

RJ News

Restorative justice news from the Thames Valley Partnership and beyond

SPRING 2004

Welcome to the second issue of *RJ News*, part of Thames

Valley Partnership's Creating Confidence in Justice project. We've had a very busy few months, and we are delighted to report on some of our own RJ initiatives: the Thames Valley's first restorative park project in Reading, the Mending Fences project which is promoting community mediation as a response to antisocial behaviour, and a peer-led alcohol education programme giving young offenders an opportunity to use their own experiences to educate other youngsters on the risks of misusing alcohol.

RJ in education is one of the most important issues for the future. Our main report visits two schools using RJ with amazing results – cutting exclusions by as much as 65 per cent. Elsewhere, a prisoner serving a life sentence offers a personal view on RJ and we hear how young men at Huntercombe YOI are recycling old bikes for special needs schools. There are also pieces on RJ in film and the use of RJ principles in work with sex offenders, and we get some tips on using the media from RJ press officer, Jackie Jones. Finally, we spend a night on duty with the Milton Keynes Retail Theft Initiative. It's the scheme that got RJ going in the Thames Valley, and is to be rolled out across the region. Happy reading!



People on probation serving Enhanced Community Punishment Orders improved 100m of path on their first day at the Edenham project

RJ takes root in Reading!

The Thames Valley's first restorative park project was launched on 19 January, with a project to restore the park at Edenham Crescent in Reading. The scheme, born under our Creating Confidence in Justice project, unites Reading Council, the Prison Service, National Probation Service, Reading Youth Offending Team, Inside Out Trust and others in the restoration of run-down open spaces for the council. The scheme is inspired by the Albert Park project in Middlesbrough, where prisoners and people serving community sentences donated £125,000-worth of labour to the restoration of a neglected Victorian 'people's park'.

The Edenham Project marks the start of a sustainable programme of groundwork in Reading, and will teach offenders skills to help them at the end of their sentences. Offenders under the supervision of Probation and the YOT, and prisoners released on temporary licence will work on site, while those in custody will contribute metalwork, plants and art produced in prison. We hope to initiate creative partnerships with schools and other community groups.

"We are very happy to be working with young offenders and want to see them benefit," says Reading's Parks and Open Spaces Development Manager, Adrian Lawson. "The team has already made a big difference to the local landscape and we have had a lot of support from the community. We hope this is the start of a really creative partnership."

Says Enhanced Community Penalties scheme manager, Andrew Mondaye: "This is a golden opportunity to work alongside prisons to contribute to substantial work in the community."

● For more info on restorative justice in parks visit the Restorative Prison Project website: www.prisonstudies.org

WHAT'S INSIDE

2 A Personal View of RJ
A prisoner speaks out

Making More of Mediation
A new approach to antisocial behaviour

4 Getting Them Young
RJ in school and a peer-led education project on alcohol

7 Winning Hearts and Minds
RJ 'conversations' in film

8 Spreading the Word on RJ
Tips from Jackie Jones

9 Is There a Restorative Answer to Sexual Crime?
Circles of Support and Accountability

10 A Night at the Milton Keynes Retail Theft Initiative
Helping shoplifters to stop

11 The Prison Film Project
Does jail look cushy on TV?

12 Chain Reaction
Huntercombe gets into gear

Family Matters
Family Group Conferences come to Oxford

RJ – A Personal View

For the past year, Bristol Prison has employed a Restorative Justice coordinator. Among other things, she has produced an RJ newsletter for the prison. This is an excerpt from the October issue

Recently, I attended a Restorative Justice Discussion Group which was held in Bristol Prison on September 29.

There were eight inmates there, seven of whom were lifers. Also present were a prison officer, the prison RJ coordinator, Lindy Wootton and a lady by the name of Marian, who lost her sister by murder.

I am a lifer, and was convicted of murder in January 1989. I moved through the system quickly and, after having addressed my 'area' of concern, namely alcohol, was released in November 1999. After being out for some 18 months I was recalled to prison after an alcohol-related driving offence.

On the afternoon of the 29th I, like everyone else, was feeling apprehensive – after all how many people convicted of murder actually

get to sit down and talk with a member of a victim's family?

One comment I feel I must make about a group setting like this is that without the presence of the normal authorities such as psychology and probation, those present, especially people serving long/life sentences, are more likely to open up to their real feelings without fear of misrepresentation or misunderstanding. This is crucial to the effectiveness of such a group.

Whilst listening to Marian sharing her experience you could almost 'feel' the silence in the room, from the pain of finding out what had happened to her sister, through to what is happening in the present. It was an experience I will never forget.

I have never seen so many people, so relaxed, talking about a subject that is, when you think about it, quite gruesome. These are people who, through

personal contact, I know find it very, very difficult to talk about ourselves or what has happened to bring us here, or what direction we are heading in now.

The topics covered that afternoon opened my eyes to issues that I had not resolved myself. Without going into detail, these issues probably led to my own return to drinking, hence my recall to prison. I, for one, truly believe that Restorative Justice is a very good way for people to gain a fuller picture of what they have done – to others, and to themselves.

I learnt more about myself in an afternoon than I did in eleven and a half years of talking to professionals. Once people gain that fuller picture, then and only

then can they have a chance of moving forward with their lives.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in

the setting up of this group, and a very special thank you to Marian for coming in and talking with us.

I hope that after the RJ trial is completed in Bristol that the powers that be will see the very positive impact it can have on the lives of those it touches, both the victims and the perpetrators. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to partake in this group.

Mark H.

