

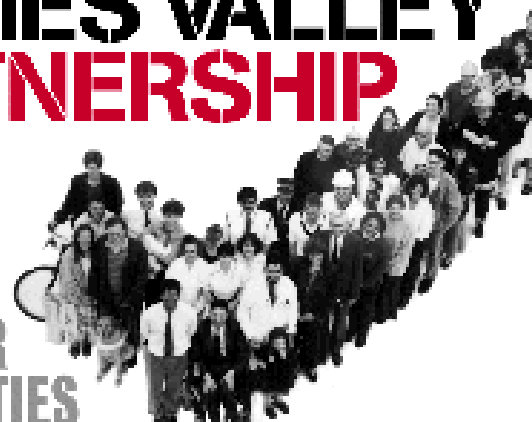
# Restorative Justice A new school of thought?

Introducing  
Restorative Justice  
into the school  
setting

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# Introduction

This booklet aims to provide practical advice and guidance to both practitioners and policy makers who are interested in exploring new ways of dealing with conflict and inappropriate behaviour in schools. The philosophy, techniques and ideas described are as appropriate to the staff-room as they are to the playground and the classroom. They centre around the philosophy of Restorative Justice (RJ). This new paradigm is described and the way in which these ideas can be useful in the school context is outlined.

The use of restorative practices within schools is a rapidly developing field and thus a rapidly changing one. Very little independent rigorous evaluation of outcomes in schools is yet available. This guide takes the experiences of a small number of initiatives across Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire to provide practical advice on how Restorative Justice is being developed within schools and what appears to work when trying to set up and maintain such initiatives. As has already been mentioned this is a developing field and therefore new schemes and ideas will undoubtedly have emerged by the time that this booklet is completed. It is hoped however that the guide can outline experience to date and also provide a wide range of information sources for those who wish to explore these ideas further.

With the emphasis in schools on raising achievement and attendance and minimising exclusions, all those involved in education need to constantly search for new, creative and effective ways of achieving these goals. As Roger Graef suggests, "Restorative Justice is an idea whose time has come".



# Restorative Justice: A New School of Thought?

Well no, not really. Restorative Justice has its roots in traditions of justice from the ancient Arab, Greek and Roman civilisations that accepted a restorative approach even to murder<sup>1</sup> and to ancient Indian Hindus for whom “he who atones is forgiven”. Restorative Justice has traditionally been associated with criminal justice and was the dominant model across much of Europe until the Norman Conquest. At that time crime was transformed into a matter of felony against the king rather than a wrong done to another person<sup>2</sup>. Thus a crime became an offence against the state and the state was required to punish the offender. The needs of the victim were forgotten.

Interest in the restorative philosophy was rekindled in the late 1980s as a long overdue model of justice that could sit somewhere between the two poles of retribution and rehabilitation. Possibly one of the most influential texts of the restorative tradition has been Nils Christie’s which defined the problem of criminal justice institutions “stealing conflicts” from those affected<sup>3</sup>. So how is Restorative Justice defined?

## A Definition

This question has challenged experts in the field for many years and there is still no complete consensus. During the 1990s Braithwaite comments that Restorative Justice became a “unifying banner, sweeping up various traditions of justice such as ‘making amends’, ‘reconciliation’, ‘peacemaking’, ‘redress’, ‘relational justice’, and ‘transformative justice’.” In 1997 Paul McCold convened a Delphi process which is a method of eliciting opinions from groups of experts about a certain topic. The group were tasked with coming to some consensual agreement on a definition of Restorative Justice. The most acceptable definition to the participants was provided by Tony Marshall:

“Restorative Justice is a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future.”

Simplified even further, Restorative Justice is about restoring the balance of a situation disturbed by crime or conflict and making good the harm caused to the individuals concerned. The word justice implies a concern for fairness in the process and a recognition that any outcome must be seen to be just by both parties.<sup>4</sup> The positive nature of Restorative Justice places great emphasis on future behaviour. Restorative Justice stresses the importance of relationships over and above rules. It seeks at all times to restore the relationships between people when these have been damaged by inappropriate or offending behaviour.<sup>5</sup>

As the Restorative Justice philosophy developed, so a number of processes have come to be associated with it. Thus victim/offender mediation, family group conferencing, healing circles, sentencing circles, restorative conferencing, community conferencing, peer mediation and circle time are all acknowledged to have a place under the restorative umbrella.

If you are interested in finding out more about Restorative Justice then details of further reading and useful web sites are provided at the end of this booklet. How then can the restorative philosophy be of relevant to the school context?

