

Principles of restorative practice

The RJC principles of restorative practice is the overarching document setting out the core values that should be held by all practitioners in the field.

The six Principles of restorative practice are:

1. Restoration – the primary aim of restorative practice is to address and repair harm.
2. Voluntarism – participation in restorative processes is voluntary and based on informed choice.
3. Neutrality – restorative processes are fair and unbiased towards participants.
4. Safety – processes and practice aim to ensure the safety of all participants and create a safe space for the expression of feelings and views about harm that has been caused.
5. Accessibility – restorative processes are non-discriminatory and available to all those affected by conflict and harm.
6. Respect – restorative processes are respectful to the dignity of all participants and those affected by the harm caused.

Practitioner guidance on the principles

These Principles should be applied in the course of all restorative practice work. Practitioners should make themselves familiar with each of the concepts and how they might apply them in their day to day work.

Restoration – practitioners should aim to ensure that restorative interventions they carry out are aimed at repairing harm that has been caused. An opportunity for addressing issues participants wish to raise in relation to the harm should be given.

Voluntarism – it is imperative that participants come to a restorative intervention of their own free will, having understood the reasons for and methodology of, the process. It is the duty of the practitioner to ensure that everyone taking part understands why they are there and their responsibilities in relation to the process.

Neutrality – practitioners are human beings and in many cases may not be neutral to the harm that has been caused. However it is important that such biases are not permitted to affect the neutrality of the restorative process, which should not be conducted in such a way as disadvantages or discriminates against any one participant or party.

Safety – practitioners should aim to ensure that processes are safe by undertaking full and proper preparation in relation to each intervention they provide. Risk assessments are paramount whether conducted 'on the spot' (as may be required in the case of 'street' or 'corridor' restorative interventions) or via the use of detailed risk assessment spreadsheets. Practitioners should be appropriately trained.

Accessibility – one of the cornerstones of the RJC’s vision is that the offer of a restorative process is available to anyone who has experienced harm or conflict with the consent of all parties and where it is safe to do so. Practitioners must be mindful of any inherent biases that could affect their ability to offer a neutral restorative process to any person on the basis of their particular status or background –for example, their race, gender, offending history, disability, socio-economic or political background.

Respect – restorative processes must be conducted in a manner which is respectful to those taking part. If the process, or anyone involved in it, is disrespectful to those taking part, the chances of a successful or positive outcome are significantly reduced. One of the many skills required of a practitioner is the ability to conduct an often highly emotional process in a neutral and measured fashion, and respect is key to delivering restorative interventions in this way.