● **Bristol Prison's RJ Coordinator, Lindy Wootton's contract ends in March 2004. She will be producing a report on her year at the jail. For more information or a copy of the report, call 0117-980 8232 or write to Rob Fenwick or Marion Phillips at HMP Bristol, 19 Cambridge Road, Horfield, Bristol BS7 8PS**

'How many people convicted of murder actually get to talk with a member of a victim's family?'

making

The central idea behind Mending Fences is that while enforcement initiatives – such

as Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) – are a key element in tackling antisocial behaviour, problem-solving approaches such as Mediation and Restorative Justice often provide the best option," says John Hedge, a senior probation officer seconded to Thames Valley Partnership and responsible for the Nuffield Foundation-funded programme.

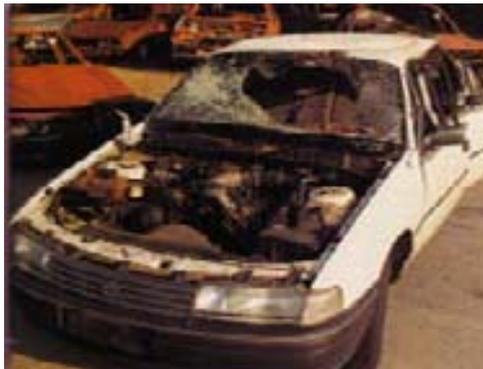
To demonstrate this, Mending Fences is running pilot projects and supporting development work with community mediation schemes across the Thames Valley. As well as raising the profile of community mediation in general, there are particular projects, for example to pioneer mediation in cases of racial tension and cases of intergenerational hostility. In addition, there are plans to explore how mediation

resolve conflict peacefully and constructively. The scheme employs 16 mediators, of whom 12 are volunteers. Together, they work on a range of disputes between neighbours, school pupils, colleagues, families, tenants and landlords, parents and schools and more. Mediation Oxfordshire can also conference large groups, facilitate meetings, and deliver training in communication, negotiating, anger management and around bullying issues. "The aim is to enable people to resolve differences quickly and effectively," says coordinator Cathy Gough. "We are freely available to anyone wanting support in dealing with conflict."

Cathy says a common theme underlying conflict is misperception of other people's behaviour and motives.

Frightened

"I was very frightened and nervous until mediation helped me realise that my neighbours felt the same way I did," wrote



Fear of antisocial behaviour makes many people afraid to go out. Mediation can give them the ability to cope

techniques can complement Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs), and there is a scheme to train young people from diverse backgrounds to mediate among themselves.

Mediation Oxfordshire is an independent charity. One of five community mediation schemes in the Thames Valley, it helps individuals, groups and organisations to

one satisfied client.

John Hedge believes such feelings are aggravated by social dislocation. "Fear of crime keeps people locked behind doors," he says. "We tend to look to officials to sort things out, but this rarely helps. Mediation allows people to find their own solutions. Given the opportunity, even the most severe cases can be solved."

Indeed, there is growing evidence that mediation can complement behaviour

more of mediation

Antisocial behaviour is a high priority at the Home Office. But with four out of 10 Antisocial Behaviour Orders imposed on young offenders being broken⁽¹⁾, is the government missing opportunities to tackle crime and fear of crime? Thames Valley Partnership is pioneering a new scheme that might offer some real solutions

enforcement actions such as ASBOs and ABCs. Mediation Oxfordshire recently dealt with a case involving multiple complaints against a young woman and visitors to her home. Local residents felt intimidated and wanted the woman evicted, whereas agencies including the police, housing and community safety, while appreciating the nuisance, felt she needed support rather than punitive action.

A mediator was employed and one neighbour was chosen to represent the rest. In a subsequent meeting an ABC was drawn up. "By hearing from her neighbour the impact of the behaviour of her visitors, the young woman was more motivated to uphold the ABC," says Cathy Gough, "while the neighbour, in contributing to the process, could see the young woman's commitment to change. With the meeting essentially supportive to the young woman despite the serious conditions being imposed, it was, in effect, a restorative ABC conference. It led to the housing officer saying that mediation was clearly 'perfect for ABC's'."

Moving forward

"Mediation is about finding resolutions that work for all parties," says John Hedge. "And by showing people that they can make a difference it can also tackle fear of crime – it can get people out from behind locked doors and equip them to move forward. People traditionally turn to the police, so if we could persuade the police to refer people to community mediators that would be a good model for other agencies to follow. And,

of course, if mediation is used routinely in less serious cases it can tackle bad behaviour before it becomes criminal."

Hand to mouth

Rethinking Crime & Punishment (RCP)* recently threw its weight behind mediation as an answer to antisocial behaviour. Commenting on the government's antisocial behaviour action plan, RCP Director Rob Allen said it was time the government started looking for some real solutions to the problem. He said: "Neighbourhood mediation schemes have a proven track record in tackling neighbour disputes, yet they are available in only half the country. A national network of neighbourhood mediation schemes would help nip problems in the bud."

John Hedge agrees: "Community mediation schemes operate on a hand-to-mouth basis. It is high time we recognised the enormous contribution they make and how much more they could do if they were consistently funded. We should give them the place they deserve in the antisocial behaviour debate."

Mediation Oxfordshire is currently hosting a Mending Fences pilot into using mediation to deal with racial tension on a local housing estate. It is working with street wardens, Sure Start, the Race Equality Council and the local community to encourage referrals to the new scheme.

"The estate suffers from the full range of conflict, but there are added problems related to

race and people's difficulty in coping with difference," says Cathy Gough. "All the agencies in the area are reporting these problems. So far, we have got agreements and the involvement of all the agencies, in particular, street wardens, who are closely in touch with local problems. We hope to show that this approach is effective."

Milton Keynes Community Mediation Service (MKCMS) has already trained four young people as mediators and plans to recruit at least 10 more to work with a range of clients, in particular in cases involving racism and other young people. MKCMS is also delivering peer mediation training at a local school.