## Restorative Justice and its Role in Schools

The previous section outlined the Restorative Justice philosophy, a philosophy that focuses on the harm caused by conflict, inappropriate behaviour or crime. Restorative approaches look to involve all those affected in seeking ways of repairing the harm. This section puts the restorative principles into context for schools and outlines some methods currently used by schools to support a restorative philosophy.

One of the three key objectives in the Department for Education and Skills Strategy to 2006 is: "to enable all young people to develop and to equip themselves with the skills, knowledge and personal qualities needed for life and work." In order to work towards this, the Department has in place a wide ranging policy programme and targets against which to measure progress and achievement. Schools are required to develop a discipline and behaviour policy and are now required to incorporate citizenship into the school curriculum. The Restorative Justice philosophy can contribute to both the achievement of targets in this area and to the wider aims of creating a healthy school community.

The development of citizenship as a new subject within the school curriculum resulted from the work of the Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools. They advised that children should be helped to acquire:

*'The knowledge, skills and values relevant to the nature and practices of participative democracy; the duties, responsibilities, rights and development of pupils into citizens; and the value to individuals, schools and society of involvement in the local and wider community...both national and local and an awareness of world affairs and global issues, and of the economic realities of adult life'.*

Following this report and extensive consultation, the Government decided to strengthen the position of citizenship within the school curriculum.

Citizenship provides learning opportunities for pupils, from the Foundation Stage, through Key Stages 1 to 4 and for students in the post-16 sector, to gain the knowledge, skills and understanding necessary to play an effective role in society at local, national and international levels.

It helps them to become informed, thoughtful and responsible citizens who are aware of their duties and rights. It promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, making them more self-confident and responsible both in and beyond the classroom. It encourages pupils to play a helpful part in the life of their schools, neighbourhoods, communities and the wider world.

As Belinda Hopkins of Transforming Conflict: A Centre for Restorative Justice in Education (see 'useful contacts' at the end of this document for details of Transforming Conflict) states: "Restorative Justice stresses the importance of relationships over and above rules. It seeks at all times to restore the relationships between people when these have been damaged by inappropriate or offending behaviour. This has profound implications for any community that seeks to embrace restorative principles - and none more so than the school community where young people are learning to be effective and reflective citizens".



Belinda has adapted work by Howard Zehr<sup>6</sup> who drew up a comparison of the traditional retributive justice system and compared it to the new restorative paradigm. Her table comparing the old retributive system of dealing with conflict in schools and a new restorative paradigm for schools is shown below.

### Restorative Justice in Schools

<b>Old Paradigm Retributive Justice</b>	<b>New Paradigm Restorative Justice</b>
Misdemeanour defined as breaking the school rules	Misdemeanour defined as adversely affecting others
Focus on establishing blame or guilt, on the past (did he/she do it?)	Focus on problem-solving by expressing feelings and needs and how to meet them in the future
Adversarial relationship and process	Dialogue and negotiation – everyone involved in communicating and co-operating with each other
Imposition of pain or unpleasantness to punish and deter/prevent	Restitution as a means of restoring both/all parties, the goal being reconciliation
Attention to right rules, and adherence to due process	Attention to right relationships and achievement of the desired outcome
Conflict represented as impersonal and abstract: individual versus school	Misdemeanours recognised as interpersonal conflicts with some value for learning
One social injury replaced by another	Focus on repair of social injury/damage
School community as spectators, represented by member of staff dealing with the situation	School community involved in facilitating restoration
People affected by misdemeanour not necessarily involved	Encouragement of all concerned to be involved – empowerment
Miscreant accountability defined in terms of receiving punishment	Miscreant accountability defined as understanding the impact of the action, seeing it as a consequence of choices and helping to decide how to put things right

Reproduced with the kind permission of Belinda Hopkins 2001

DfES guidance on school discipline policies states that they should: -

“Set out the boundaries of what is acceptable, the hierarchy of rewards and sanctions and how they will be fairly and consistently applied.

Key elements are strategies to tackle bullying, racial and sexual harassment and the school's policy on detention and exclusion if these sanctions are used.

Overall, the policy should: -

- promote self-discipline and proper regard for authority among pupils
- encourage good behaviour and respect for others
- ensure pupils' standard of behaviour is acceptable
- regulate pupils' conduct"

Effective anti-bullying strategies should also form part of a school's discipline and behaviour policy. The emotional distress caused by bullying in whatever form can prejudice school achievement, lead to lateness or unauthorised absence and, in extreme cases has been known to end with suicide. To provide some perspective, a third of all girls and a quarter of all boys are at some time afraid of going to school because of bullying.

