathways to offending and addiction

are different for women than for men, and different for girls than for boys (Nelson-Zlupko et al 1995; Heidensohn 2002; Batchelor 2005; Corston 2007; Cabinet Office 2009; Brown and Ross 2010; Sharpe 2011; Scottish Government 2012; Howard League Scotland 2012; Women's Breakout 2012). Equally, the factors that predict re-integration are different for women (Martin et al 2009; Heidemann et al 2016; Radcliffe and Hunter 2016).

Women and girls not only experience society differently but are judged differently by it. Carlen and Worrall (1987) drew attention to the particular stigma that attaches to offending behaviour in women. Girls and women are under more social pressure to be "good" than men and boys; and offending behaviour, particularly if it involves violence and particularly if it has repercussions for a woman's family or children, is judged "doubly deviant, doubly damned" (Lloyd 1995). Social stigma goes hand-in-hand with sexual stigma: "bad girls" are judged to be sexually (too) available (Heidensohn 2002; Colvin 2011).

Shame and self-blame are common in women who feel their offending

behaviour has affected their families; but also in single mothers and women who have been abused, have mental health issues or are in recovery from addiction (Corston 2007; Sheehan et al 2007; Cabinet Office 2009; Scottish Government 2012; Howard League Scotland 2012). In probation and addiction recovery, women express greater feelings of shame than men; and stigma, shame, and self-blame impact negatively on self-esteem, sometimes leading to depression and/or self-harm (O'Connor et al 1994; Link et al 2001; Sharpe 2011; Heidemann et al 2016; Radcliffe and Hunter 2016). The self-harm rate among women in prison is ten times that among men; compared to the general population women recently released from prison are 36 times more likely to commit suicide (where men are 8 times more likely) (Flynn et al 2016).

A wide range of studies, therefore, highlights the need *not* to treat women the same as men, and girls the same as boys but instead to develop a gender-responsive approach (Carlen 2002; Roberts 2002; Poteat 2002; Corston 2007; Gelsthorpe et al 2007; O'Keefe et al 2007; Sheehan et al 2007b; Cabinet Office 2009; Fawcett

Society 2009; Martin et al 2009; Van Wormer 2010; Sharpe 2011; Howard League Scotland 2012; Scottish Government 2012; Women's Breakout 2012; Annison et al 2015; Radcliffe and Hunter 2016). **Women-only provision** provides a safe space for women with backgrounds of abuse or violence from men, and for women whose religious or ethnic background means they cannot easily access mixed groups (Corston 2007; Gelsthorpe et al 2007; Radcliffe and Hunter 2016). Women-only space enables a sense of community and belonging, and a place of escape from stigma or feeling judged (Radcliffe and Hunter 2016). An evaluation of a gender-responsive programme in the US for women ex-prisoners with substance abuse issues found that participants had significantly lower re-offending rates and did better with regard to drug use, employment, psychological functioning, and regaining custody of their children than those participating in a traditional programme (Spjelnes and Goodkind 2009); evidence from the UK points similarly strongly to the importance of a gender-specific, women-only approach (Worrall and Gelsthorpe 2009; Martin et al 2009; Gelsthorpe 2010; Radcliffe and Hunter 2016).

Nonetheless, women at risk and women with experience of the criminal justice system are not a homogenous group. Corston (2007) advocated a "distinct" or **personalised approach** that treats each woman as an individual and responds according to her particular needs and self-perception. Many young working-class women go from "care to custody" (Carlen and Worrall 1987), and a differentiated approach must meet the specific needs of girls and young women (Prison Reform Trust 2011; Sharpe 2011; Scottish Government 2012). The distinct approach is holistic and acknowledges the whole woman, not just the offender or potential offender. It recognises factors known to have relevance to women's life patterns and vulnerability (Corston 2007; Cabinet Office 2009; Fawcett Society 2009; Worrall and Gelsthorpe 2009; Gelsthorpe 2010; Sharpe 2011; Ministry of Justice 2012; Scottish Government 2012). It can help address problems in self-perception, including the feelings of stigma and shame that impact on women's life chances in particular (Sheehan et al 2007b; Howard League Scotland 2012). A best practice approach is responsive and individually tailored, open to addressing a multiple and

complex range of problems and issues linked or leading to offending, and designed with active input from clients (Hedderman et al 2011; Gelsthorpe 2010; Weaver 2014).