"Children are often a factor in conflict," says Paul Kett, 24, who has been a mediator for

two years. "It can be about their music, kids not getting on, allegations of bullying. It is often a relief for young people to meet a mediator from the same kind of age group.

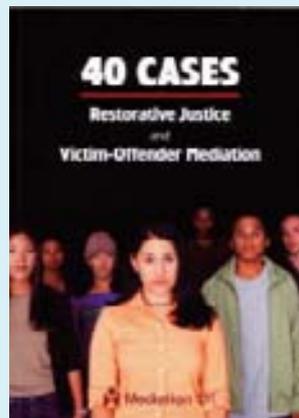
"The work has been superb to do," he adds. "It's made me much more confident. I no longer back away from conflict. This has taught me how to listen, delve deeper and get attuned to people's needs." ■

⁽¹⁾ A survey for the programme *Kenyon Confronts* claims 370 out of 842 young people given an ASBO – 44 per cent – ignore the bans

*Rethinking Crime & Punishment is a three-year national project to increase public understanding of criminal justice

● For further information on Mending Fences, contact John Hedge on 01844-202001; email: johnh@thamesvalleypartnership.org.uk

● For your local mediation service call Mediation UK on 0117-904 6661



Mediation UK has recently published **40 Cases**, a compilation of Restorative Justice and Mediation case studies illustrating RJ in practice. The book covers a huge breadth of cases including vandalism, arson in a school, theft and assault. Bullet points labelled 'Reflections' at the end of most of the cases highlight important practical issues, while the Introduction contains a useful list of 'Key Features of Restorative Justice'.

"40 Cases reconnects the idea of Restorative Justice with the authentic accounts of 28 practitioners and delivers learning to share. It is a readily accessible source of additional experience and inspiration to respectfully repair harm," says Paul Crosland, the book's co-editor and Mediation UK's RJ coordinator.

● To get **40 Cases** for £12.95, phone Mediation UK on 0117-904 6661, or visit the resources/publications section at www.mediationuk.org.uk

getting them when



Harriet Wall (back to camera) is head of the Learning Support Unit at Drayton School in Banbury. She says: "RJ allows agreement between students so that they know where they stand."

RJ in school is cutting exclusions by up to 65 per cent and – with children outside mainstream education three times as likely to offend – RJ in education is one of the most effective means we have of reducing long-term offending risk.

RJ News visits two schools at the cutting edge

Restorative justice is growing fast in the UK's schools. Since summer 2002, the Safer Schools Partnership between the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Youth Justice Board (YJB) and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) has led to the introduction of 100 police officers in schools in areas of high street crime. A second YJB programme, 'Restorative Justice in Schools', has funded nine projects over three years to use a variety of restorative practices to reduce offending, victimisation, bullying, truancy and exclusion.

The Safer Schools Partnership (SSP) was

inspired by a 1998 Thames Valley Police scheme to install police officers in secondary schools in Banbury. The idea was to use community-based policing to cut crime. Putting police in school was seen as a way to reach a large

'At first we were seen as a joke!'

proportion of the community – schoolchildren – and offer diversions to those at risk of getting into crime or being excluded from school.

The scheme was set up by PC Graham Waddington who spent four years as resident police officer at Drayton

School in North Banbury. He remembers the early days: "At first, Drayton was seen as a bit of a joke – people said, 'the school's so bad it needs a policeman!'," Graham laughs. "But within a year all the schools wanted one."

Graham was last year awarded the Queen's Police Medal for services to young people, policing and community work for his work at Drayton.

"The original project was a tiny, grassroots thing," he recalls. "It started as a pragmatic approach to divert young people from the criminal justice system, and allowed schools to develop a policy of inclusion. Using RJ

meant we could engage with the children, and use a range of restorative practices to challenge their behaviour on a daily basis. Not only did it give the victims a voice, it was a great empowerment tool for the perpetrators. It allowed them to stay at school, face up to what they had done and find the support they needed to make other choices."

Graham has since left Drayton and the SSP officer for the school is currently PC Gary Fletcher. In common with SSP colleagues across the country, his role is to reduce crime and victimisation among young people, provide a safe school environment,

they're young...

help keep young people in education and inspire in them respect for their community.

For Drayton's headteacher Graham Robb, who took over in July 1999 when the school was under Special Measures, RJ has been a powerful tool in

'A more positive school ethos'

repairing relationships, dealing with potentially criminal issues and building up a more positive school ethos.

In cases of a serious nature, victims are now offered a choice between going to court, letting the school address the problem or, where appropriate, working with Gary Fletcher or another trained RJ facilitator from the school on a restorative solution.

"It's usually agreed that RJ is the better way," says Graham Robb. "It's quick, as opposed to a referral to the criminal justice system, and it means that the hurt party sees a speedy resolution. There is a perception among pupils and parents that perpetrators have had to listen in a demanding way to the harm caused."

Gary Fletcher also acts as a bridge to the wider community, working with agencies such as Connexions. He believes that improving children's respect for the school community improves their respect for the community outside. His work brings home to pupils the seriousness of some offences and shows them that such behaviour would not be tolerated outside school gates. Indeed, figures have shown a drop in permanent exclusions – while tracking of those involved in RJ conferences has shown success in keeping people out of the criminal justice system.

Drayton is also a part of the YJB's RJ in Schools

programme. It has joined up with five 'feeder' primary schools and commissioned eight training sessions by Oxfordshire YOT and the RJ in schools organisation Transforming Conflict. In an example of a 'Whole School' approach to RJ, a range of staff, including teachers, clerical and lunchtime staff, have been trained in a range of restorative techniques including conferencing, circle time and 'restorative discussions'.

