

Restorative justice in youth offending teams

Information pack

February 2015



Contents

- 3 Foreword by The Rt Hon the Lord McNally
- 4 Introduction by Jon Collins
- 5 Restorative justice – the facts
- 6 Julie and Anthony’s story
- 8 Restorative justice in youth offending teams – frequently asked questions
- 11 Restorative justice in action
- 12 An overview of restorative justice in Surrey by Chris Stevens
- 14 Northamptonshire: partnership working between a case manager and restorative justice practitioner
- 16 Dave’s story – a victim’s perspective
- 19 Henry’s story – facing the music
- 20 Restorative justice in Warwickshire – Jack and Sam’s story
- 21 Ensuring confidence in the quality of restorative justice
- 22 From crime to completion by Pete Wallis

About the RJC

The Restorative Justice Council (RJC) is the independent third sector membership body for the field of restorative practice. It provides quality assurance and a national voice advocating the widespread use of all forms of restorative practice, including restorative justice. The RJC’s vision is of a restorative society where everyone has access to safe, high quality restorative practice wherever and whenever it is needed.

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Foreword from the Chairman of the Youth Justice Board



The criminal justice system is all too often criticised for its failure to stem high levels of reoffending; for the ever-increasing costs to keep offenders in prison; for failing to protect the community from offending; and for

leaving victims of crime hurt and angry, with no sense of support or recourse. What attracts me to the concept of restorative justice is that it can respond to offending – and to those who offend – in ways that meet the needs of all the people affected by criminal acts. It is not a silver bullet or cure all; but well-prepared restorative justice carried out by trained practitioners has an important part to play in our criminal justice system.

To me, it represents a return to the wisdom of viewing conflict, and the consequences arising from it, as an opportunity for individuals to learn and grow from their actions. It empowers victims and communities. It recognises the value of the offender acknowledging their acts, showing remorse for their actions and the damage they've caused; and being willing to work to reintegrate into the society – the community – that they have harmed.

Research has already shown us that when a young person commits a crime and ends up in custody, the positive effects of restorative justice are able to deliver sustainable outcomes downstream; which continue to work through the gate, and into the community upon that young offender's release.

But the beauty of the principles of restorative justice lie in the fact that they don't only apply after a crime has been committed by a young person.

When used with imagination, as some youth offending teams (YOTs) are already

demonstrating, it can form the foundation of early interventions with young people on the cusp of criminality, working upstream to help divert them from a criminal path. Schools, for example, are increasingly aware of the advantages a restorative justice approach can have for their students. Some now use it to help resolve conflict between young people, increase their self-awareness, and consider alternative – more productive – resolutions to their issues.

The Youth Justice Board (YJB), together with YOTs, has a good record of promoting and practising restorative justice in local communities around the country. Further, the YJB – using funds provided by the Ministry of Justice, through their Victims Surcharge pot – secured £2.15m to be granted to YOTs. The purpose of this grant is to increase opportunities for victims to participate in safe and effective restorative justice activities; and to further develop YOT practices, in line with the standards set by the Restorative Justice Council.

I want to see this good work continue, and encourage all YOTs to learn about restorative justice and find innovative ways to implement it, working with their area partners. The YJB's online Effective Practice Library already has examples of how it can work, and showcases some of the good ideas that YOTs themselves have come up with to implement it. Do look there and get in touch with those YOTs who have contributed. They'll be only too willing to help and advise.

The more we practise it across the country, the more embedded restorative justice becomes into the mainstream of the criminal justice system. I firmly believe that can only be a good thing for all of us – as individuals, and as a society.

**The Rt Hon the Lord McNally
Chairman of the Youth Justice Board
for England & Wales**

Introduction



One of the undoubted successes in the criminal justice system in the last two decades has been in youth justice. Crime committed by young people is down, the number of people entering

the youth justice system is down, and the number of young people in custody has dropped dramatically. Youth offending teams (YOTs) have been integral to this success and a key part of it has been their use of restorative justice.

The benefits of restorative justice are well known and supported by robust evidence. It empowers victims and gives them a voice in the criminal justice process, helping them to move on with their lives. It also helps offenders to turn their lives around by giving them an opportunity to hear from their victim, to take responsibility and to make amends.

The use of restorative justice need not be restricted to a particular type of offence or offender. It can challenge the behaviour of persistent and serious offenders but it can also provide an opportunity to divert young people from the criminal justice system when they have committed minor offences and antisocial behaviour.

By both diverting young people from the justice system and contributing to lower levels of reoffending, restorative justice can save a significant amount of money. It is also popular with the public. Polling conducted by the Restorative Justice Council (RJC) found that three quarters of the public support the concept of restorative justice. This figure rose to 84% when only those who had been victims of crime were asked.

At the RJC – the independent membership body for the restorative justice field – it is our role to promote access to high quality restorative justice for all victims of crime in England and Wales. And while a great deal of progress has been made in the youth justice system, there is more that could be done. In Northern Ireland, for example, restorative justice has been placed at the heart of their response to offending by young people, with impressive results.

This information pack is intended to support YOTs in making greater use of restorative approaches. It features articles showing the benefits of restorative justice as well as articles from those who are pushing at the boundaries of restorative justice work with young people. It includes accounts of restorative justice from the point of view of practitioners and case managers, demonstrating the benefits it can bring to their work with young people.

But most importantly it also includes the voices of young people who have offended and victims who have taken part in a restorative justice process. These are the people most affected by crime. Restorative justice gives them the opportunity to work together, to move on, and to find a positive way forward.

Although restorative justice has become a part of the work of most YOTs in England and Wales, it is sometimes seen as an add-on to their core work of rehabilitating young people. In truth, restorative justice is an essential part of the process. Our vision is for restorative justice to take a central role in the work of every YOT, with every victim and offender offered the chance to take part. We hope this resource will help to make this vision a reality.