The effects of **one-to-one support** on re-offending are debated in the research literature. Some studies conclude that one-to-one engagement provides emotional support and stress relief, and builds confidence and feelings of self-worth (Spencer and Laing 2009; Hedderman et al 2011; Smyth 2014); other analyses point to the problems of evidencing its effectiveness in the context of a great diversity of quality of practice (Taylor et al 2013; Buck et al 2015). Some recent research has focused on the benefits of particular kinds of one-to-one relationships that empower service users to take control, make choices, and thus “co-produce” positive change (Smyth 2014; Weaver 2014). Collaborative support of this kind is associated with better employment outcomes and a better housing situation, coping and a more positive approach to problems. It is linked to reductions in drug abuse and improved self-efficacy and self-esteem, and to better relationships

(Taylor et al 2013). As a means of supporting learning in the context of a broad programme of provision, one-to-one support has been identified as a success factor (Hawthorn and Alloway 2009; Buck et al 2015).

A different way of learning: the evidence for arts- and theatre-based approaches

It has been argued that by engaging the body as well as the mind, theatre harnesses “the power of learning by doing” (Baim et al 2002; Hurry et al 2009). Even the most critical reviews of scholarship on the arts and desistance (eg Meekums and Daniel 2011; Burrowes et al 2013) recognise evidence that participatory arts projects support mental health and a sense of purpose, and may support self-identity, self-efficacy, anger management and empathy – all of which are associated with desistance from offending. Arts-based programmes have been shown to reduce depression (which is linked to addiction), work against isolation (associated with addiction, aggression, and mental illness) and build social cohesion. They support recovery from

mental illness and from alcohol and drug addiction, as well as general coping and resilience and desistance from crime (Rumgay 2004; Marlatt and Wilkiewitz 2005; Nelson et al 2006; McNeill and Maruna 2007; Volkow 2014).

It is widely recognised that arts-based learning enhances openness to education, where education and skills are crucial for life chances, and lack is a key predictor of offending and negative behaviours (Wilson et al 2008; Day 2009; Anderson et al. 2011; McNeill et al 2011; Cheliotis and Jordanoska 2015; Coates 2016).

Programmes for at-risk groups face the challenge of enabling learning for those who have had insufficient access to, or have not succeeded in, conventional learning environments. A range of research indicates that arts-based programmes provide uniquely effective learning spaces for people for whom conventional environments have not worked. Participants often taste success for the first time, which enables a more positive, open, and confident attitude to learning (Hughes 2005; James and McNeil 2009; Hurry et al 2009; Anderson et al. 2011; McNeill et al 2011; Tett et al 2012). Effective learning is strongly supported by a positive self-identity (Sfard and

Prusak 2005; Cieslik 2006; McNeill et al 2011). Mutually empowering social interaction is part of the learning process, and is associated with increased self-efficacy and self-esteem (Anderson et al. 2011; McNeill et al 2011; Tett et al 2012).

Multiple research studies link self-esteem, self-efficacy, and sense of self-identity to key outcomes such as recovery from mental illness, abstinence from addictive behaviours, and desistance from offending (Link et al 2001; Giordano et al 2002; Marlatt and Witkiewitz 2005; McNeill 2006; Weaver and McNeill 2010; McNeill et al 2011; Hedderman et al 2011; McNeill et al 2012; Sowislo and Orth 2013; Davey et al 2014).

Arts-based programmes are associated with a more positive self-identity in people who previously thought of themselves as failures: recovery and desistance are all about agency (no-one can do it for me), and change and growth become possible in the context of a new sense of myself as someone who has options and can make choices (Hughes 2005; McNeill 2006; McNeill et al 2011; Cheliotis & Jordanoska 2015).

Maruna's (2001) influential work on

how ex-offenders “make good” established how important it is to make sense of a difficult past, and to build a sense of self that enables a hopeful vision of the future. Follow-on research suggests that negative self-images and social stigma (which tend to reinforce mental illness, addiction, and offending behaviour) are challenged in arts-based work by the experience of rising to the creative challenge; by positive experiences in the group; and by admiring responses from audiences or family members (Twardzicki 2008; James and McNeil 2009; Anderson et al. 2011; McNeill et al 2011; Cox and Gelsthorpe 2012; Cheliotis and Jordanoska 2015). Public performances build community connections and a sense of opportunity: social capital, another key element in recovery, integration and desistance (Farrall 2004; McNeill et al 2005; Brown and Ross 2010; Faigin and Stein 2010; McNeill et al 2011; Tett et al 2012; Davey et al 2014; Weaver 2014).