The restorative philosophy can provide effective strategies for dealing with pupil discipline, bullying, all inappropriate behaviour and as a conversational tool can be used to deal with any incident within the school setting where harm has been caused to relationships. It can be as relevant to disputes between staff as it is to disputes between pupils and as such, Belinda Hopkins advocates a "whole school approach" in the introduction of restorative principles to the school setting. This would involve (wherever possible) parents, governors, lunchtime supervisors as well as all other staff and pupils. Belinda states: "We would encourage schools to consider what we offer as pieces of a jigsaw which, put together, create a congruent whole school approach to relationship building and conflict management."



# Some Restorative Methods Currently Used by Schools

(By kind permission of Belinda Hopkins)

## Circle Time for Students

**Circle Time provides an opportunity** for people to come together in a safe, supportive and enjoyable way to learn more about each other, to grow together as a team, to develop communication skills, to share exploration of problems and to celebrate achievements. Participants are able to develop their social, moral and emotional skills and develop a sense of shared purpose. In process and content Circle Time embodies the spirit of Inclusion and develops Active Citizenship skills.

**Using games**, pair and group activities, Circle Time can help to develop self-esteem, appreciation of others, conflict management and problem solving skills, co-operation and a sense of fun! It is not just an educational and enjoyable experience for young people however. All members of a school community can use this process to enhance their working relationships – whole staff teams, senior management, lunchtime controllers, governors – to name but a few.

## Circle Time for Staff Teams

**Circle Time is becoming more** widely known in both Junior and Secondary schools as a technique for developing a sense of community, developing self-esteem, communication skills and an ethos of inclusion and acceptance. The initial training for teachers in facilitating Circle Time is usually experiential and people have often commented on how useful they find the process for themselves. The need for support; recognition; appreciation; sharing difficulties as well as good ideas; and feeling safe to tackle difficult issues - these are all commonly expressed by staff teams. Circle Time provides an opportunity for all of these. However, support and training is often needed to engage in what is often a new approach to team meetings.

### **When to use it**

Regularly?

Some schools include Circle Time at the beginning of the school day or at the beginning of their regular meetings for business. This provides opportunities for developing a sense of team and expressing concerns, or simply sharing information which colleagues may find useful for providing mutual support through the day.

### **Challenging situations?**

Circle Time has also been found useful to support staff as they prepare for stressful occasions such as an impending inspection or recovering from the aftermath of one. Circle Time recognises that teachers are human beings and not automatons and that to be professional and effective they need to look after themselves and each other before they can look after their students.

### **Team building?**

Team building is vital at the beginning of the school year and perhaps also at the beginning of each new term. Staff come and go and not everyone feels part of the team immediately. Circle Time, with its emphasis on fun and co-operation, can be an enjoyable and effective way to ensure that people who do not normally spend time together can do just that, and perhaps find new ways to collaborate across curriculum or year team divides.

### **Conflict?**

There are times when even the most effective team experiences conflict. Resentment, anxiety and bitterness can fester unless matters are dealt with in a way which is mutually acceptable. If a school is encouraging students to deal with conflict creatively then the adults themselves must be modelling such an approach. Circle Time provides the basis for open sharing of difficult emotion. At times conflicts are of such an order that a more formal process such as the community conference may be needed, However, a staff versed in circle time will be able to engage in a conference with more success and less likely to find themselves in conflict in the first place.

## Restorative Conferencing

**Restorative conferencing** - a process which seeks to repair the harm done to relationships within a community by allowing everyone involved to meet and gain a better understanding from each other of the impact of an incident, the reasons for it and the preferred outcomes. The process usually involves the 'victim' and their parents/supporters and the 'offender' and their supporters as well as key school personnel and behaviour support staff where applicable.

**The conference takes place in** a room where everyone can sit in a circle. Some thought is given to the seating plan and usually the 'victim' or 'victims' sit with their family/supporters and the offender/s sit with theirs. Other key personnel sit somewhere in the middle. The facilitator usually places themselves equidistant from victim and offender.

**The facilitator will have communicated** personally with all involved prior to the conference, ideally face to face, to prepare them for the process and answer any queries and concerns. It is important that everyone present has volunteered to be there and that everyone feels safe. The conference is intended to be an ultimately positive experience from which people can walk away better able to move on and put the incident behind them.