Jon Collins
Chief Executive Officer
Restorative Justice Council

Reoffending:

Restorative justice reduces the frequency of reoffending by **14%**.

Saving public money:

For every **£1** spent on restorative justice **£8** is saved through a reduction in reoffending.

Giving victims a voice:

85% of victims are satisfied or very satisfied after meeting an offender face to face.

Victims say:

“For me, restorative justice turned the tables and I don’t feel like I’m a victim any more. I’m in control now.”

“It gives you closure. People are never the way you imagine them to be, and it really is worthwhile looking them in the eye and telling them the hurt and the upset they’ve caused you.”

“It was so liberating to have a voice, and to know he’d have to listen to what I was saying.”

“That [restorative justice] was my turning point. When I realised what effect my crimes had on other people, I felt ashamed and embarrassed.”

“I was always scared stiff before every meeting. But then after every meeting, I came out as happy as anything. I felt like I’d got a chance to explain my situation.”

Offenders say:

Julie and Anthony's story

After Anthony, 15, lost his temper during a game of football and assaulted another boy, he was offered the chance to take part in a restorative justice conference. Here, Anthony and his mum Julie explain how it helped them to move on from the incident and deal with his behaviour.

Julie: Anthony has had problems with his temper for a while. I've had difficulty with his behaviour since he started high school and I wasn't getting the help I needed. He was in a bus shelter once with his friends and they were teasing him. Rather than hit one of his friends he decided to punch the bus stop. He actually had to go to hospital and have an operation on his hand to straighten it. That scared me because I didn't want him to do any harm to anyone, but in the end that is what he did.

Anthony: I was playing football and there was a lad there called Ben*. He had come out with me and my friends a few times before but I didn't really know him well. During the game I thought that Ben had kicked me but he hadn't really done anything. I got really angry. I just lost it for no reason whatsoever. After the game as he was walking off I chased after him and as he turned around I hit him in the face and cut his eye open. After that I just ran home.

About a week later, I saw the police. I hadn't spoken to Ben since it happened but in that week I was really panicking because I knew the police were going to get involved. I was also just upset about what I had done which made me feel a lot worse. I felt horrible about what had happened.

Julie: At the police station they showed us photographs of Ben that had been taken at the hospital and that frightened me to death. Ben's injury was really bad and there was a lot of blood. It was a big gash on his eyebrow and it had actually gone down to the bone.

There was a time after the offence when Anthony wouldn't go to school he was so worried, and that's not like Anthony as he usually has good attendance. It wasn't just because he was ashamed of what he had done, it was also because he was scared of his own actions. He was scared and didn't want to hurt anyone else so he locked himself away.

Anthony: I was given a youth caution and that's how I met Cate Fitzpatrick at Wigan Restorative Solutions. She talked me through how I was feeling and I told her I was scared and shocked after what had happened. I told her that I wished I hadn't hit Ben.

She told me restorative justice might be able to make the situation better. I thought it might make me feel better and I'd be able to apologise to Ben. I said I'd like to take part.

Julie: Cate visited us at least three or four times before the meeting and she phoned several times too. I think if we hadn't had the contact beforehand we would have really struggled but because we had that preparation we knew exactly what was coming.

Anthony: They came round and asked me how I felt. They explained what was going to happen at the meeting. It was about a month later that the meeting went ahead. I went along with my mum and Ben was there with his mum. I was nervous before going in, I didn't know how he would react.

When I went through to see Ben, he wasn't angry. He seemed confident. He told me about how he had felt at the time. It made me really upset to think that he had had to go through all of this because of something I had done.

I told Ben that I had been angry for no reason and had taken it out on him. I told him I had lashed out over nothing. I had been shocked and upset after I had hit him and I told him that was the reason I had run off. I apologised to him for what had happened and he told me he had accepted the apology – he even said 'thank you' to me.

It felt good to be able to speak to him about what had happened. I felt like I had got it all out of my system and it was all over and done with. If I saw Ben again I think I would be able to talk to him because of restorative justice.

Julie: I didn't expect it to, but the meeting had a really relaxed atmosphere. After the questions, we all had tea, coffee and biscuits and had a chat. Ben's mum gave Anthony a hug. She said she didn't expect Anthony to be who he was. I suppose when you are the victim's mum meeting your son's attacker, you don't expect to meet a quiet boy. She said she was really surprised meeting Anthony and that she felt that something like this could happen to anyone.



The whole process had a big impact on Anthony. Meeting Ben has made Anthony take responsibility for his actions. He's really calmed down a lot. Now there are different organisations behind us, including the school. Cate was really helpful in setting this up and she has continued to visit and support Anthony.

With Anthony's caution, he would be arrested immediately if he committed another offence and he would have to go to court. I think going through restorative justice has made that much less likely.

I would say to anyone who is offered the chance to take part in restorative justice to go along to the meeting. It gives you a chance to apologise and it gives you a chance to see how your actions have affected another person. It also gives you the opportunity to put things right and make sure you don't do anything like that again. You can bring peace to the situation.

Anthony: I don't think I would ever do something like this again. It made me feel awful to hear about what Ben had gone through because of me. If I hadn't been able to speak to him it would have been a lot worse

because it would have all been on my mind. I would definitely recommend for other people to go through restorative justice. I would really like to thank Cate and everyone else who helped for everything they've done.

Julie: This sort of incident can happen at any time and anyone who gets into a situation like this needs support. Left to our own devices, without restorative justice, I really can't imagine how I would have been able to manage. I don't know what we would have gone through, me and Anthony and especially Ben and his mum. Just going to court and paying a fine doesn't solve it. You need this kind of emotional support. Restorative justice has given a lot to Anthony.