Theatre-based learning in particular is associated with communication skills, confidence and self-esteem, and a more pro-social identity; it develops teamwork skills and trust (Henry 2000; Baim et al 2002; James and McNeil

2006; Thompson 2008; James and McNeil 2009; Prendergast and Saxon 2009; Faigin and Stein 2010; Davey et al 2014). The opportunities for *both* verbal self-expression *and* non-verbal expression in theatre can help participants get past conscious and unconscious defences (Cheliotis and Jordanoska 2015). Theatre work offers the opportunity to help others succeed, producing a sense of enhanced generativity or “giving back”: a sense of usefulness and belonging, and of being someone who has a lot to give, which may be especially powerful for people who have felt socially marginalised (Bazemore and Erbe 2003; McNeill and Maruna 2007; Faigin and Stein 2010; Cox and Gelsthorpe 2012; Weaver 2014). For some it offers a more culturally acceptable form of self-expression, in place of “acting up” (Gussek 2012).

Desistance research emphasises how important it is to challenge self-centred thinking and solipsistic narratives, and develop empathy. In theatre work, self-centredness is challenged by group work and role play (Henry 2000; Baim et al 2002; Prendergast and Saxton 2009); Shailor (2010) calls the effect “dual

consciousness”, that is, seeing simultaneously through my own and other eyes, where seeing through other eyes means imagining different possible futures and lifestyles. That is a key step on the “good life” journey (McNeill et al 2011; Davey et al 2014; Colvin 2015), and theatre-based learning might create unique conditions for imagining and embarking on the journey. Given the social prohibition on women “making a spectacle of themselves” – that is, drawing attention to themselves and their bodies, or being publicly seen and heard – it is possible that performance work provides a particularly significant learning space for women (Hart 1989).

A different way of being: long-term engagement and “giving

“If we want to encourage offenders to ‘give up’ crime, we would do well to create opportunities for them to engage in ‘giving back’” (McNeill and Maruna 2007)

Desistance, or giving up crime, requires a long-term change in self-identity or self-narrative (McNeill and Maruna 2007), and a wide range of

research indicates that programmes offering engagement and support over a number of years have the most successful outcomes (Rumgay 2004; Hawthorn and Alloway 2009; McNeill and Weaver 2010; McNeill et al 2011; Bottoms and Shapland 2011; Weaver 2014; Cheliotis and Jordanoska 2015). Over 70% of the women studying at Clean Break go on to further education, training, employment, or long-term voluntary placements.

Clean Break has partnerships with a number of London’s theatre companies and arts organisations, and offers current and former students theatre-based voluntary placements for work experience. “Giving back” to society, or drawing on my own experience to help others, has been shown to support long-term desistance from offending (Maruna 2001; McNeill and Maruna 2007; Carlsson 2013; Lebel et al 2015; Heidemann et al 2016; Radcliffe and Hunter 2016). It facilitates narrative change: working for the benefit of society, the next generation, or others at risk can provide not only a reinforcement of personal learning (Lebel et al 2015) but a “redemptive bridge” to a long-term normalised identity (Radcliffe and Hunter 2016). In their self-identity,

“wounded healers” move from being part of the problem to being part of the solution, a development that promotes a sense of having a place in society, of purpose and meaning in life, and of redemption from past mistakes, and therefore builds feelings of self-esteem and better psychological health (McNeill and Maruna 2007; Lebel et al 2015).

Their everyday involvement in the generative activities of childcare and community service has been cited as a primary reason why so few women, relative to men, engage in crime (Heidemann et al 2016). Worrall and others have argued that women offend in the face of a perceived lack of other feasible choices in their lives (Worrall 2002; Radcliffe and Hunter 2016). Heidemann et al (2016) see a particular significance in the “helper” role for women and suggest that the “wounded healer” pathway is often their only path out of a “deviant career”: first because caregiving is one of the few unproblematically socially acceptable roles available to women, and second because women’s traditional roles of mother and caregiver are interrupted by incarceration, and a sense of resuming such roles in community involvement

or mutual support helps rebuild self-worth.

