Rehabilitation is More Than Just an Act

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Psychologists at the University of Birmingham have found that a theatre and drama project for violent offenders produces dramatic reductions in their anger levels.

The Insult to Injury project, developed by the West Midlands-based Geese Theatre Company, was the focus of a study conducted by the University's Forensic Psychology Department.

Researchers examined the effect on sixty-two adult male offenders - all with a history of anger-related violent offending - from six prisons across the UK who took part in a nine-day drama-based programme, designed to explore the processes of anger, aggression and violence.

The programme helped offenders to identify, and generate strategies and skills for dealing with, potentially volatile situations. Results show that intervention was associated with a significant reduction in self-reported anger among participants, who reported feeling less angry and less likely to express anger either physically or verbally. The tendency for anger was reduced, as was the expression of anger internally and externally.

Criminal Psychologist, Prof Anthony Beech, who led the research study said: "The results of this study show significant shifts in behaviour. They suggest that a drama-based approach may be a promising adjunct to traditional anger management programmes for violent offenders in prison, and the community."

The project was developed in conjunction with West Midlands-based Geese Theatre Company, who specialise in developing theatre-based programmes for offenders. They use a combination of theatre, drama, mask and experimental activities combined with cognitive techniques. Artistic Director, Andy Watson, said: "We are delighted that the empirical evidence so clearly reinforces what we have been observing in our work with offenders. Theatre and drama provide a unique environment in which offenders can explore their own behaviour and begin to make appropriate changes. This study provides exciting proof that this is happening."

Ends

Further media information

Images are available on request.

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Andy Watson, Artistic Director at Geese is available for interview. Please call 0121 449 6222.

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