*Ben's name has been changed.

The RJC would like to thank Wigan Restorative Solutions Team, and Anthony and Julie for sharing their story with us.

Restorative justice in youth offending teams – frequently asked questions

What is restorative justice?

Restorative justice gives victims the chance to meet or communicate with their offenders to explain the real impact of the crime - it empowers victims by giving them a voice. It also holds offenders to account for what they have done and helps them to take responsibility and make amends. Ministry of Justice (MoJ) research demonstrates that restorative justice provides an 85% victim satisfaction rate, and a 14% reduction in the frequency of reoffending.

“I’d tell my mates to do restorative justice if it came up. It’s a chance to ask as many questions as you want, and I think it’s good to get information. It gives you a chance to stand up for yourself.”

Young victim of a street robbery.

What forms can restorative justice take in youth justice?

Restorative justice activities can take many forms. These include:

- **A victim offender conference** – This involves a formal face to face meeting between victim and offender led by a trained facilitator. Supporters for both parties can also attend, usually family members.
- **A community conference** – This is similar to a victim offender conference but involves members of the community who have been affected by a crime.
- **Indirect communication** – Sometimes referred to as shuttle restorative justice, this involves messages being passed back and forth between victim and offender by a trained facilitator. The participants do not meet and messages can be passed via letter, recorded video or audio.

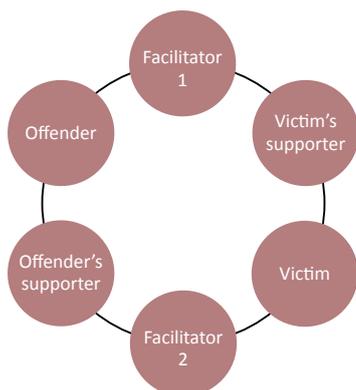
Restorative techniques can also be used in the day to day work of all staff in YOTs. Restorative questioning and language can be used by case managers and by referral order panel members as part of the panel process. Restorative approaches can help young people to think about the effect their crime has had on others and to get them to consider taking part in one of the formal restorative justice activities listed above. Family group conferencing, in which families decide together how to deal with a problem, can also be used between young people and their families to deal with bad behaviour.

What stage can restorative justice be used within the work of youth offending services?

Restorative justice can be used for any type of sentence and at any time within the process. Below are some examples of where it can be used within the work of YOTs.

- **Youth Conditional Caution** – Taking part in restorative justice can be one of the conditions attached to a youth conditional caution. MoJ and YJB guidance states that restorative justice should form part of a youth caution wherever appropriate.
- **Pre-sentence** – The government has recently introduced legislation to allow for courts to defer sentencing after a guilty plea in order for restorative justice to take place. Potentially suitable cases can be recommended by YOT staff and they may deliver the process.
- **Referral Orders** – Restorative justice can form part of a referral order. Referral order guidance from the MoJ and YJB states that referral order panels should be based on restorative principles. It also states that it is essential that referral order panels allow victims the chance to become involved in the process. The best way to do this is by offering them the chance to take part in a face to face restorative

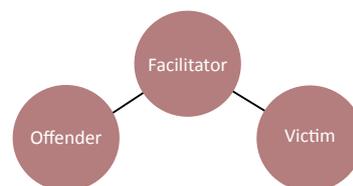
Victim offender conference



Community conference



Indirect communication



justice conference.

- **Youth Rehabilitation Order** – Restorative justice can form one of the requirements of a youth rehabilitation order.
- **During custody** – Restorative justice can also be delivered with young offenders within a youth offending institution or after their release from custody.

Other methods to deal with offences committed by young people include Youth Restorative Disposals (YRDs). YRDs are used in some areas as an out of court disposal by the police to deal with low level crime. Surrey Police and Youth Support Service have also introduced a Youth Restorative Intervention, which deals with crime committed by young people restoratively without giving them a criminal record. You can find more information on this on page 12.

What conditions must be met in order for restorative justice to take place?

Restorative justice can only take place when three conditions are met:

1. There is an identifiable victim or victims. The person who takes part in the restorative justice process does not need to be the direct victim of the crime. It could be a family member, representative of the community or someone else who has been affected by the crime.
2. The offender accepts responsibility and has made a guilty plea (at any stage of the proceedings).
3. The victim, offender and any other participants consent to take part in a restorative justice activity.

What should victims and offenders expect to happen at a restorative justice conference?

During victim offender conferences, participants meet to discuss a crime in which they have been involved. The discussion is led by a trained restorative justice facilitator from the YOT and supporters for both victim and offender can also be present. The facilitator will lead a discussion on the crime by asking what happened, who was affected, how they were affected and what can be done to repair the harm that was caused. The offender is asked first, followed by the victim. The participants may decide on an outcome agreement outlining actions to be taken to try to repair the harm caused.

The RJC advises that case managers working with the young person who has offended also attend the

conference. This can be useful for future work with the young person and allows the case manager to see what is agreed between participants.

“After the restorative justice, the young person’s self-esteem improved, her fear of school went away and she is now attending full time and enjoying it. This effect that restorative justice can have on offenders is why it is so important for my work.”
Sandy Hilderley, case manager at Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service.

How do victims benefit from restorative justice?

Many victims find that restorative justice helps them to come to terms with their experience and move on. Victims who engage in the process can experience reduced post-traumatic stress, higher levels of satisfaction with the criminal justice system and less fear of repercussions. The opportunity to participate may allow them to move on from the crime. There are many examples of victims who have an improved quality of life after engaging in a restorative intervention. This is because restorative justice allows victims to become involved directly in the justice process and empowers them by giving them a voice.