Conclusion: Improved life chances for women? Clean Break’s Theory of Change in the context of the research literature

The mission of Clean Break’s theatre-based education programme is to help women with experience of the criminal justice system and women at risk of offending to develop personal, social, professional and creative skills leading to education and employment, and therefore to provide improved life chances for women. The three long-term goals of the programme are

1. improved emotional health and wellbeing
2. improved education and/or employment prospects
3. desistance from offending

Each goal supports the others; in particular, education and employment are evidenced to be highly supportive of desistance (Taylor 2013). The goals are enabled by a range of intermediate outcomes listed in the background to the review. This final section of the review assesses, in the context of

the research literature, how Clean Break's intermediate outcomes are enabled by the five key features of its education programme (theatre-based learning, personalised one-to-one support, trauma-informed and gender-specific provision, and long-term engagement) and in turn enable the three long-term goals.

(i) Theatre-based learning

The research literature reviewed associated arts- and theatre-based learning with better educational outcomes for people who have not succeeded in conventional environments because it builds a more confident approach to learning. The collaborative group work that characterises arts-based learning is linked to a reduction in feelings of isolation and moving beyond self-centred thinking; also with improved mental health, self-esteem, and anger management. It builds interpersonal and teamwork skills and a sense of trust and belonging, as well as participants' sense of their capacity to support others: their generativity or human capital, now widely recognised as a key element in social integration. Role play gives access to new perspectives, which help develop a new sense of what is possible,

supporting positive shifts in personal narratives and self-identity. Social capital – a sense of community connectedness – is developed by public performances and community cultural engagement, and is similarly associated with social integration and a reduction in offending behaviour.

(ii) Personalised, one-to-one support

The literature reviewed indicated the benefits specifically of relationships that empower service users to “co-produce” positive change. Here the *quality* of the personal relationships between practitioners and clients is key: engaged, collaborative, empowering relationships support learning, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, as well as recovery from mental illness and anger and guilt management. The holistic approach (which sees the “whole woman”, not just the “offender” or “addict”) takes account of individual life complexities and supports coping skills and self-esteem, and therefore better educational outcomes.

One-to-one support has been identified as a critical success factor specifically when it is one element in a broader learning programme. It can

empower disadvantaged adult learners to take control and make choices. It is associated with better employment outcomes and a better housing situation; with self-efficacy, confidence, and coping; communicative, decision-making and problem-solving skills; feeling valued; trust, hope and optimism; and healthier relationships. Those outcomes are strongly linked to desistance from reoffending and from substance abuse. Clean Break's provision of holistic, one-to-one support is a likely key factor in students' successful engagement with the education programme, and feeds not only the personal but the *interpersonal* and *community outcomes* identified in the theory of change. It may be a critical success factor in achieving all three of the long-term goals.

(iii) Trauma-informed, gender-specific provision

The first section of this review assessed the research base for Clean Break's women-only, trauma-aware approach. A gender-responsive approach takes account of women's specific risk factors and pathways into offending and drug abuse, and their specific experience in society, which

includes stigmatisation if they offend. The indications are that women-only provision provides a safe space for women who have experienced trauma and whose offending and/or substance abuse has been linked to relationships with men. It has been shown to build trust, confidence, and a sense of belonging. Recent research shows that awareness of the triggers that cause trauma reactions or retraumatisation is a critical factor in enabling coping and learning for people who had traumatic lives. Trauma-informed provision helps rebuild self-esteem and positive identity narratives, which are associated with better mental health, reduced substance abuse, a will to contribute to society and "give back", and desistance from offending. Those outcomes again link clearly to Clean Break's long-term goals.

(iv) Long-term engagement and "giving back"

Abstinence from addiction, desistance from offending, better interpersonal relationships, increased self-esteem and success in education and employment are not achieved in a single moment of change - they are processes that require the development of a new sense of

identity. “Giving back”, or working for the benefit of others or the community, not only reinforces personal learning but can help build a “redemptive bridge” to a long-term normalised identity and sense of social belonging. Clean Break’s long-term engagement, and the theatre-based voluntary pathways available, strongly support “giving back”, and therefore intermediate outcomes such as a sense of meaning and purpose, and a feeling of being valued. They also support the education programme’s three long-term goals: improvements in mental health and wellbeing, improved education and employment prospects, and long-term desistance from offending.

Summary

Conclusive evidence for complex human processes such as behavioural and personal change is inevitably hard to find (Burrowes et al 2013; Taylor et al 2013). However, the range of recent, largely UK-focused research literature reviewed here indicates strongly that theatre-

based learning is an effective path back into education; that the most successful educational, life, and desistance outcomes are achieved by long-term engagement; and that a trauma-informed, gender-specific, personalised approach means better outcomes for women.