"RJ is not just about security, it's about better qualifications," says Graham Robb. "It's about stopping children falling out of the educational community, because if they are excluded their chances of getting into crime are much higher. And it's about developing emotional literacy so children can express themselves and avoid conflict."

In the future, Graham would like to see children practising mediation. "We already have peer educators and peer mentors – the vision is that we will eventually have peer mediators out in the playground using RJ terms and processes, working with

'It's about emotional literacy'

victims and perpetrators of bullying to show them that harm has been caused and resolution must be reached.

"Continuing this work is crucial," Graham concludes. "These are the citizens of the future. They need to develop skills to solve the problems they will face as adults. Restorative justice allows them to do this. We must encourage it across all schools in order to build a more cohesive society, and a society at ease with itself." ■

● Visit Transforming Conflict at: www.transformingconflict.org

'RJ has given us a second chance'

At Hurlingham and Chelsea School in Fulham, London, Janet Clark, a member of the school's Inclusion Team, is a dedicated RJ coordinator, part-funded by the YJB under the RJ in Schools programme. Since their RJ project began in early 2002, Janet and other trained staff have conducted over 127 RJ conferences, tackling everything from bullying to group conflict, pupil-teacher conflict and truancy. Some 189 exclusions have been avoided – and out of 238 agreements there have been just two re-occurrences of incidents involving the same pupils.

The project initially focused

every weekday, there is almost always a history to the offence in question – completely unprovoked attacks are the exception. Luckily, through their remit to explore harm done, RJ conferences provide an opportunity for both parties to explore their relationship – and often there are apologies on both sides. From the pupils' perspective, conferences provide a valuable opportunity for them to communicate in a safe environment – and to get to the truth.

This has led to a perception that the process provides justice. In a survey at the school, 82 per



Chelsea girls:
from l-r:
Jenny,
Kayleigh,
Janet Clark,
Ebony and
Charlene

on cases punishable by fixed-term exclusions of between one and 40 days, but has since broadened out to less serious matters. In a conference, perpetrator and victim, sometimes accompanied by supporters, can express their feelings according to a traditional RJ conference format. At the end, an apology is sought, and a contract is signed, generally undertaking that similar behaviour will not happen again.

In a marked difference to many cases in the wider criminal justice system, Janet points out that with school children facing each other

cent of pupils agreed that the conferences were fair.

The contract signed at the end is very important, too. For Jenny, who, with her sister, got into a fight with another group of girls, a restorative justice conference was a way of making peace with the rival group without losing face: "We got to say what we wanted to each other without anyone else stirring things up. And signing the contract was great – if you don't stick to it, you're out of school. So RJ gives you a second chance to put things right, and it also makes you feel more secure because you can say, 'I don't want to fight', not

because you're scared, but because you don't want to get into trouble."

Helen Mahaffey, Project Coordinator for Hammersmith & Fulham Youth Offending Service, says: "The most important result is that it has changed the children's behaviour. It has made them more aware of the impact of what they're doing – not just on the victim but on their own family and the victim's family. They learn through experience. It's probably one of the most effective steps towards real change we have."

Certainly, for Ebony, who was involved in a series of fights at the start of the project, RJ has helped with behaviour. "There used to be a big problem with our crew," she says. "We were just too much. But after we had a meeting we calmed down straightaway."

Transformative

And for Kayleigh, who had excluded herself from school after an argument with a friend, RJ was a blessing. Although it took a year to get the two into the same room, the conference when it happened was transformative. "It was done very fairly," says Kayleigh. "No one took sides. We found out how each other felt – we didn't know before the meeting. If I hadn't had that meeting I wouldn't be in school now. I felt much more confident afterwards. We are best friends now."

Helen Mahaffey points out that with the children taking real pride in their contracts, RJ has taken a lot of pressure off pupils, meaning that they can progress with their learning. Says Ebony: "Everyone in school knows about RJ, and most people do RJ if they get the choice. It means we don't need to watch our backs so much. We can walk around without being afraid of who's behind."

Integrated

In its final phase, the Hurlingham and Chelsea project has broadened out and informal mediation is increasingly taking the place of full-scale conferences.

"From being seen as a separate project in the school, it now feels very integrated," says Helen Mahaffey. "Pupils are referring themselves! Last year, a group of girls asked for an inter-school conference after running up against a rival 'crew' from another school, and last week two girls knocked on the door saying they had a problem that was going to lead to a fight if it wasn't sorted out soon. So now we are getting them before they even get into conflict, which is wonderful!"

"It's made us think about peer mediation even more," adds Janet. "If the staff can carry on with the conferences and we can train our peer mentors to use restorative skills to resolve conflict amongst their peers, that would make an excellent model." ■

● For more info visit the YJB website: www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk

● You can contact Helen Mahaffey on 07813-687598; email: HEL@mahaff.freeserve.co.uk

Telling it straight

Ten young people stand on stage at the Swan Theatre, High Wycombe, soaking up hearty applause from an invited audience which includes local journalists and the chair of Bucks County Council. They've just premiered *Alcohol: The Way It Really Is*, a video about the effects of alcohol that they've made with the help of filmmaker Hatim Qureshi, actors from the troupe Teatro Unfortunato and Judy Munday, arts coordinator at the Thames Valley Partnership.

A collaboration between Thames Valley Partnership, Bucks Youth and Community Services and Bucks Youth Offending Services, four of the teenagers are former young offenders working on the project as part of their reparation orders. The group is now touring the video and an interactive workshop to schools across Bucks, educating their Year 8 and 9 peers.