**From the offenders' perspective** the process is not an easy option. Those involved will have to listen to many people who will be talking about the adverse effects the incident has had on them. This is hard to hear and for some it is the first time they really understand the consequences of their behaviour on others, including their own families. Nevertheless it is hoped that by the end of the conference the offenders are able to move forward, perhaps having expressed remorse and even an apology (although this is not forced). Practical reparation is also sometimes agreed upon and an agreement is often signed by all present. The offenders' family can offer practical support to help the offender behave differently in the future. The conference often throws up other issues which may need to be addressed outside of the conference (eg drugs awareness advice; anger management etc)

**From the victim's perspective** the process is a step to understanding why the incident happened. This is often a pressing need for victims, and not knowing can lead to anxiety, distress, loss of confidence, feelings of failure, stress and an inability to cope with every day life. Victims also need to know that an offender fully appreciates the harm they have caused. An apology and perhaps some kind of reparation are likely outcomes which can help the victim move on and put the incident behind them. These are not inevitable outcomes of a conference but they are common.

**From the family's perspective,** the conference gives everyone who feels involved and affected to have a voice. Often an incident has much wider impact than first acknowledged and people are left alone to come to terms with it as best as they can. Friends and families of both victims and offenders can suffer in silence, worried and unsupported, to the detriment of their health and their relationships. A conference can surface these difficult emotions and enable people to reach out, realise they are not alone, and support each other.

**An important feature of the conference is** the involvement of everyone there in planning the way forward. The victims and their supporters are asked what they would like to see come out of the conference and so are the offender's supporters and the offender him or herself. This contrasts with more punitive ways of dealing with inappropriate behaviour. Consensus is generally reached and an agreement signed by everyone. A copy of this agreement is distributed to everyone at the end of the conference and has proved to be a significant element in repairing the harm done.

**Conferences have been used successfully in** schools to deal with cases of bullying, truancy, inter-personal conflict, disruptive behaviour and behaviour warranting possible exclusion.

## Peer Mediation

**Mediation is a process in which people** in conflict are supported by a neutral third party (or parties) to hear each other's story and find a mutually acceptable way forward. Peer mediation is the term given to this process when the mediators are young people mediating their peers. A key principle of mediation is that the people with the conflict are the ones best placed to find ways forward. Imposed solutions do not necessarily address the underlying resentment and bitterness which conflict can cause. Mediation provides an opportunity for exploring these and repairing the harm done to relationships caused by conflict.

Young people can learn the skills of conflict management from an early age. There are schemes encouraging these skills at Key Stage One and Two but mediation training is generally offered in primary and secondary schools rather than at Infant level. (The early groundwork enables mediators to grasp the key issues more quickly so early work with infant age children is encouraged too, perhaps using Circle Time)

**Increasing numbers of schools** are recognising that young people themselves can and should be the ones to find the solutions to their own conflicts. Young mediators can enable their peers to do just that, or at least find a mutually acceptable way forward.

## Managing Conflict in the Playground

**The job of the lunchtime controller** is one of the most important in the school. Controllers often have to deal with issues that spill out from the morning. The skill with which they manage such issues can influence the way young people can engage with their lessons in the afternoon. These people, often undervalued, work with large numbers of young people with adult:child ratios no classroom teacher would accept. Furthermore they are often unprepared for their role as training is scarce and the remuneration they receive is low.

**Dealing with challenging situations** needs to address the context in which the controllers have to work as well as the job they are asked to do. Boosting morale and considering the practical issues are as important as developing conflict management skills. Indeed, feeling recognised and valued and having a good support system in place are pre-requisites to effective conflict management.



## Methodology

As has already been discussed, this booklet is designed as a guide for practitioners and policy makers who may be interested in finding out more about how Restorative Justice ideas could be introduced into the school setting. As such, it was of greater importance to produce the document within a short time-scale whilst the ideas are fresh and relevant and thus sacrifice a more detailed and rigorous evaluation of the schemes over a much greater time-scale. This does not preclude more detailed evaluations in the future but helps to put this document in context.

The schemes are all based in the counties of Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire and have involved personnel from education departments, schools, the police, the Thames Valley Partnership and independent trainers. Some of these people have been directly involved with the schemes from the early consultation phase through to its introduction into schools whereas others have only been involved at one stage, for example early consultation or negotiation on funding. Information has been gathered in a number of ways. Visits have been made to the sites of some schemes that are already up and running. Interviews have been carried out with a small number of key players and questionnaires have been sent to all those identified as having some role (however big or small) in the development of the schemes. The respondents reflect a cross section from practitioner, policy maker and management fields and come from a number of different agencies that have had involvement in the establishment of schemes in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. The author is aware that many smaller schemes have been set up or are operating in these counties and also that Restorative Justice practitioners from many different agencies use the philosophy on an ad hoc basis in their dealings with schools. It has not however been possible to investigate and document this activity within this study.