Those are strong indicators that the personal, interpersonal and community outcomes outlined in Clean Break’s theory of change, and the improved life chances for women that arise out of them, are realisable in the context of Clean Break’s gender-specific, holistic, trauma-informed and long-term programme of engagement. While further research into the precise mechanisms and outcomes of theatre-based education programmes specifically with women with experience of the criminal justice system and women at risk is to be desired, the available evidence clearly supports Clean Break’s praxis and theory of change.

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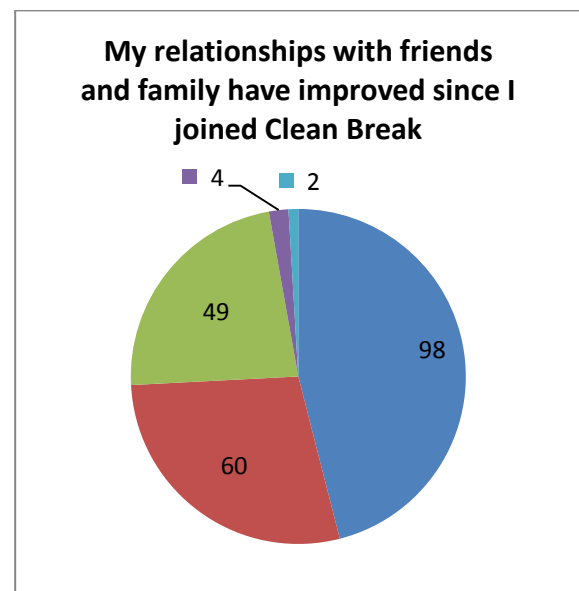
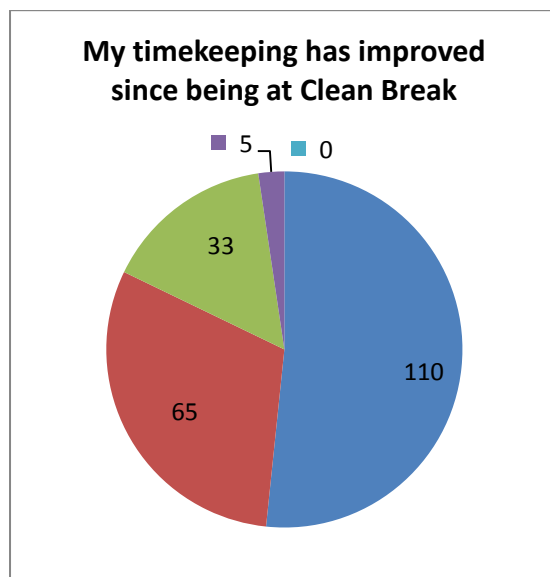
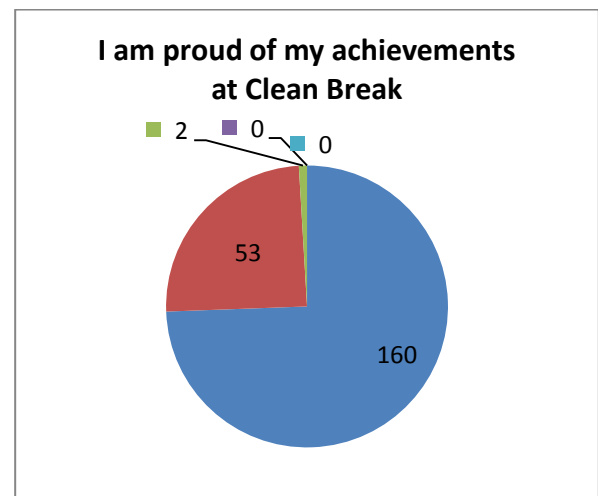
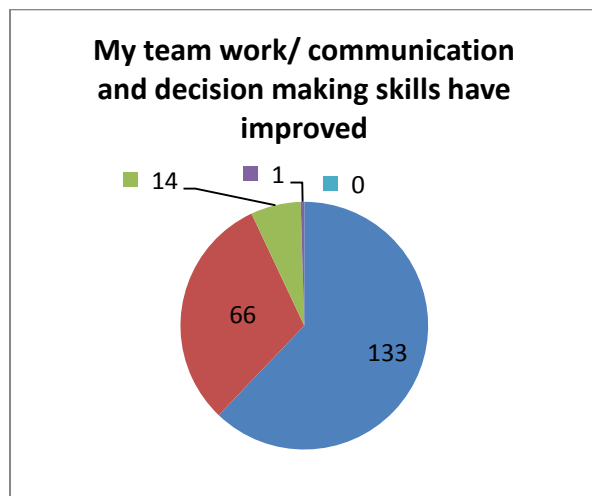
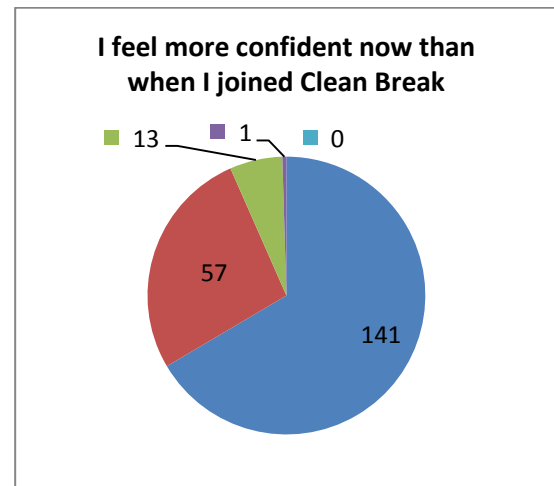
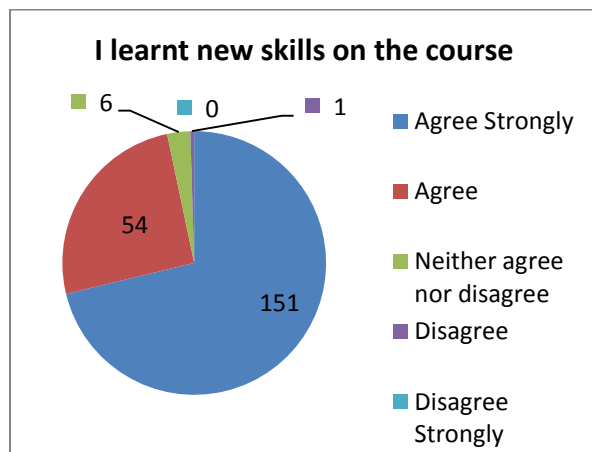
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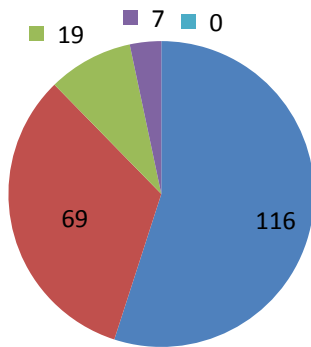
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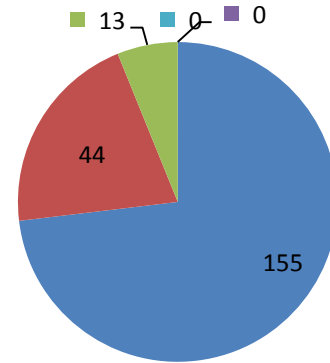
Appendix 1: Evaluation of Feedback