The video draws on the young people's personal knowledge of alcohol, combining information on its effects through dramatised scenes showing alcohol's effects on relationships, health and safety. Cathy Hunter

from Bucks YOS has no doubt why the project has been such a success: "The young people have learned a lot – not just about alcohol. The YOS clients, in particular, have gained self esteem. They weren't singled out as naughty kids, but instead given a chance to develop good relationships with youngsters from other backgrounds. It has been important for them to be a part of such a positive project."

YOS client Steven says: "I used to get into

trouble because I like to be the centre of attention. This has been a good way to express myself without getting into trouble."

Andy, who is also working on the project as part of a reparation order, committed an offence under the influence of alcohol. "You can't stop young people from experi-

menting, and we won't interest everyone," he says, "but if we interest one person it's better than none." Adds Steven: "We are trying to stop other kids making the same mistakes as us."

● For information on the tour of the video and interactive training programme, contact Judy Munday on 01844-202001; email: judy@thamesvalleypartnership.org.uk

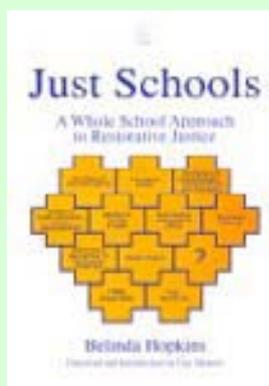


RJ in Education – What Works?

In the UK, restorative justice approaches in schools encompass a range of initiatives including circle time, peer mediation, the 'no blame' approach, also known as the 'taking responsibility' approach and restorative conferencing. Linked to these approaches are preventative aspects, such as conflict resolution and parts of the Citizenship curriculum, which focus on communication skills, anger management and the notion of responsibility. All of these approaches prepare the ground for restorative justice to flourish and become integrated in schools.

A study by Partners in Evaluation (PiE) in association with Oxford University considered the parallels and differences between RJ in the courtroom and schoolroom, and made 11 recommendations based on a YJB RJ in Schools pilot project in Lambeth between May 2000 and April 2002. PiE's report and recommendations can be found on the YJB website on the Practitioners Portal under Restorative Justice. PiE is now evaluating the YJB's current RJ in Schools Project. A report will be out this year.

● For more info visit the YJB website: www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk



There has been much discussion about whether 'restorative justice' is the right name for restorative practice in schools. Author Belinda Hopkins is in no doubt. "RJ is about justice in schools," she says simply. "It is about challenging the punitive mindset." In her book, *Just Schools*, a brief history of RJ is followed by advice on developing it for yourself. With clear explanations of process and advice on many useful skills such as developing an ethos of care and justice, learning to listen and developing restorative approaches to difficult situations, this is useful reading even if you have nothing to do with schools! Rooted in experience, the book is welcoming and workmanlike – recommended.

Just Schools by Belinda Hopkins is published by Jessica Kingsley. £24.95

Winning hearts and minds

Conversations about retribution and reconciliation are taking place in film and television
says Sean O'Sullivan – coordinator of the Prison Film Project

Two years ago, before I began work on the Prison Film Project, I had never heard of Restorative Justice and had little interest in the subject.

But, having recently been involved in work using mainstream film to promote thought about the appropriateness of prison, I think that RJ is a 'big idea' whose time has come. This being the case, one might reasonably ask: Where are the Restorative Justice movies reflecting the ascent of this ideal?

It has been suggested that the Jack Nicholson film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) crystallised the arguments of the anti-psychiatry movement and became a touchstone for proponents of de-institutionalisation and community care. Earlier, in the 1960s, the television drama *Cathy Come Home* raised the issue of homelessness and is credited by some for contributing to the introduction of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act.

Recently, Hollywood has examined social issues from disability to the death penalty.

At first sight, the past decade hasn't seen many Hollywood movies promoting the RJ cause. But, if we look carefully, we might detect a current of films which

address, either directly or indirectly, RJ issues. Proponents of RJ should be encouraged to look sympathetically at how these films might be used to encourage debate about broad RJ themes.

The punitive case

We might begin our round-up with an examination of the negative case – a film which, it could be argued, represents the anti restorative justice position. *In The Bedroom* (2001) stars Sissy Spacek and Tom Wilkenson and tells the story of a middle-aged couple whose son is killed by the ex-partner of his girlfriend. The Oscar-nominated film was well received in its native America – being described in review as a deliciously dark examination of the impact of family tragedy on normal, everyday people.

In the film, unable to prove their son's death was the result of an intentional slaying, his parents have to watch the arrogant killer serve a short sentence and return to the community. The feeling that

they have been denied justice grows, until the couple decide they will take their own revenge. They plan to murder their son's killer.

It is difficult to get any message from this other than that, in contemporary America, arrogant criminals treat the law with impunity and extreme 'vigilante action' is necessary for those let down by it. It is a message that was rarely critically commented on in reviews. The film can be understood as a demand for more punitive justice. A restorative strategy is never tried to deal with the hurt arising from tragic loss.

A counterpoint

A Map of the World (1999) acts as a counterpoint to *In the Bedroom*. In it, Sigourney Weaver plays Alice Goodwin who lives on a Wisconsin dairy farm with her family and works as a school nurse. Her neighbour and best friend is Theresa (Julianne



Photo: BBC

Just as films like *Cathy Come Home* campaigned for social justice in the 1960s, Hollywood films are venturing into restorative justice today

Moore). One day, whilst Theresa's children are visiting Alice, the youngest wanders off to play alone and drowns in the pond. The two women struggle to remain friends, although the incident puts a palpable tension between them.

Shortly after the accident, one of the children at the school where Alice works accuses her of abuse. Other children come forward to make similar allegations. To Alice's surprise, the allegations are investigated and the case goes to court where she is remanded to the county jail to await full trial. When the case goes to court, Theresa takes the stand to testify that Alice has looked after her children often without giving cause for concern. Theresa maintains that the drowning was an accident and says she would still trust Alice with her children. Boosted by her friend's testimony, Alice beats the abuse charge. After the court case Alice and Theresa meet just once, on reasonably amicable terms.

