

WHAT IS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE?

Restorative justice brings victims and offenders into communication, enabling everyone affected by a crime to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward.

Restorative justice gives victims the chance to have their say, to get answers to their questions, and to move on with their lives.

Restorative justice holds offenders to account, directly and personally, gives them an insight into the real impact of their behaviour, and an opportunity to make amends.

Restorative justice is not designed to replace criminal justice proceedings. In Durham it is designed to work alongside, and when integrated with criminal justice it can deliver benefits that traditional criminal justice on its own cannot.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS?

Trained facilitators will arrange to meet you, to talk about how you and anyone close to you have been impacted by the crime and what could be done to make things better for you.

You will be asked if you would like the facilitator to arrange a meeting for you, or some other type of communication with the offender so that you can tell them about your thoughts and feelings about what has happened.

You will also be asked if you would like any meeting or other communication to be soon, before the offender is sentenced or later.

If you say that you would like some communication with the offender soon, and if the person who has been charged pleads guilty when they come to Court, the same facilitator will then contact the offender.

The facilitator will then talk to the offender about what happened, about the offender's understanding of the harm they have caused, and what they think they could do to personally make things better.

The offender will then be asked if they would like the opportunity to meet you or have some other type of communication with you.



THE CONFERENCE

If everyone agrees (that's you, the offender and the facilitators) a face to face meeting, **called a conference** will be arranged.

The meeting will be managed by the facilitators who are responsible for making sure that it is safe and that everyone equally has the chance to have their say. It will be held in a safe place and could last for up to an hour and a half.

If needed and agreed beforehand you and the offender are able to bring along a supporter.

Alternatively, you and the offender might agree to communicate indirectly which means that the facilitators will arrange to pass messages and/or questions back and forward between you. This will continue until you are both happy that all issues have been addressed.

THE FACILITATORS

The facilitators have all taken part in specialist training in restorative justice and have experience of dealing with this type of process. They provide a completely confidential and impartial service. **Their aim is to be supportive and to make the experience positive for everyone involved.**

WILL THIS CHANGE THE SENTENCE THE OFFENDER GETS?

That is up to the Judge or the Magistrate.

The Court will be given a report by the facilitator which will record what happened, what was agreed, and what the victim thinks and feels. It is the judiciary who decide on the appropriate sentence for the crime.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR ME?

Victims often want to understand why the crime happened to them. They also want to play some part in the process of what happens to the offender

This communication will give you the opportunity to tell the offender your thoughts and feelings about what happened. You can ask any questions you have and agree what the offender could do to make things better for you.

Evidence shows that over 85% of victims who have taken part in restorative justice processes have come away from conferences feeling satisfied because they have had their say, because it has helped them move on from what has happened, and because the experience has reduced their fear of crime.

Being involved in a restorative process can give you a chance to:

- Have your say
- Explain to the person who harmed you, what the real impact of their behaviour has had on your life;
- Get answers to questions and remove the nagging doubts;
- Face your fears, take back control and move forward positively with your life;
- Help to prevent the same thing happening to somebody else

ARE THERE BENEFITS FOR THE OFFENDER?

If the offender is motivated, they will listen, answer any questions that might help you understand and apologise properly and personally. Similarly, they might agree with you any actions that may make

things better for you. That might include addressing the issues, which led them to commit the crime. Offenders who have taken part in restorative justice processes have said that the experience has helped them understand how their actions affect others, to address their feelings of guilt and remorse for what they have done, and to do something positive.

HOW TO CONTACT US

For more information, contact:

The Restorative Hub

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PRE-SENTENCE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROJECT

Information for Victims

Durham Courts