“It gives you closure. People are never the way you imagine them to be, and it really is worthwhile looking them in the eye and telling them the hurt and the upset they’ve caused you.”
Mother of a victim of harassment.

How do offenders benefit from restorative justice?

Restorative justice gives offenders the chance to come to terms with their actions, make an apology and move on. Research shows that 80% of offenders who have met their victims face to face were satisfied with the process and almost three quarters would recommend it to others in their situation.

Which offences are appropriate for restorative justice?

The RJC supports the use of restorative justice for any offence, provided that it is facilitated by a practitioner with appropriate training and experience. Although some categories of crime can pose particular issues for practitioners, such as domestic violence and sexual offences, we believe there is no category of crime where restorative justice cannot be applied if

the circumstances are right. It is important to look at the specific circumstances of an offence and the views of the victim and offender rather than the category of crime itself. Restorative justice practitioners should decide on whether it is appropriate based on individual cases.

“The concept of restorative justice is always applicable, that is we ask: What are the harms that have happened? What are the needs that have resulted? Whose obligations are they? How do we engage people in the process? To what extent can we engage people in the process? Those questions are always valid.”

Professor Howard Zehr, widely known as ‘the grandfather of restorative justice’.

What training do YOT workers need to use restorative justice?

Training in restorative justice is the bedrock of quality practice, particularly for practitioners who facilitate face to face meetings. All workers who facilitate face to face meetings should undertake facilitator training. Workers not directly involved in facilitating formal restorative justice activities can also benefit from training in restorative practice. Different levels of training can be obtained including training for managers and introductory training for workers who will not facilitate restorative justice conferences. This can allow them to see the benefits of a restorative approach and give them the ability to use restorative approaches in their work.

The RJC has an online Trainers Register which lists providers who have signed up to our Code of Practice for Trainers. To find a trainer please visit: www.rjc.org.uk/trainers

Experienced facilitators may wish to consider becoming accredited by the RJC which provides them with the opportunity to demonstrate through independent assessment that they are meeting national standards. More information can be found here: practitioners.rjc.org.uk

“I have really valued the process of accreditation as it has given me confidence in my restorative work and made me take time to think about what I do and why I do it.”

Deirdre Leask, Southwark Youth Offending Service.

What evidence is there that restorative justice works?

Government research has shown that restorative justice has a positive impact on both victims and offenders. The government funded a £7 million, seven year research programme into restorative justice which showed that:

- 70% of victims chose to take part in face to face meetings which led to 85% victim satisfaction rates.
- 78% of victims said that they would recommend restorative justice to other victims (only 5% would not).
- The research also showed that face to face meetings reduced the frequency of reoffending by 14% and that this reduction in reoffending was highly cost effective for the criminal justice system, saving an average of eight pounds for every one pound spent on delivering restorative justice.

“Victims’ satisfaction with the handling of their cases is consistently higher for victims assigned to [restorative justice conferences] than for victims whose cases were assigned to normal criminal justice processing.”

Excerpt from Campbell Systematic reviews (2013:10)

In terms of reoffending, how does restorative justice compare to other criminal justice interventions?

Restorative justice consistently outperforms traditional criminal justice processes alone across a range of offence categories of varying types and seriousness. No other intervention tested in the same way as restorative justice has demonstrated such a substantial effect on reoffending.

How do you keep people safe during restorative justice?

Restorative justice only works if it is done well. Victims and offenders have to know that they are at the centre of the process and trust the facilitator that it will be safe and meet their needs. For this reason national standards, training and accreditation are crucial. The RJC has published Best Practice Guidance for practitioners and provides accreditation for facilitators and a quality mark for services. Any YOT worker who facilitates restorative justice activities needs to be properly trained.

Restorative justice in action

Restorative justice can have life-changing effects for both victims and offenders. Below we look at three cases where restorative justice has helped people to move on from an incident of crime.

Multiple dwelling burglaries Kelvin's story

"Going to prison, that's just running away and getting away from it all. But to actually go into a room and sit down knowing that they're going to walk through that door in a few minutes time and want to know why you stole from them – that's scary for me. Every time, it kind of broke me, but it made me as well."



Kelvin was kicked out of his nan's house as a teenager. At 16, he started taking cocaine and began offending to pay for his habit. He ended up in a young offender's institution for seven months after being convicted of burglary. On his release his youth offending team worker recommended restorative justice to him. Kelvin ended up meeting a number of his victims which had a profound effect on him: "I was looking in their eyes and thinking I don't know these people, they don't know me, they've never done anything wrong in life, as far as I can tell, and I've taken their things. A lot of people would have said, 'No, I'm not doing that', but I tried to give them the best explanation I could, and apologise for what I'd done."

Sexually harmful behaviour Paula's story

"I felt like a weight had been lifted off me, and that wouldn't have happened if I hadn't been offered restorative justice. I know some people don't think it should be used in cases of sexually harmful behaviour, but I think it should be up to the victim to make that choice, or their power to make decisions is being taken away, again."

Paula was walking her dog in the early evening when a teenager exposed himself to her. Although her initial reaction was nervous laughter, this was quickly followed by anger, and then real fear. When the teenager was caught, Paula spoke to Jodie from Essex YOT. Paula said: "In everything that had happened, none of it had been about my emotional reaction. The police were amazing, but it's their job to deal in facts, not feelings. Jodie listened – many



times – to how I felt, and what I'd gone through emotionally. For the first time, I was given a voice and a chance to make decisions. I knew

that restorative justice was the way forward." Paula went through indirect restorative justice via video messages which helped her to move on from the incident. She said: "For me, restorative justice has been incredibly empowering. I've regained control by turning a negative, frightening experience into a positive, life-changing one."

