

What is Restorative Justice?

Restorative justice brings those harmed by crime, 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.

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 gives offenders/the person that caused harm 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; alongside and integrated with criminal justice it can deliver benefits that traditional criminal justice on its own cannot.

The process

A trained facilitator will arrange to meet the victim of the crime you have committed, to talk about the impact of what has happened, the consequences this might have, and what could be done to make things better for them.

The victim will be asked if they would like the facilitator to arrange a meeting, or some other type of communication, with you, so that they can tell you about their thoughts and feelings about what has happened.

The victim will also be asked if they would like any meeting or other communication to be soon, before you are sentenced, or later.

If they say that they would like some communication with you soon, and if you plead guilty when you come to Court, the same facilitator will then make contact with you.

The facilitator will talk to you about what happened, about your understanding of the harm you have caused, and what you think you could do to personally make things better.

You will then be asked if you would like the opportunity to meet the victim, or to have some other type of communication with them.

The conference

If everyone agrees – that's the victim, you and the trained facilitator – a face-to-face meeting, called a conference, will be arranged.

The meeting will be guided by the facilitator, will be held in a safe place and will probably last for up to an hour and a half. In the meeting, everyone will get to have their say.

You, and the victim, can invite friends, family or other supporters to come along.

Alternatively, if everyone agrees, the facilitator can arrange another type of communication between you.

The facilitator

The facilitator will be someone who has undergone specialist training in restorative justice. They provide a completely confidential and impartial service.

Their aim is to be supportive and to make the experience positive for everyone involved.

“If anyone reading this is considering taken part in an RJ conference but aren't sure, then let me say this. Go for it, it just may change your life! It changed mine.”

Peter Woolf, a former career criminal who spent over 18 years of his life in prison.

What are the benefits for the victim?

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 person who committed the crime.

The conference will give the victim the opportunity to tell you their thoughts and feelings about what happened. They can ask any questions they have, and agree what you could do to make things better for them.

What are the benefits for me?

It gives you the chance to make a real, positive difference to the person you have harmed. You have the opportunity to listen to them, and can answer any questions they might have.

By helping you to face up to the consequences of what you have done it can help you to feel better about what happened and help you to put it behind you.

You might apologise for what you have done, and can agree with the person you have harmed what you can do to personally make things better for them. That might include addressing the issues which led you 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

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We are an independent charity offering free, confidential support to people affected by crime and traumatic incidents.

For information and support, contact us by:

- calling: Supportline **08 08 16 89 111**
- using Next Generation Text (add **18001** before any of our phone numbers)
- Online: **victimsupport.org.uk**

To find out how you can help us, visit **victimsupport.org.uk/get-involved**

VS VICTIM SUPPORT

What is Restorative Justice?

Information for offenders/person who has caused harm

“I remember everything about what happened that’s why I feel so bad about it all. I want to say sorry. I didn’t intend to scare her, if someone had done that to my family I would have gone mad.

I don’t want her to keep feeling worried. Meeting her will be the hardest thing I have ever done, including going to jail.”

Quote from offender 2017.

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