A Map of the World isn't an RJ movie in the way RJ practitioners might understand it. There is no formal RJ process between

Alice and her accusers. But we can still see the film as carrying a restorative moral.

New gameplan

Troubled family circumstances also feature in the next film up for consideration – Spike Lee's *He Got Game* (1998). Believed by most to be about basketball, Lee's film is clearly an argument for reducing the prison population through a shift to RJ thinking.

In *He Got Game*, Denzel Washington plays Jake Shuttlesworth, serving a one-to-fifteen-year sentence in the Attica correctional facility for the manslaughter of his wife. His son Jesus (Ray Allen) is the Number One high school basketball prospect in the country and Jake is offered a deal by the state Governor who says he will reduce Jake's sentence if he can persuade his son to sign for 'Big State' – the Governor's old university.

The film takes place over the course of a week when Jake is out on parole on his mission to influence his son's choice of basketball destination. During a difficult few days, the circumstance of the family killing and the reason for it become clear and Jake is able to effect a partial reconciliation with his son. The film ends on an ambiguous note. Jesus signs for Big State – but we don't know if the Governor will honour his promise and reduce Jake's sentence.

You need really to see *He Got Game* to appreciate why it is a Restorative Justice movie. The questions for discussion posed by the film include: Did Jake deserve to go to prison?; 'Does Jake deserve early release and, if so, why?'; and 'What does *He Got Game* say about what punishment is intended to achieve?' True *He Got Game* doesn't show a restorative conference, but the film does raise some relevant questions and it would be a shame if its debating points were to be overlooked through a failure to recognise them.

Granted, the films reviewed here don't suggest that RJ has taken Hollywood by storm. But equally, a conversation about 'punitiveness and revenge' versus 'reconciliation and healing' is being carried on in Hollywood cinema. We could add to the films above the death penalty movies of the 1990s. The films *Dead Man Walking* (1995), *Last Dance* (1996) and *The Green Mile* (1999) all raise questions about why we punish and what punishment is trying to achieve. They, too, could be used to stimulate debate about these issues.

● For more on the Prison Film Project see p11

Spreading the word on RJ

by Jackie Jones, Media Consultant, Winchester RJ Group

Last July, the Home Office launched its consultation document on restorative justice. Up until then, most people had little understanding of RJ. I would explain it was usually when victims and offenders met face-to-face and it could be really powerful. Some people would vaguely acknowledge they might have heard something about it.

That changed with the publication of the Home Office RJ strategy. Its launch was widely publicised with press and broadcast interviews by government ministers backed with real-life case studies from offenders and victims. The coverage was mainly favourable with even the tabloids treating the subject well, apart from the occasional misleading headline – ‘say sorry and you won’t go to jail’.

If RJ is to gain public acceptance and become mainstream in the criminal justice system, it is vital the publicity continues. True, handling the media can be tricky –

‘We need publicity for RJ to succeed’

some journalists are pushy in their search for the story they want – but we must not be deterred from getting the publicity.

We need the media for RJ to succeed. By giving them clear background information, the more likely the end article or broadcast will be accurate and what we wish to see.

Last year, I prepared a series of press releases on RJ. They provide background on RJ and what it is, information on world findings and a list of the benefits. They were prepared for use across the RJ movement with agreement from Thames Valley Police, Thames Valley Partnership, the Home Office, Restorative Justice Consortium and Mediation UK. The releases are available on the Restorative Justice Consortium’s website and journalists can be referred to them.

Media interviews with offenders and victims who had been through the RJ process worked particularly well for the Government launch. The media always love the human interest angle which brings a complex subject to life with people simply explaining their own experiences. Suitable subjects for case studies are hard to find but it is important that we have more new ones from a variety of crimes – especially victims and offenders from the same case. If we had

more subjects willing to be interviewed, the coverage would have been even greater.

However, one must be careful giving personal information on victims and offenders to journalists and I have prepared my own protocol for handling case studies.

Also, when speaking to the media, try and extract as much information as possible from the journalist or researcher. Ask where and when the article/documentary is to appear and the questions they need answering. Don’t try and bluff your way through the information; never worry about getting back with the answers or suggesting someone else to interview. If major mistakes are published, write a Letter to the Editor, (these are usually published), or try and get a

follow-up story in the next issue or bulletin.

RJ is now being practised in schools, prisons, in the workplace and for tackling antisocial behaviour in the community. All these aspects of restorative justice will be discussed and debated at the Winchester International Restorative Justice Conference, 24 - 26 March. Like the Home Office strategy publication last summer, we are hoping this will be another opportunity to gain more positive coverage for restorative justice.

● For info on the Winchester conference visit www.neilstewartassociates.com

● If you have RJ case studies or need PR advice on RJ, please contact Jackie Jones on 07976-324742

Sycamore Tree transforms lives

Peter Walker, Executive Director of the Prison Fellowship writes:

We were very encouraged to read in the Spring/Summer issue of *RJ News* about RJ at Norwich Prison. In the article you mention the Prison Fellowship Sycamore Tree programme. We wanted to let your readers know that it goes far beyond Norwich.

In the last five years Prison Fellowship has run 219 Sycamore Tree programmes in 44 prisons involving over 2,400 prisoners. It is now the most widely-used restorative justice programme in the Prison Service and at the end of November 2003 was accredited by the Open College Network.