Street robbery Aaron's story



"I'd tell my mates to do restorative justice if it came up. It's a chance to ask as many questions as you want, and I think it's good to get information. It gives you a chance to stand up for yourself."

After Aaron was robbed by some boys who had been bullying him at school, a restorative justice meeting with one of the gang gave him a chance to regain his confidence. Aaron said: "I decided to meet him because I wanted to face my fears. I wrote some questions down. I really thought about them, because I wanted to get the best possible answers." The conference had a big impact on Aaron, and his mum felt that it had increased his confidence. She said: "Before the meeting, Aaron was quite frightened about going out of the house. I was having to walk him to and from school, just in case someone was waiting outside for him. That's changed now. He goes and plays football with his friends, and he's better about going out on his own. He's got more confidence since the meeting. He's moved on."

If you would like to read more case studies like these please visit: www.rjc.org.uk/rj-in-action

number of young people who are homeless, the number of looked after children featuring in the criminal justice system and the number of young people who are not in education, training or employment.

Surrey has transformed its youth justice landscape with the introduction of our Youth Restorative Intervention (YRI). The YRI is run jointly between the youth support service and Surrey police. It is a pre-court disposal and an alternative to other options such as the youth caution, the youth conditional caution or prosecution. With a few exceptions it is the default disposal for offenders who are under the age of 18 and admit to the offence.

The YRI is strongly associated with significant improvement in the experience of justice for the Surrey public – a more than 50% reduction in youth crime and a more than 60% reduction in serious

youth crime in the last four years. The independent evaluation of the YRI also reports a saving of almost £3 for every £1 spent.

An independent evaluation of the YRI in Surrey found:

- it led to an 18% reduction in reoffending
- 91% of victims were satisfied with the process
- the YRI costs on average £360 to administer compared to an average £600 for alternatives¹

The results of Surrey's YRI speak for themselves, and after many years in the restorative justice field it is this achievement of which I am most proud.

The full evaluation of the Youth Restorative Intervention can be found here:

www.restorativejustice.org.uk/resource/surrey_yri

Chris Stevens
Senior Manager Restorative Practice and
Countywide Services
Surrey County Council

¹ Youth Restorative Intervention Evaluation, Final report, 2014 – Alan Mackie, Jack Cattell, Neil Reeder and Sarah Webb.



Northamptonshire: partnership working between a case manager and restorative justice practitioner

When Julia* was given a referral order for her part in an assault at school, her case manager Sandy Hilderley thought that restorative justice would help. Sandy worked with Liz Fowler, restorative justice operations manager, to bring Julia together with her victim, Amy*, in a face to face conference. Here Sandy and Liz describe the process of bringing Julia and Amy together, and how it helped both of them to move on from the assault.

Sandy: The incident happened one lunchtime when Julia was with two friends of hers. Her friends had begun to pick on another girl, Amy. There was some history between Amy and Julia, and Amy had bullied Julia in the past.

The situation escalated and Julia's friends ended up assaulting Amy quite seriously. They pulled her hair and then kicked Amy while she was on the floor. During all this one of Julia's friends had said to her: "Are you taping this?" and Julia had started recording the assault on her mobile. That was the only part she played in the situation.

Liz: All of the girls were taken to court and pleaded not guilty, but on the day of the trial they changed their pleas to guilty and they all received referral orders.

Sandy: Back in those early days when I started working with Julia it was quite hard. She struggles with her confidence. Although she has never been diagnosed with dyslexia, I suspect she might have it. Julia found it really difficult to talk about the offence, and engaging in conversation with her was very difficult.

However, during my first interview I recognised that Julia was really remorseful about what she had done and I immediately thought that restorative justice could help. Julia was still at school with Amy and they had already had some contact.

Liz: Julia's friends had been excluded for the assault but Julia wasn't, and there had been some low-level communication between Julia and Amy at school. They were in some of the same classes together and they both felt awkward about the situation. We hoped that restorative justice would help the situation.

Sandy: Julia showed genuine remorse right from the beginning, both in my first interview with her but also at the police station when she was arrested. I spoke to Julia about restorative justice and she was keen on it immediately.

Liz: While Sandy was talking to Julia, I got into contact with Amy. I went and met Amy and her mum and discussed different options. Amy immediately said: "I want to meet with Julia. I want to meet her."

Both girls had expressed a willingness to take part in the process and Sandy and I took it forward from there. We went through a similar preparation process for both of them. We have a leaflet which explains in basic terms what restorative justice involves. I did a joint home visit with Sandy to Julia's home and went through the leaflet. I then visited Amy and went through the same process. We also checked out the supporters who would be attending with them, Amy's mum and Julia's mum's partner.

Sandy: Because we suspected Julia may have dyslexia, I got the script that would be used during the meeting and I went and actually role-played it with Julia so she would know what to expect. When she came to the conference itself, she was well prepared.

Liz: The conference went exceptionally well. The meeting was very emotional for everyone involved, especially Julia. She acknowledged the harm she had caused and apologised at the end.

Interestingly when Julia apologised to Amy, Amy apologised to Julia as well. We suspect it was to do with some of the previous things that had happened between them. We didn't pursue the background of their conflict in the conference because we were very much there to discuss the assault and how it had affected Amy, but I found it interesting that Amy apologised and Julia knew what that apology was for. The girls decided they wanted to go back to being friends. They were never the best of mates but they had certainly repaired their relationship.

The conference probably lasted about 40 minutes, but after it was finished we spent another 40 minutes sitting together having some refreshments. The informal part of the conference was probably more important than the formal part. It was amazing.



The meeting had a big impact on Julia. We had her referral order panel immediately after the conference and she was on cloud nine. I think it had given her an idea of the harm she had caused, and that it didn't only affect Amy but her family as well.