The information gathered using these methods has been collated and grouped to headings which best categorise the issues and points raised by respondents. The schools included in this study that have already begun to develop schemes, cover a broad cross section of the education spectrum and include schools from the secondary and special sectors. It should however be noted that restorative principles can be applied in any type of school and can be grasped by very young children as well as those in the secondary phase of their education.





# The Findings

## Introducing Restorative Justice into Schools

This section consists mainly of quotes from those interviewed for this study. The author has grouped the responses to the key themes that have emerged during the study and the quotes from those interviewed are shown in italics. Additional text is added to put the remarks in context. The next section looks at implications for the future.

### Who Should be Involved?

Different methods of consultation have taken place across the different initiatives. Some have involved a steering group which was drawn together initially to look at developing a number of projects across a county whilst others involved one to one meetings with different people at different stages of the development of an initiative in an individual school. The steering group, involving representatives from a number of interested agencies, appeared to be the most popular starting point but just who was involved and some of the difficulties of maintaining that involvement are summarised by the following comments: -

*"I recollect there was a lack of practice experience/knowledge of the process with respect to most of the key contributors. I think it would have been helpful to have had a practitioner".*

This is supported by the comments of one practitioner who states: -

*"I would have preferred to have been involved in the initial consultation, setting up and awareness phase. This would have made my job a lot easier".*

Others highlight the need to work in partnership: -

*"Multi-agency participation – all key agencies (should be) fully represented".*

*"Greater involvement of YOT Manager, Education senior management level, Connexions Service, Police Area management team".*

The need to establish clarity of purpose was identified as an important starting point for the steering group and if this vision was clearly defined from the start then those interviewed felt that commitment from all partners was more likely to be maintained: -

*"We needed to develop a clear strategy or vision before we started 'selling' to key managers/people with authority and power. We also needed structured meetings/presentations".*

*"I would have liked the consultation process to have been more complete in the sense that you have to 'get past' the senior management group, they have to sanction it. I would recommend spending some time in the school chatting informally and casually to as many people as possible but even for that you have to get permission".*

*"In retrospect I think that we would need clear agreements in the steering group as to the responsibilities and commitments of the various agencies".*

*"There should have been someone from the LEA who had both the power to spend and the ability to understand the subject. We always seemed to have one or the other or neither".*

## **When to Introduce the Initiative**

Many of those interviewed or responding to the questionnaire experienced difficulties in actually getting things off the ground. Some of the reasons for this are described in more detail in the section on 'difficulties' but the notion of *when* to introduce the ideas to schools featured quite predominantly and therefore justified a separate mention. What seemed to be an important pre-requisite to the introduction of Restorative Justice into a school was that the school already demonstrated some kind of restorative practice and was predisposed therefore to the philosophy: -

*"It is easier if there is already an ethos that is congruent with a restorative ethos. Get an idea from the mission statement, behaviour management policy, PSE/Citizenship programme, internal discipline procedures, bullying policy".*

*"Timing is important – not to take in something when other things being equal it would not be a good time. In a school setting, timing would be crucial and if too many other initiatives are going on check to see if this adds to what they are doing".*

*"You need to be building on stuff rather than starting from scratch".*

*"Needs to be a willingness to be open to change".*

Thus as well as the feeling that the right people need to be involved from the beginning of the initiative, it is also clear that a cultural predisposition to the restorative ethos within the school can be beneficial and may influence the speed with which a project can develop.

## **Resourcing the Initiative**

How to resource Restorative Justice initiatives in schools was another crucial issue that respondees felt had to be addressed and clarified at an early stage. Although resourcing mainly focused on how the initiative would be financed, this was definitely not the only issue. This section highlights not only the material resources that are needed to introduce the initiative but also some of the ongoing factors considered important in maintaining the projects.

In terms of funding the views expressed varied. For some, the emphasis was clearly on funding from central government or the LEA. As one respondent commented: -

*"The funding is more difficult. The easiest route is from Central Government. Failing that, funding should be provided from stakeholders who will gain from its successful implementation".*

For others where funds should originate was a more complex issue and many linked the source of the funding as having a strong correlation with the success and sustainability of the initiative. Thus respondents commented: -

*"An RJ initiative in any individual school needs to be set up with an ongoing commitment of at least some of the funding from the school itself. This should include an allocation of resources to enable staff to do training and continue to take time out from the classroom to evaluate, review and support each other. Funding coming from outside can help to get things off the ground but without mainstream support it is unlikely to secure an ongoing support to a new approach".*

*"Firm difference between a school that is paying for it out of its own budget and a school where funds come from outside. If a school has paid for it, they are more likely to do what they say".*

Financial resources were by no means the only resource issue and in responses received they were rarely the top of the list of prerequisites to the successful introduction of a restorative initiative. Commitment and understanding appeared to be at least as important. Indeed as one interviewee responded, what was needed was: -

*"Committed individuals who have the 'power to spend'.*

Many suggested that financial commitment might be of little use without the commitment of the people who are to be involved and who will be delivering the approach.

