Holyoake DRUMBEAT Program Evaluation

Interim evaluation Report
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Background

DRUMBEAT (Discovering Relationships Using Music -Beliefs, Emotions, Attitudes, and Thoughts) is an evidence based intervention that aims to improve mental, social and emotional well-being amongst people from ‘high risk’ population groups. The DRUMBEAT program incorporates both experiential and cognitive based therapies that address a range of factors that influence an individual’s mental health, including emotional comparison, anxiety, self-esteem, resilience, and social relationships. The DRUMBEAT program has been well received when run with Indigenous people in community settings, but has not previously been formally evaluated in a prison setting as a therapeutic intervention with Indigenous prisoners, nor with prisoners who may be less likely to engage with more mainstreamed programs offered. In keeping with traditional modes of learning in Indigenous communities the major emphasis in the DRUMBEAT program is through the experiential process –observing, trialling and experimenting.

The primary aim of this evaluation project is to investigate the effectiveness of the DRUMBEAT program in assisting participants (with a particular focus on Indigenous prisoners) to improve their mental well-being, as well as more broadly looking at the impact of the program on participants in relation to interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, and interpersonal skills. An important secondary aim of the project is to develop and trial a comprehensive set of evaluation tools that can be used by DRUMBEAT to evaluate future programs run in prisons. While most of the scales and questions have been sourced from validated instruments or used elsewhere in Indigenous and/or prison research, and in some instances used in DRUMBEAT program evaluation, this project seeks to synthesise these different measures, and will complement the survey measures with qualitative interviews. The research team will be able to explore the extent to which the survey measures capture program outcomes identified through the qualitative research. The research team will also be monitoring how easily the evaluation tools can be administered, and will document any issues relating to administration and implementation as part of the process evaluation.

The evaluation project has approval from the Holyoake research committee, the Department of Corrective Services (DCS) Research and Evaluation Committee and the UWA Human Research Ethics Committee.

Evaluation overview

This is a mixed methods evaluation, including pre and post program questionnaires, follow up in depth interviews, and 3 month survey follow up with participants; along with feedback measures from surveys and interviews with prison staff and DRUMBEAT program facilitators (see Figure 1 for evaluation overview).

Figure 1: Evaluation overview
Evaluation progress to date

To date, evaluation has been implemented for 12 DRUMBEAT programs, across 6 prisons (see Table 1 for program and evaluation participation rates). The original aim was to run and evaluate 20 programs by the end of June 2013. Participation in the program is voluntary, as is participation in the evaluation. Of the prisoners who have completed the pre-program evaluation 67% (22/45) were Indigenous. The high attrition rate for the program and evaluation is primarily related to the high number of participants paroled, released or relocated to other prisons during the course of the program. Overall, of the 109 prisoners who have enrolled in the DRUMBEAT program, only 44 have completed both the pre and post surveys.

Table 1: DRUMBEAT program and evaluation participation rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prison</th>
<th>N programs</th>
<th>Total N started*</th>
<th>Total N completed</th>
<th>Total N completed pre-survey</th>
<th>Total N completed post-survey</th>
<th>(%) pre and post surveys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karnet</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acacia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casuarina</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooroloo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boronia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandyup</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>^</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>^</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*attended at least one session, ^ program in progress

Participant interviews

In total 16 prisoners have been interviewed to date (11 Wooroloo, 5 Karnet); of these 7 were Indigenous. While DCS has approved recording of interviews subject to security protocols, approval also has to be obtained from each prison, and to date only Karnet has allowed this. Where recording is permitted, the audio recording is electronically sent to and transcribed by a DCS approved transcription service (Pacific Transcription), and no recording of the interview retained, and all names and identifying information is removed. Notes are being taken at interviews for which approval for audio recording has not been provided.

DRUMBEAT Facilitator interviews

At the completion of each program, interviews with DRUMBEAT facilitators provide information about their perception about the impact of the program on group participants. 12 facilitator interviews have been completed to date. A new Facilitator Feedback instrument has been developed to record group dynamics, at program start and completion. This will be used for the rest of the evaluation.

Prison staff interviews

These have not yet commenced.
Quantitative Data

Preliminary analysis of data from the pre and post program surveys (n=44, only those that completed both pre and post program survey) to date indicate that the program is proving effective against its objectives. The survey data includes mental wellbeing measures, as well as items to capture feedback about the program more specifically.