She also seemed proud of herself for going through the process. Her communication about the offence had improved and she was able to tell the panel meeting how the conference had gone and that she was able to recognise the harm she had caused.

Sandy: I think it made a big difference to Julia emotionally. After the meeting she was so much calmer in our sessions. The offending behaviour work I was doing with her was so much easier, she was able to talk about what happened and she didn't have this stomach-churning fear and anxiety that she had had before.

Liz: Both Julia and Amy felt the conference had really helped them. In the follow up after the conference Amy said to me that it was the best thing she could have done and the situation was a lot better at school. Julia said that meeting Amy had taken away all of the awkwardness they had felt before and she felt the conference was even better than she had imagined it would be.

Sandy: Because she had been so nervous about going into school, Julia was having trouble with her attendance and her mum nearly had to go to court over it. But after the restorative process, her self-esteem has improved, her fear of school went away and she is now attending full time and enjoying it. This effect that restorative justice can have on offenders is why it is so important for my work.

Liz: This isn't the first case in which Sandy has used restorative justice in her work with young people because she has seen the effect it can have. Sandy works closely with our team to bring these benefits to the young people she works with.

We achieved the Restorative Service Quality Mark (RSQM) at Northamptonshire YOS recently and I think that gave us confidence in what we have been doing. We have been very proactive in embedding restorative justice into our work and our case managers have all been trained in restorative practices.

We still have a massive journey to go on with restorative justice but we are enjoying it. And it's not just the restorative justice team that are going on this journey, it's the whole organisation. We don't see restorative justice as an addition to our work here. It's a central part of what we do.

Sandy: We all really believe in restorative justice as it is so helpful for victims. They often have this fear that they have been targeted and the crime is going to happen again. Going through the process, victims often see that the image they have in their minds of the offender isn't correct. And the healing for the victim is terrific as well. Its impact is massive.

Liz: I am certain that restorative justice reduces reoffending by giving offenders a perspective on how the victim feels. I have no doubt that Julia will not reoffend.

* Julia and Amy's names have been changed.

The RJC would like to thank Liz and Sandy for speaking to us.

Dave's story – a victims' perspective

Dave is the manager of a youth centre which was burgled and vandalised on Christmas night. The police quickly arrested Michael for the offence and he was given a youth conditional caution. Dave and some of his staff agreed to meet Michael in a restorative justice conference. Here Dave explains how the conference was useful for him and his staff, and how it helped Michael to address his behaviour.

Last Christmas night the youth centre that we look after got burgled by an extremely bad, incompetent burglar – it had all of the hallmarks of some idiot breaking in rather than anything malicious. The burglar cut himself when he broke the window then proceeded to leave bloody footprints and handprints everywhere, giving the police DNA and other ways of tracing him.

At the time, lots of people were giving up their evenings and weekends to help renovate the youth centre's building and we'd really turned it around. We'd spent £90,000 on the project, some of which was raised by a local primary school and church – there was a great sense of community spirit. To find out – on Christmas night – that someone had thrown a brick through the window and completely trashed the place was horrible.

A lot of our staff and volunteers were really angry – we'd been working on the project for the benefit of the local young people, and one of them had come along and wrecked the place. We had to keep reminding ourselves that the damage was probably only done by one or two people, and wasn't representative of all the young people in the area.

The police picked the burglar up quite quickly and they wouldn't tell us much except that he was known to them, but not for any major crimes. We also heard that he was a teenager. With that in mind, we made a suggestion to the police. Rather than putting him through the criminal justice system, which would involve going to court and getting a further mark on his record, we felt we could appeal to his better nature.

We got a call from Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service's restorative justice co-ordinator, Darren, who told me about restorative justice. Darren explained that the offender would come along and would have to sit down in front of us – most likely with an apology – and that Darren would ask questions in a careful way to enable a discussion. I went back to the youth centre's board of trustees and everyone agreed that this was the best approach.

The lad, Michael*, said yes immediately and we were impressed – facing up to people takes courage.

What I was really worried about was that he would swagger in, clearly not caring about being there. But it wasn't like that at all. When he came in he looked a bit pathetic – he had his head down and he looked sorrowful. He was clearly embarrassed and awkward, and was showing remorse. You need to see that. You need to feel that the person who's offended against you does care. And once we'd shown him around, he was even more apologetic.

Michael said: 'I didn't realise what this place was – I just thought it was an old building.' There was a huge difference between when he came in and when he left. By that time we were all shaking hands and smiling.

When you're a victim of a crime it hits you in the pit of your stomach sometimes. You feel a bit sick and you have this anger boiling up inside you. When you meet somebody and they say, 'I did it and I'm sorry', it takes all of that away so it's quite a cathartic thing. It's therapeutic for the victim.





We agreed that Michael would come and do some work for us. He was meant to do six hours, but he kept coming back, painting and decorating far beyond what we'd agreed. It transpired that he was actually quite handy.

We started chatting to him and finding out about his background, which hadn't been easy. The education system hadn't worked for him because he's not good with letters and numbers, but if you give him something practical to do, that seems to be his forte. We got on very well with Michael and he worked alongside the other volunteers.

We feel that restorative justice has been a good approach for our many volunteers who felt really

angry, and also for Michael who seems to have positively gained from the process in terms of addressing his issues and behaviour. If this can stop people like him committing further offences, when clearly punitive approaches do not, then it's an even greater reward all round.

If you can make young people who've offended face up to what they've done and look the victim in the eye and apologise, that's probably the thing that will make them grow up. I think that people – even criminals – are fundamentally decent, they've just taken the wrong path.

* Michael's name has been changed.



Henry's story – facing the music

As I waited for Rachel to arrive I was absolutely terrified. I knew what would happen but it was terrifying doing it – actually facing her. She was the one I stole from. It went right to my guts. I knew then that this just wasn't me – I had to change. I think back on that day and it gives me the attitude that I need to never go back to how I was before.