In terms of general resources needed to start and maintain an initiative, one individual listed the following as key to success: -

- *"Senior management support*
- *Funding*
- *Schedule of work (project plan with milestones)*
- *Exit strategy*
- *Understanding of what RJ can bring to the schools vision*
- *Shared ownership/commitment from those involved"*

Ownership, commitment and understanding were common themes discussed by all those interviewed as the following quotes highlight: -

*"Shared responsibility from a range of professional bodies".*

*"RJ must be seen as part of a mainstream solution to a problem or issue that confronts the school as a whole. It must have the support from the Head directly – and probably from the governors and all teaching staff".*

In order to gain this commitment and understanding there was an acute awareness of the day to day pressures within which school staff operate and the need to create time to allow concepts to be understood and taken on board. School staff also needed to be able to see how the concepts could have a direct impact on their day to day activities. Thus respondents said: -

*"Intelligence about the real ways schools operate and their real concerns and priorities. One agency to take the lead. Individuals with time to devote and the ability to problem solve".*

*"RJ needs time to bed in and for people to understand and appreciate what it can achieve".*

*"RJ training tailored to school".*

Those interviewed recognised that the resourcing of restorative initiatives in schools depends on sustainable funding. Their opinions on who should provide those funds over time differed but they all agreed that these funds should be securely linked to a clear long term strategy that allows staff time to train, time to take on board ideas and to practice them within a supportive network.

## **Difficulties**

When asked about the difficulties encountered in initiating a restorative project, there was one issue that for schools stood out as a major problem – TIME. Time to train, time to attend meetings and even time to listen to someone talk about the potential benefits of RJ for the school. The following responses from those trying to establish the projects illustrates this point: -

*"One of the biggest stumbling blocks to developing this is time and resources to cover teachers to come out of classrooms to train".*

*"Reality is that teachers in schools are just very very busy and I find with most negotiations you just have to be patient".*

*"I think the reality is, things take longer than you think and its just how it is and you can't really rush it and in fact that's maybe not even a difficulty, it is maybe OK because some of my current experience is it's going too fast, I haven't had time to bond, understand, get on with people, get a sense of what's going on or have a chance to reflect".*

Although time was generally felt to be the main problem for implementing a new idea into schools, it was not the only difficulty encountered. Some of the other difficulties are highlighted by the following comments: -

*"Changes of personnel within LEA".*

*"Professional rigidity – a reluctance to shift existing ideas about how things should be done".*

*"Needed more practical problem solving discussions and less restating of positions and the benefits of RJ approaches. Didn't feel we were operating as a team but promoting different agency/organisation interests".*

*"Clearer understanding of the impact of new initiatives and projects on schools especially in context of recruitment and retention issues".*

*"It's always difficult to engage schools directly...attendance at initial meetings was very poor".*

These difficulties cover a number of areas but tend to link in to other headings that have already been covered in this 'findings' section. Thus where there was no clear strategy established or the wrong people involved then difficulties were more likely to occur as the project was introduced. If the school did not have a predisposition to a restorative philosophy or did not provide time for staff to accept and understand the principles then the project was much harder to introduce. Finally if insufficient resources were highlighted for the work then it was far more difficult to introduce an initiative that would endure.

### **What are the Benefits?**

On a more positive note, there were plenty of benefits to the process cited albeit some of them potential due to the lack of evaluation. One practitioner who had worked intensively within the school setting as well as having used Restorative Justice in other contexts stated: -

*"I have seen it work in many areas and school communities are no different".*

The following are seen as actual or potential benefits based mainly on anecdotal evidence but considerable practical experience.

*"The school will become a fairer place*

*The school will become a safer place*

*There will be more respect shown to the members of the school community by each other*

*There will be better communication*

*Harm will be addressed and repaired"*

*"People will be allowed to take responsibility for their choices"*

Benefits identified included: -

- *"Anti-bullying"*
- *"Raising self esteem"*
- *"Reduced exclusion"*
- *"Reduced violence"*
- *"Raising educational standards"*
- *"Improved learning for all"*
- *"More self confidence for teachers"*
- *"Inclusive approaches towards children with problems"*
- *"Prevention of social exclusion and criminality."*

Some highlighted a need at least initially to use the principles to deal with a specific problem such as bullying, theft or aggressive behaviour.