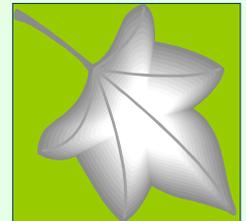
A vital ingredient in the programme is that volunteers who have been victims of crime tell the prisoners about the impact of crime on their lives. Prisoners are invited in the final session to take part in symbolic acts of restitution to the volunteer victims.

Based on the story of Zacchaeus’ meeting with Christ, Sycamore Tree is open to all prisoners regardless of faith, gender, age or offence. There are five sessions, run by trained staff and volunteers.

A volunteer victim from a Victim Support group wrote:

‘As I told my story I was not totally sure that I was being heard by the prisoners. However, the final session did surprise me...I was touched by the emotive material that the men had produced. I feel that I

have made a difference and they have changed my attitude...I felt they had grown. I have grown as a person. They understood my pain and looked into my soul. They gave me back my faith in the human race.’



Prisoners have made many positive comments too, such as:

‘Sycamore Tree made me look at myself, what kind of person I am. I want to change.’

‘Hearing from a victim really hit home.’

‘I think every prisoner should do this because we will all understand more about our victims.’

We are also very encouraged by responses we are receiving from those in the restorative justice field, such as Tim Newell who wrote:

‘Sycamore Tree is the most accessible way of introducing prisoners to the idea of restorative processes and has had a wonderful transforming impact on many lives.’

● Prison Fellowship England and Wales
Tel: 01621-843232;
email: enquiries@prisonfellowship.org.uk
www.prisonfellowship.org.uk

Please send your letters and contributions in to *RJ News* at the address on the back page, or email: rebecca@thamesvalleypartnership.org.uk

Is there a restorative answer to sexual crime?

asks Tany Alexander, a volunteer with Thames Valley Circles of Support and Accountability

In one memorable episode of the hospital drama *ER*, a mortally wounded man has one request: to be allowed to apologise to a woman he raped. His surgeon – the beautiful, brilliant and savvy Elizabeth – refuses outright, but there is an intensity to his continued pleas she just can't ignore. She sets up the meeting he wants. The outcome is predictable, and as the camera displays the horror of the victim in voyeuristic detail, the moral is clear: 'you can never trust a sex offender' – and you are a fool even to try.

Anyone working in the field of sex offending or dealing with sexual abuse can't help but be aware of the facts of sexual crime and how they differ from the fiction. But even as news stories come and go, these facts – like paint running off waxed fabric – seem doomed never to penetrate the public consciousness.

The trouble with the 'lock them up and throw away the key' approach that seems to be the moral of the *ER* tale, is that, in reality, the majority of people are sexually assaulted by people they know. What this means is that most victims of sexual crime have not only



More than tea and sympathy: a Circle of Support and Accountability holds ex-offenders responsible for their actions

to deal with the shock, injury and outrage of a sexual attack, but also with the social and emotional fallout of the betrayal of trust by someone they knew, and maybe even liked or loved. This is particularly true for children: they are three times more likely to be abused by a member of their family or close community.

This kind of violence leaves deep and lasting wounds. Its effects can extend beyond the immediate victim to the whole family, and through time down generations. It also leaves its mark on communities. In recent months, two sex offenders have been murdered. One way or another, our whole

society is affected by the scourge of sexual abuse.

So what can a restorative approach offer in this situation? One answer may lie in Circles of Support and Accountability.

The concept of Circles is blindingly simple: because loneliness and isolation are major factors making sex offenders re-offend, something

the circle looks out for the interests of the community in which the core member is now living while he (or sometimes she) is reborn as a social being. With an over-riding aim to protect the public, its task is to offer support and accountability, accountability and support. Circle members are well placed to keep a close watch over the core member's activities and, if there are danger signs, call them to account. If necessary, they will alert the authorities.

And there you have it: restorative justice by proxy. What the good-hearted Elizabeth couldn't achieve in one 50-minute hospital drama, Circles of Support and Accountability has made a good start on in its first 18 months. With eight circles up and running and another two due to start up in the spring, that's eight ex-offenders being held to account in a way that

They may not know it, but eight communities are safer

has to be done to hook them back into society.

Circles is run with the backing of the police, prisons, probation and sex offender treatment providers. It is part of a Home Office pilot project aiming to provide high-risk, high-need offenders with a circle of four to six trained volunteers to help them through their first year out of prison.

Initially, the circle meets weekly and, most days, a circle member sees the ex-offender, known as the core member, perhaps for a social activity. Circles' skill lies in modeling ordinary human relationships.

Finally – and importantly for the idea of restoration –

is definitely no easy option. Although they aren't aware of it, that's eight neighbourhoods where children are safer. And a whole silent community of children, unwilling victims of abuse, whose pain is not forgotten and whose suffering has made a greater contribution than they will probably ever know. ■

● For info on Circles visit www.quaker.org.uk/peace/brit.html or contact Thames Valley Circles: info@circles.fsnet.co.uk

● Tany Alexander also works as Development Coordinator of Thames Valley Stop It Now!, a campaign aimed at preventing sexual abuse. Visit www.stopitnow.org.uk or email tany@stopitnow.org.uk

Desmond Tutu honours Circles



Photo: Benny Gool

The success of Thames Valley Circles of Support and Accountability was acknowledged in February by the Frank Longford Charitable Trust.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu presented the team with the 'Highly Commended' award before giving the Third Longford Lecture: *The Truth and Reconciliation Process, a Restorative Justice Approach*.

A night in the life of...