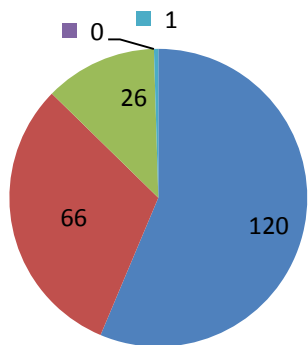
I have made new friends since being at Clean Break



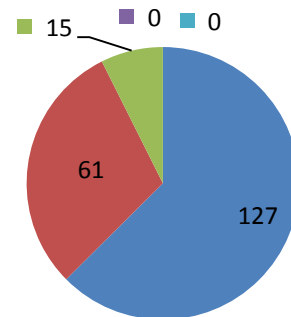
The support I have received has been important to my progress.



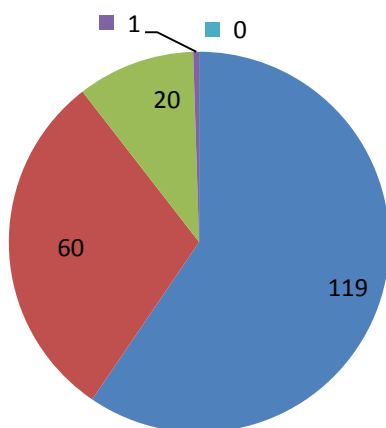
I am making more positive choices since being at Clean Break



I feel the skills I have developed at Clean Break will help me in the future



I feel I have more options to consider for moving on



I feel more hopeful about the future