*"It is more likely to be acceptable where it is offered as a 'tool' to eg reduce bullying, violence etc even where it is a whole school approach".*

*"I would hope that the overall target would be the reduction in exclusion, improvements in attendance and higher levels of achievement. It is because I believe that RJ approaches could contribute to these core objectives that it is still worth promoting and supporting the approach".*

For others, it was much more about developing a whole school ethos which would impact on relationships across the school setting.

*"Much of the research about academic success seems to suggest that good relationships, feeling safe and again the thing about community are key factors in achievement".*

*"Developing a fair and open discipline system in which all participants receive a level of restoration following an act of wrongdoing".*

*"Maintaining good order and behaviour management is key to all aspects of intellectual/social progress. Introducing new concepts/ideas for front line staff in managing this aspect of the work was clearly appreciated. The process itself contributes towards a more transparent and open way of dealing with daily conflicts/issues and enables pupils to fully contribute to acceptable forms of resolution".*

*"The main objective is to help teachers develop new skills and ways of dealing with conflict and bad behaviour in the classroom...teacher training places a greater emphasis on curriculum issues and teachers trained in the last ten years or so have much less confidence and skills to deal with everyday problems of behaviour and challenge. RJ could provide a whole school framework in which teachers and children are helped to resolve conflicts differently – to seek resolution and to recognise the harm that is done to others by anti-social behaviour".*

Those who contributed to these findings had quite different levels of knowledge and experience in relation to Restorative Justice. Some had heard of RJ before their involvement with the project but had not received any training. At the other end of the scale were those who had been involved with the restorative philosophy for years and were both trainers and practitioners in the philosophy and techniques associated with it. Whatever the experience however, they all commented on how much they had learnt from their involvement with the introduction of RJ into the school context. Some of their key learning points are illustrated by the following comments: -

*"I certainly see the benefit for pupils and staff alike. I would not suggest it is the answer in every case but without doubt it is a front line strategy in improving relationships and adult/child communications. Also promotes a sense of fair play for pupils".*

*"The conferencing model can be adapted to different situations from formal to informal".*

*"Need to share best practice – nationally and internationally working with others who also have something to offer – this should be seen as an inclusive approach in all respects".*

*"Need to sell at high level important clear aims/objectives being honest about what it can achieve and what it can't".*

*"In some ways I can see the potential even more strongly now than I could at the beginning. I have become increasingly aware of the difficulty that teaching staff have in dealing with behaviour and the lack of training and support for any kind of approach to help them deal with difficult behaviour in the classroom or in the school. This is actually a huge issue which needs to be tackled through policy, training etc. In the meantime RJ approaches seem to offer one route which can build on expertise from other sectors provided people are prepared to give up the professional boundaries and genuinely look at how the principles can be applied in very different settings".*

The following section, based on the findings discussed in this section, seeks to identify what has been learnt to date and how the findings may be useful for others interested in introducing the restorative philosophy into their school.





## The Future

Restorative Justice as a philosophy can operate at any level within schools focusing on the harm caused to relationships. *How* it is used can vary from informal conversational usage to the holding of a more formal restorative conference. What was apparent from the study findings was that the philosophy is very relevant to the school setting and used appropriately has the potential to have a big impact on relationships within the school community. This applies both to staff and young people as well as between the school community and other interested parties such as parents and governors.

If a school is considering the introduction of a restorative initiative then these experiences have suggested that there are some key factors which if addressed at the early stages are likely to improve the chances of success: -

- A multi agency steering group consisting of committed practitioners and policy makers who have the ability to make decisions and commit resources
- A clear vision with aims, objectives, an implementation strategy and maintenance plan
- An assessment of the school's 'readiness' for the restorative philosophy. Does the school have an existing philosophy which is congruent or at least receptive to restorative approaches
- Support from the head and governing body to provide the necessary time for awareness raising, training, practice, refresher training and implementation
- The philosophy takes time to sink in and it is only over time that people can truly understand and appreciate what the approach can achieve
- Restorative Justice training packages that can be tailored to meet the schools needs
- Experienced trainers available for both training and post training support
- Support networks for those trained and practising the use of restorative approaches in schools
- Funds to be identified and ring-fenced from the start to cover the set up and maintenance of the work. At least some of these funds should come directly from the school to increase the chances of commitment
- Commitment from the whole school community
- Introduction of the ideas into teacher training
- Systems to monitor and evaluate the success of the approach
- Sharing of best practice