At 14 I moved schools and it was soon after that when a friend pressured me into trying ketamine for the first time. It became my addiction. I left school with one GCSE, and left my family to live with a friend in a caravan. I thought I was alright because I was next to my drugs – I could get them easily and that was what I cared about.

Eventually I ran out of money. I started to go out at night, breaking into cars and sheds, stealing anything I could sell.

I hung around with a guy called Tom*. Tom had a learning disability and I could convince him to do anything I wanted him to. One night I didn't have anywhere to stay so I convinced Tom to let me stay at his mum's house. The next morning while Tom was in the shower I started looking through his mum's things. I found a ring and a Rolex watch, which I stole. I made Tom drive me away, hiding his mum's things under my jumper.

Her things equalled money, money equalled drugs. When I was using, it shut me off from the world and everyone in it. I had no emotions, no feelings. I sold the watch and ring to a dealer for drugs.

Facing the music

I got caught a couple of weeks later. At court they gave me a nine month referral order. I had to go to see someone once a week and talk about my drug problem. I would go along to the meetings and be like: "Yep, yep, yep." An hour later I'd go out and be using again. I wasn't enjoying life. I was suffering from depression and I had never felt so lonely.

As part of the referral order, I agreed that if Tom or his mum wanted to meet me I would do that. Rachel*, Tom's mum, decided she would like to meet me. On the day of the meeting I stood outside the Town Hall where it was going to take place, shaking. I was absolutely terrified about going in and seeing her, with everyone knowing what I had done.

I decided to go in and face the music. I walked into the room where my referral order worker was

waiting for me. We waited for Rachel to arrive. Those few minutes were horrible.

The meeting

Rachel came in with Peter, who was running the meeting. I could tell she was angry. She told me how furious she was when she found out about the theft and how I had been taking advantage of Tom. She asked me how I could have done what I did. She told me how badly I had abused Tom's trust and how important it was that I didn't do it again, to him or to anyone else. She told me that he was afraid of going out and making friends. It made me realise what the drugs had made me become.

Although she was fuming about what I had done, she was still concerned about me. She was supportive of my addiction and wanted me to get better. Rachel being nice made me feel even worse about what I'd done.

I agreed to do some outdoor work as reparation and that I would get myself off the drugs. I apologised to Rachel and said I would write a letter of apology to Tom. I told him not everyone was like me and that he could find friends who would be there for him and wouldn't treat him the way I had done. I told him how sorry I was and that I was never going to do that to him or anyone else again.

After meeting Rachel I felt a mixture of shame about how I was but also relief that I'd been strong enough to do something about it. It felt good to write to Tom and I hope that he will understand that not everyone will be like I was.

Quitting the drugs wasn't easy. I stopped stealing to fund my habit straight away but it wasn't until Peter set up a meeting reuniting me with my dad that I managed to go to rehab and get clean. Now I'm studying to become a tree surgeon and I've got a job, helping a local tree surgeon, which I love. I'm back with my family now - they can support me and I can support them too. It's all looking up at the moment.

*Tom and Rachel's names have been changed. Our thanks to Henry for sharing his story. The above is an abridged version of the original publication in Resolution magazine.

Restorative justice in Warwickshire – Jack and Sam’s story

“I was given a choice to get involved in the meeting. They didn’t want me to feel forced in any way, but straight away I thought: ‘I want to do this. I want to see Sam and I want to apologise and sort everything out’.”

Jack and Sam met just over a year ago and have become close friends. But it’s an unlikely friendship considering that they first met when Jack assaulted Sam after a misunderstanding over a girl. Jack was arrested for the assault and referred to Warwickshire Youth Justice Service. Jack and Sam were offered the chance to take part in restorative justice. Both agreed,

and after thorough preparation they took part in a face to face meeting, with Jack’s mum and Sam’s dad there for support. The meeting had a huge effect not just on Jack and Sam but also on their families.

To watch Jack and Sam’s story please click the play button below.



Ensuring confidence in the quality of restorative justice

Youth offending services have been at the forefront of innovation and supporting standards in the field of restorative justice. Their workers have driven demand for the RJC's Direct Accreditation process and our Restorative Service Quality Mark (RSQM). Here we look at how these products have helped youth offending workers and hear from organisations and individuals who have achieved them.

We all know that restorative justice works. It can have a positive effect on offenders and help victims move on from harmful incidents. The RJC wants to make sure that restorative justice is always done well so that people harmed by crime can be confident that they will get a safe, effective service that meets their needs. Practitioner Accreditation and the RSQM, which is supported by the Ministry of Justice, give the public that confidence.

The RSQM is a quality mark for organisations that provide high quality restorative services. It measures organisations' restorative work against the six Restorative Service Standards and ensures that victims and young people who offend feel safe and are able to fully benefit from restorative processes. Graham Doubleday works with young people at Wigan Council Restorative Solutions Team which has achieved the RSQM. He said: "I think standards are really, really important. Nationally there are a lot of services delivering restorative interventions, but whether they are meeting the needs of the victims, young people and communities is still unclear. The RSQM is the only true and proper way to actually measure that."

The Restorative Service Standards and the RSQM were developed by the RJC in consultation with the field after the Ministry of Justice Restorative Justice Action Plan identified the need for a clear set of standards and a quality mark for services which

meet those standards. Dianne Gibson, an RJC Accredited Practitioner at Leeds YOS, which also holds the RSQM, said: "The Restorative Service Standards and RSQM are extremely important as they are recognised by the government. It was a massive achievement for us to gain the RSQM and something we are really proud of."