Post program feedback responses
Overall the vast majority of prisoners have indicated DRUMBEAT has helped them to; feel good about themselves, solve problems, improve relationships, and to understand their values. Furthermore, nearly 90% of prisoners indicated they would pass on some of what they have learnt from DRUMBEAT to other prisoners, friends and family. See Table 2 for prisoner perspectives about the impact of DRUMBEAT.

Table 2: Responses from prisoners regarding DRUMBEAT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Disagreed N (%)</th>
<th>Neutral N (%)</th>
<th>Agreed N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My input was encouraged in sessions</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td>8 (18)</td>
<td>36 (80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt part of a team while doing DRUMBEAT</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>44 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The drumming skills I have learnt in DRUMBEAT have helped me to feel good about myself</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td>3 (7)</td>
<td>41 (91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find some problems easier to work through since doing DRUMBEAT</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td>5 (11)</td>
<td>38 (86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel more responsible for my behaviour since doing DRUMBEAT</td>
<td>9 (20)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36 (80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I now have a better understanding of the skills needed to have good relationships with others</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td>7 (16)</td>
<td>37 (82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRUMBEAT has assisted with improving my relationships with other prisoners</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td>6 (13)</td>
<td>38 (84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRUMBEAT has assisted with improving my relationships with prison staff</td>
<td>5 (11)</td>
<td>12 (27)</td>
<td>27 (61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since doing DRUMBEAT I aim for more harmony in my relationships</td>
<td>2 (5)</td>
<td>8 (18)</td>
<td>34 (77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRUMBEAT has helped me identify the importance of having values</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td>7 (16)</td>
<td>36 (82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRUMBEAT has helped me learn about myself</td>
<td>2 (4)</td>
<td>6 (13)</td>
<td>37 (82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will pass on some of what I have learnt though DRUMBEAT to other prisoners, friends or family</td>
<td>2 (4)</td>
<td>3 (7)</td>
<td>40 (89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend the DRUMBEAT Program to others</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td>43 (96)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mental wellbeing measures

The survey includes two validated mental health measures, the Kessler psychological distress scale (K5 version) and the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing scale (WEMWBS).

A higher total score on the WEMWBS signifies greater mental wellbeing. Changes in the WEMWBS scores of prisoners measured pre and post DRUMBEAT indicate a statistically significant improvement in the mental wellbeing of prisoners. These findings parallel with the data gathered during the interviews to date. Of the 44 prisoners completing the post and pre survey, a mean improvement of 3.5 in their score was evident (from an average score of 52.8 to 56.3). Comparing the pre and post program scores for individual prisoners, 26 (66.7%) had improved wellbeing scores, 3 (7.8%) scored the same and 10 (25.6%) had decreased wellbeing scores.

Higher scores on the Kessler indicate increased risk of psychological stress. Changes in Kessler scores of prisoners indicate a trend towards a decreased risk of psychological distress following the DRUMBEAT program. Of the 44 prisoners completing the post and pre survey, a mean improvement of 0.7 in their score was evident (from an average score of 9.9 down to 9.2). Comparing the pre and post program K5 scores for individual participants, 22 prisoners had lower risk of psychological distress (50%), 8 stayed same (18%) and 14 (32%) had scored higher on the K5 measure post program.

Qualitative Data

Interviews with participants are being transcribed during the course of the evaluation project – these will be analysed formally at the completion of the project, but already the interviews are yielding rich and insightful data to complement the survey findings. Additional qualitative data is gathered on the Feedback survey. Some examples of responses to the DRUMBEAT program follow:

It releases feelings. My feelings I have bottled up on the outside. If I had a problem I didn’t know who to talk to or was too proud to speak to a professional about it. Alcohol was an escape and I kept bad company that was negative. Drumbeat showed me how to be positive as a person and how to open up as a person. [Male]

Well I have just gone off my mental health drugs because of DRUMBEAT! Since finishing I feel a lot more healthy in my head. For that I couldn’t tell you why, but I feel healthier. I have been off them for one and half weeks now and feel great. [Male]

Feeling better after drumming, mind is clearer. [Female]