- A willingness to accept and try out new ideas rather than a reluctance to shift from the 'comfort zone' of traditional practices

Restorative Justice recognises the fact that when harm is caused, needs are primary and problem solving is central. The total context of the behaviour is taken into consideration and outcomes focus on the future. Professionals help to facilitate the process but it is those affected by the harm who work out what needs to be done and how. The philosophy expects individuals to be accountable for their actions but focuses on how that harm can be repaired. Communication and relationships are central. Although the introduction of these principles into schools is still in its infancy, it seems that there is no better place to start. With the introduction of more restorative initiatives into schools it is hoped that systems to monitor and evaluate the outcomes will also be central to all new projects. Existing positive anecdotal experience can then be backed up by rigorous evaluation and thus support the further use of this new paradigm.

If having read this guide you would like to find out more about Restorative Justice then the following sections on further reading, useful web sites and contact addresses are provided to help you.

## Further Reading

Bazemore, G, and Schiff, M, (2001) **Restorative Community Justice: Repairing Harm and Transforming Communities**. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson.

Bazemore G and Walgrave L (eds.) **Restorative Juvenile Justice: Repairing the Harm of Youth Crime**

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Johnstone,G, (2001) **Restorative Justice: Ideas, Values, Debates** Willan Publishing,

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Masters, Guy. (2001) **The Rough Guide to Restorative Justice and the Crime and Disorder Act** Bristol: Mediation UK

Nathanson Donald L. (1992) **Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex and the Birth of the Self** W. W. Norton. New York: USA

Olweus, D. (1993) **Bullying at School: What we Know and What we Can Do**. Blackwell. Oxford. UK

Sergiovanni, T.J. (1994) **Building Community in Schools** Jossey Bass Inc: USA

Van Ness, Daniel, and Strong Karen H. (1997) **Restoring Justice**. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson.

Wright, M. (1999) **Restoring Respect for Justice**. Winchester: Waterside Press.



## Useful Websites

### **Centre for Restorative Justice and Peacekeeping**

<http://ssw.che.umn.edu/rjp/default.html>

### **Crime Concern**

<http://www.crimeconcern.org.uk/>

### **Crime Concern RJ knowledge base** done with the Youth Justice Board

<http://www.rjkbase.org.uk/>

### **Justice Research Consortium** - For more information click resources then research in side bar

[www.sas.upenn.edu/jerrylee/jrc](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/jerrylee/jrc)

### **Lucky Duck** - Resources and materials on a no blame approach to bullying

<http://www.luckyduck.co.uk>

### **Mediation UK**

<http://www.mediationuk.org.uk>

### **Real Justice**

<http://www.realjustice.org>

### **Restorative Justice Consortium**

<http://www.restorativejustice.org.uk>

### **Restorative Justice Consultants** - Stuart McNeillie's site for Restorative Justice and drug awareness training

<http://www.restorativejusticeconsultants.co.uk>

### **Transforming Conflict** Belinda Hopkins site on RJ in schools

<http://www.transformingconflict.org>

### **Thames Valley Partnership**

<http://www.thamesvalleypartnership.org.uk>

### **Thames Valley Police**

<http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/about/rj/index.htm>

### **Youth Justice Board**

<http://www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk/>



## Useful Addresses

Belinda Hopkins  
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Mortimer Hill  
Mortimer  
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RG7 3PW

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Restorative Justice Consortium  
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Howard Road  
Leytonstone  
London  
E11 3PJ

Tel: 020 8988 0720

Real Justice UK and Eire  
PO Box 30  
Todmorden  
OL14 6LA

Tel: 01706 810201

Youth Justice Board  
11 Carteret Street  
LONDON SW1H 9DL

Tel: 020 7271 3011

Thames Valley Police  
Restorative Justice Consultancy  
Thames Valley Police HQ  
Oxford Road  
Kidlington OX5 2NX

Tel: 01865 375218

Victim Support National Office  
Cranmer House  
39 Brixton Road  
LONDON SW9 6DZ

Tel: 020 7735 9166

The Thames Valley Partnership  
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- <sup>4</sup> Walgrave, L. "Restorative Justice as a Programme and its Consequences for Partnership with Criminal Justice" ; Presentation at the EU Seminar London 9 – 10 June 1998
- <sup>5</sup> Hopkins, B. (1999). "Restorative Approaches in the Community." Mediation 15(3): 3-4.  
Hopkins, B. (1999). "Restorative Justice in Schools." unpublished.
- <sup>6</sup> Zehr, H. "Changing Lenses: A new focus for criminal justice" Scottsdale PA and Waterloo Ontario, Herald Press 1990.

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