The RSQM was launched in January 2014 and a year on it is gaining momentum. At the time of writing, 14 organisations from a range of sectors hold the award and applications to complete the process are growing steadily. Of those 14, five YOTs have achieved the RSQM with six others currently working towards it. In addition to this over 30 YOTs have now started the free self-assessment, available on the RSQM website - the first step to achieving the quality mark.

The RSQM can provide an opportunity to celebrate the good work of staff. Graham Doubleday says: "Achieving the RSQM was a massive achievement for Wigan because we are a little town in the north-west of England and we have achieved a really significant national accreditation. We see this as the start of a journey though, because there will be learning from this, which can help us develop our practice even further."

Becoming an Accredited Practitioner is also extremely important and provides an opportunity for individuals to demonstrate that their work has been assessed against national standards. Practitioner Accreditation can help practitioners to have confidence in their own work. Dianne Gibson says: "Achieving accreditation boosted my confidence and it also reassures victims and offenders that I know what I'm doing. Going through the accreditation process gave me a belief in myself and my work which I can put across to case holders. It made me a bit more assertive".

To find out more about becoming an Accredited Practitioner, please visit: <http://practitioners.rjc.org.uk>

To find out more about the RSQM, please visit: www.rsqm.org.uk



From crime to completion

Restorative justice is fast becoming integral to the work of youth offending teams across the country. Here Pete Wallis looks at different approaches to embedding restorative practices into youth justice.



Restorative justice was first introduced in legislation in England and Wales at the time that YOTs came into being. Since then the majority of restorative justice in England and Wales has taken place in youth justice, although the balance is now changing with the current

government's commitment to adult restorative justice. Since the late nineties there has also been a wave of interest in the use of restorative approaches in other settings, for example in schools, housing, children's homes and in the workplace.

More recently there is increasing interest in the concept of a 'restorative organisation', in which a restorative mindset is embedded in every aspect of a team or service, and also the emergence of restorative cities and counties. There is now huge variation in how YOTs understand and deliver restorative justice, and the extent to which this remains simply a service to clients or a more fundamental shift in the whole ethos of the organisation or even the criminal justice process itself.

Below I will look at my own service, Oxfordshire YOS and Wigan Council Restorative Solutions Team, to see two different options for how restorative practice can be introduced into youth justice. Reflecting on these examples of how restorative justice is delivered in different areas highlights the huge scope for creativity and innovation in this vibrant area of youth justice. It shows that there is no single model of restorative justice, and that rather than 'best practice' it may be more accurate to talk about 'emerging practice'.

Oxfordshire YOS

Oxfordshire YOS has a restorative justice senior practitioner, a restorative justice support worker and two volunteers. The team meet with all the young people referred to the YOS by the police and the courts, and with the people affected by their crimes, to explore the potential for a restorative process. In line with Youth Justice Board policy all frontline YOS

workers, managers and volunteers are trained in the restorative approach.

The YOS recently achieved the Restorative Service Quality Mark for the service it delivers to clients, and is now working towards an understanding of what it might mean to be a fully restorative organisation. In common with many other YOTs Oxfordshire is working in partnership with the county's schools, children's homes, social care and early intervention services to embed restorative approaches as an alternative to criminalising young people where there is conflict. The YOS also works in close partnership with the charity SAFE! which supports young people who are struggling to cope and recover following a crime.

Case study: Rape case

Oxfordshire's senior practitioner facilitated a restorative meeting in a case involving a young man who raped a much older woman. Although the woman said immediately after the young man was sentenced that she wished to meet with him, the case took three years of preparation before the time was right for the meeting to go ahead. A vulnerability management plan was put in place to ensure that the young man was supported following the meeting, and in common with other cases involving very serious offences, he dipped a few days after the meeting and had to be placed on enhanced surveillance. The restorative meeting was a first for the young offender institute, and both parties were pleased with the outcome.

Wigan Council Restorative Solutions Team

Wigan Council Restorative Solutions Team is a diverse team that works with young people who are at risk of engaging in low-level antisocial and offending behaviour, young people who are made subject to Out of Court Disposals, and cases referred to Wigan YOT from court. The team has 19 staff who are all trained in restorative conferencing and they undertake all victim contact on behalf of Wigan YOT. If the case is serious it is allocated to a senior

practitioner, YOT police officer or more experienced member of the Restorative Solutions team for the restorative justice work.

Restorative Solutions uses volunteers to facilitate Neighbourhood Resolution Panels, which have recently been expanded to cover the entire borough. The team offers a youth mediation service in local communities and X-Zones diversionary activities to targeted groups and individuals, and facilitates all the reparation work in Wigan.

The team received the Restorative Service Quality Mark from the Restorative Justice Council in November 2013.

Pete Wallis
Senior Practitioner (Restorative Justice)
Oxfordshire Youth Offending Service

Case study: Shoplifting

Two young people were involved in five incidents of shoplifting in a local shop. The restorative solutions team supported the trained volunteer to visit and assess the shop owner who was the victim in this case, the young people and their parents. A restorative meeting was held at the local fire station. The shop owner received a formal apology from both of the young people and their parents, and the young people paid £15 as a private agreement. One of the young people also brought along a letter of apology.

The ban from the shop was lifted, and the young people also agreed to go into the shop to apologise to the shop owner's mother informally, with the full support of their parents. All parties were satisfied with the outcome.



For more information on the RJC and quality restorative justice

Case studies demonstrating restorative justice in action:

www.rjc.org.uk/rj-in-action

Best Practice Guidance for Restorative Practice:

www.rjc.org.uk/bestpractice

Information on joining the RJC:

www.rjc.org.uk/register

Information on the Restorative Service Quality Mark:

www.rsqm.org.uk

Information on becoming an Accredited Practitioner:

<http://practitioners.rjc.org.uk>