Normally on the outside I am an individual and I work by myself, I tackle problems by myself. With DRUMBEAT I learnt to work as a team, if one person was falling behind we would help that person, we would slow to their beat. [Male]

I used to love going to DRUMBEAT every Wednesday and Friday, I was excited about it. I don’t usually feel like that about programs….[Male]

It [DRUMBEAT] made me feel more released of anxiety and tension. It released it. [Male]

Drumbeat showed me how to be positive as a person and how to open up as a person. [Male]

when beating the drum a lot of tension comes out your body. First I was banging out of anger, but then I was beating to a rhythm, and that got me a more even beat -the beat was going through me and it was released. It was a therapy I wouldn’t consider on the outside. [Male]
I really liked it and will take up the instrument when I am out. I want to better myself as a person. [Male]

With the other programs you don’t come away feeling good, not like DRUMBEAT, where you do feel good. We know all these things we have done wrong, we don’t have to be told- we need to know how to change these things- DB helps with that- it like makes you feel better about yourself. With DRUMBEAT, instead of the bad stuff being drummed into you, it is being drummed out. [Male]

It has made me think about how lucky I am, I think about my kids and realise I need to stop thinking about myself, why I am in gaol. DRUMBEAT has taught me that I think I can be a better role model to my kids and a better husband to my ‘missus’ [Male].

It learns [sic] some common sense, you know right from wrong[Male].

Research challenges to date

The research team regards this as a highly worthwhile research project, but notes that there have been substantial challenges that have added to the complexity and time required to undertake the evaluation to date. These have included:

- intense approval processes and ongoing liaison with the Department of Corrective Services (DCS)
- DCS requirement for all research to be governed by a Risk Management agreement (RMPA), which has to be developed for each participating prison, signed by prison staff and the research team, and which requires considerable liaison with prison staff prior to, during and following program completion.
- low program completion rates due to prisoner transfer, parole and release
- the complexity of implementing the evaluation across so many prisons, which requires the establishment of agreements, relationships, and liaison with host of different prison staff
- literacy and cultural barriers to questionnaire completion
- additional onsite attendance at prisons by research team to build relationships with prison staff and participants to facilitate data collection and build evaluation project support.

As a result of some of the impediments to the evaluation and data collection encountered, we have outlined below several areas that we believe need to occur (and be funded to occur) to ensure that the evaluation project delivers optimal evaluation results. Conversations with various prison staff and with the Department continue to confirm the great merit seen in Holyoake’s efforts to ensure that the program is rigorously evaluated, with general consensus regarding the need for more evidence to support effective programs in custodial settings in Australia.

Areas to be addressed:

Sample size

With the low completion rates of both the program and the evaluation, to ensure sufficient sample size for valid statistical analysis, additional visits to the prisons is required by the principal evaluation researchers. An estimated minimum sample size of 100 prisoners completing pre and post surveys and six interviews at each prison is ideal. The funds provided by Holyoake for the evaluation project have already been expended on the data collection and analysis to date (with matched pro-bono funding by the research team (see Table 3); hence collection and analysis of the remaining data requires some additional funding.

Comparison data
As there are many factors impacting on mental health among prisoners, it is difficult without a comparison group to ascertain to what extent the changes we have seen in the mental health measures to date are solely attributable to the DRUMBEAT program. As recommended by DCS, we want to persist with collecting data from a group of prisoners who have not participated in DRUMBEAT and are matched to evaluation participant demographics (gender, age, duration in prison, broad type of sentence, and race). This data would need to be collected twice, with either a five or 10 week interval (matching the program length at each prison). While this data will add value to the interpretation of results, this process requires cooperation and assistance from DCS and each prison, and will add workload to the principal evaluation researchers. DCS had approved this and offered to assist in identifying comparison group participants, but this has not yet occurred, and the research team has been too busy with the other evaluation components to pursue this.

Follow up data

To ascertain longer term outcomes and the sustainability of the benefits of the DRUMBEAT program to date, we proposed to ask DRUMBEAT evaluation participants to complete an additional evaluation survey three months following program completion. Some of these prisoners have (or will have) been released and follow up requires them to be contacted in the community via their community liaison officer. To complete this follow up data collection additional visits to prisons and the assistance of the prison-community liaison officers will be required.