

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ACROSS WILTSHIRE

Introduction

1. Restorative Justice can deliver a large reduction in offending, a reduction in first time entrants to the Criminal Justice System and reduce offenders from returning to custodial care. It can reduce anti-social behaviour (ASB) and improve significantly conflict in housing and neighbourhood dispute.
2. Restorative justice is being delivered through a unique partnership between the Centre for Justice Innovation (CJI) and Ryse CIC. CJI are an international charity working to develop innovative services in the UK criminal justice system through policy exchange and technical assistance, and Ryse is a community interest company that specialises in the delivery of restorative justice and mentoring services and training.
3. Restorative justice services are delivered in and out of prisons, enabling victims to meet with offenders in a safe process, helping them to move on with their lives. It gives offenders an opportunity to address and change their behaviour and offending patterns. The partnership delivers Neighbourhood Justice Panels which again use restorative justice process both in and out of prisons, and train community volunteers and offenders to deliver this very successfully. This process is further supported by community mentors who are trained to support offenders from the prison estate to work with the contracts agreed at the justice panels, addressing their offending behaviour and paying back victims making up for the harm caused, and reduce the possibility of them returning to prison.

Restorative Justice

4. **Restorative processes bring those harmed by crime or conflict, and those responsible for the harm, into communication, enabling everyone affected by a particular incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward.**
5. In criminal justice, restorative processes give victims the chance to tell offenders the real impact of their crime, to get answers to their questions, and an apology. Restorative justice holds offenders to account for what they have done, helps them understand the real impact of what they've done, to take responsibility and make amends.
6. Restorative processes are increasingly being used in schools, care homes and the wider community to address conflict, build understanding and strengthen relationships with young people. In these contexts it is also known by the names 'restorative approaches' and 'restorative practices'.



Restorative Justice Practices

7. Restorative Justice is an umbrella term for several practices:

- Restorative Justice Conferencing

Conferencing brings the victim and offender to a face-to-face meeting to discuss the crime and its impact. This process includes providing support people for both the victim and offender in the discussions. Representatives from the criminal justice system may also be present in the conference process. A trained facilitator uses the restorative justice conference script to engage people in the process and develop a binding contract.

In the conference, the victim and offender each tell their story. They talk about the events of the crime/conflict and its subsequent impact on their lives. They can each ask questions of the other and in the process build a common understanding of the events that occurred. The victim supporters are able to talk about the crime, its impact on their loved one, and their own lives. The offender supporters show that the offender is not an isolated being, express how the offending behaviour has impacted them, and provide extra insight into who the offender is and how he/she came to commit the offence.

A key element of the conferencing process is re-integrative shaming. This means conveying disapproval of the behaviour while showing respect for the offender and working to reintegrate him/her back into the community. At the same time, the victim needs to have his/her experiences validated through the recognition of the harms he/she received.

- Neighbourhood Justice Panels (NJPs)

The NJPs are run by local members of the community, and use a restorative conferencing justice process to bring together victims and offenders to deal with issues of anti-social behaviour, low level crime and community conflict.

These have been piloted by the Ministry of Justice over the last 18 months. Swindon is one of the most successful of these pilots and is now being expanded across Wiltshire in 2014. In Swindon it has contributed significantly to a fall in ASB and Housing and Neighbourhood conflict.

NJP's are to be launched nationally by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) in Spring 2014 and Swindon will be a centre for excellence for South Wales and South West England for organisations implementing the NJP in their area.

The NJPs across Wiltshire are being delivered by CJI supported by Ryse who have responsibility of recruitment and training of community panel volunteers and restorative justice training for partners, the set up and implementation of the NJPs across the county.

- Family Group Conferencing

Family group conferences can be used in any situation where a plan and decision needs to be made about a vulnerable adult or child. In the United Kingdom family group conferences are mainly used in child welfare, particularly when a child is at risk of going into care, although some local areas are using the approach to prevent school exclusions, tackle anti-social behaviour, address youth offending and in planning for vulnerable adults.

Families, including extended family members are assisted by an independent family group conference coordinator to prepare for the meeting. At the first part of the meeting, social workers and other professionals set out their concerns and what support could be made available. In the second part of the meeting family members then meet on their own to make a plan for the child. The family should be supported to carry out the plan, unless it is not safe.

Family group conferences are effective in making safe plans for children, enabling many to stay within their family network as an alternative to going into care and are cost effective.

The Wider use of Restorative Justice

8. Restorative Justice (RJ) can be and is used in all areas of the criminal justice system and across the wider community where conflict exists. The use of RJ in prisons has proven to show a 30% reduction in re-offending, the use of NJPs is starting to show encouraging signs of reducing anti-social behaviour and community conflict resulting in less need for formal intervention from the criminal justice system, allowing courts to concentrate on more serious crime. Many schools have adopted restorative practices to enable better functioning schools and a reduction in conflict and exclusions.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1s6wKeGLQk>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQIMxYqu6Do>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaeeRwOJQng>

The Evidence

9. The Government funded a £7 million 7 year research programme looking into restorative justice. In her independent evaluation, published in four reports (see 'Ministry of Justice Evaluation' below) Professor Joanna Shapland found that in randomised control trials of RJ with serious offences (robbery, burglary and violent offences) by adult offenders:
 - The majority of victims chose to participate in face-to-face meetings with the offender, when offered by a trained facilitator
 - 85% of victims who took part were satisfied with the process
 - RJ reduced the frequency of re-offending, leading to £9 savings for every £1 spent on restorative justice
10. Expert independent criminologists Professor Lawrence Sherman and Dr Heather Strang state that the reduction in the frequency of re-offending found in this research was 27% - that's 27% less crime, 27% fewer victims following RJ.
11. Alongside the Sentencing Green Paper in December 2010 the Government published their own further analysis of the data behind the Shapland reports, quantifying the size of the reduction in the frequency of re-offending following RJ as 14%.

Cost-benefits

12. Working from the data in Professor Shapland's reports, the Restorative Justice Council and Victim Support presented the Government with evidence that providing

restorative justice in 70,000 cases involving adult offenders would deliver £185 million in cashable cost savings to the criminal justice system over two years, through reductions in re-offending alone.

13. The Matrix Report - an independent expert analysis of the economic benefits of restorative justice - has revealed that restorative justice would likely lead to a net benefit of over £1billion over ten years. The report concludes that diverting young offenders from community orders to a pre-court restorative justice conferencing scheme would produce a life time saving to society of almost £275 million (£7,050 per offender). The cost of implementing a restorative scheme would be paid back in the first year and during the course of two parliaments (10 years) society would benefit by over £1billion.

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