The Milton Keynes Retail Theft Initiative

Since it started in 1994, the Milton Keynes Retail Theft Initiative (RTI) has reduced reoffending from 35 per cent to three per cent, and cut the time it takes officers to deal with shoplifters by half. Recognised as the initiative that got restorative justice rolling in the Thames Valley, it deals with people from all walks of life – and of all ages: from six to 86. The initiative is to be rolled out across the Thames Valley. *RJ News* spent an evening at the RTI at its base in Milton Keynes Police Station

4pm. Admin assistant Caroline Cotton arrives and looks through the timetable for the evening. RTI runs every Wednesday from 6pm to 10pm, during which time up to 30 people will be attending either an initial interview, a voluntary intervention such as careers advice or counselling, or a compulsory restorative reprimand, final warning or caution. As long as they meet certain criteria, all those caught stealing in Milton Keynes are offered a place. Not all will have stolen from shops, however: clients tonight include two men caught stealing food from their workplace and an eight-year-old, referred by his parents after they found him handing their money out to his friends. “A lot of our work involves reassuring parents,” Caroline says. “Stealing is a serious matter, but it’s not the end of the world. Coming here gives people a chance to put things right.”

4.30pm. The other observers and I visit Milton Keynes shopping centre to get a snack before the evening begins. The largest shopping centre in Europe, it contains over three miles of shop fronts and over 230 stores. “Before RTI, the main problem was the length of time it took to deal with shop theft offenders,” says RTI project manager WPC Joanna Mears. “Cases were expensive to deal with, too, so many smaller scale offenders were just dismissed. None were having any work done with them to stop them reoffending, and some had significant

problems. Our aims were to reduce the time it took to deal with shop theft offenders and to stop them reoffending. We consulted a range of organisations, including the store managers. We felt the problem belonged to all of us and a multi-agency approach would be best.”

5.30pm. RTI staff and volunteers arrive. They include Protective Behaviours counsellor Jenny Batstone, store manager James Bailey and ex-prisoner Jimmy Twist. By 6pm, various clients have arrived, too, and RTI coordinator Pat Herkes welcomes her first case of the evening, a teenage girl caught stealing from Boots. The girl is accompanied by her mother. The interview is in depth, seeking to find out why the girl stole and any reasons behind her behaviour. The three also discuss who has been affected. The girl can’t understand why she stole, but gentle probing reveals that she’s been bullied at school, and that she is keen to go into hairdressing. Pat refers her to a session with the store manager and Protective Behaviours counselling, and promises to speak to the careers advisor to see if there is a course the girl can do.

7pm. As Pat Herkes moves on to her next case, store manager James Bailey is talking to a young woman caught stealing from a DIY store. As retailers are the victims of shop theft, everyone caught stealing from a shop will see James or another store manager. James explains that for a small business, a lot of theft may result in the business folding or staff redundancies, while in a larger company staff may face disciplinary proceedings or even the

sack. “I wasn’t sure about the RTI approach at first,” James says, “but since I’ve been volunteering I can see how effective it is. Seeing the real people involved makes a real difference, too.”

The store managers also find it useful to hear why RTI clients have chosen their particular stores to steal from – this information can help them tighten security.

Interestingly, the RTI places a moral burden on the companies themselves: “If a store puts a rack of leather coats by the door, sales go up significantly – but unfortunately so do thefts,” says Joanna Mears. “The value of sales means the losses pale into insignificance for the stores. But it’s not insignificant for us – our crime figures rise drastically. And it’s not good for those who get caught stealing, either. We encourage stores to think more carefully about how displaying their goods impacts on others.”

‘The staff were really positive. They understood Gemma is human and that we all make mistakes. At the same time they drummed into her the effect of her actions on others. It made a big impression’

Mother of an RTI client

7.30pm. Protective Behaviours counsellor, Jenny Batstone, gets a break. “The people referred to me are seen as vulnerable,” she says. “A lot get into trouble because of peer pressure. I help them to develop the skills to say ‘no’. One of the children I saw tonight stole

because she was afraid she would be beaten up if she didn’t. I get them to look for physical warning signs, such as feeling sick or worried, then I help them to think creatively about what they could have done differently. Tonight, we discussed how she could have made a scene, for example. Through talking, I found out she has nobody to talk to. I’ve given her a counselling leaflet from the youth service

and she's gone away thinking about asking for support."

Other interventions include drug counselling, parenting classes (through the health visitor), a session with a youth worker and neuro linguistic programming (NLP) – a form of coaching looking at patterns of communication to facilitate changes in thought and behaviour. Most people take up the services on offer – in eight years, Pat Herkes has only seen them declined once.

8pm. Jimmy Twist is talking to a 12-year-old shoplifter about his own experiences in prison. Jimmy sees cases identified as a bit more challenging. After 27 years inside, he claims RJ, which he was introduced to in prison and now continues through volunteering with the RTI, has given him a reason to go straight. He encourages the boy he's with tonight to train as a mechanic, and draws a graphic picture of the possible consequences should the lad continue to offend. "When you're new in prison and you get your trainers taken, you've got to choose: do you fight back, or snitch, or continue to be victimised?" he asks.

8.30pm. Pat Herkes finishes interviewing a middle-aged woman caught stealing a sandwich during her lunch hour. "She bought some goods, hid the sandwich in her bag and walked out," Pat says. "There was no rhyme or reason to her actions – the sandwich had meat in it, and the woman is a vegetarian. She's got a job, a family, no apparent problems, so on the surface everything seemed fine. But it turned out she thinks she may have some kind of compulsive disorder, so I referred her to the health visitor and also gave her information on a counselling service that she can visit in confidence."

9pm. Sgt Don Christy introduces himself to his last case of the night, a teenager caught stealing from Boots. His job is to put closure on cases and help people move on. First, he puts them at their ease: "Although I will be speaking to you as a police officer, I'm also speaking to you as a father of four and a human being who cares," he begins. His job tonight is to administer restorative reprimands, final warnings and cautions. Grim reminders of what shop theft may lead to – in extreme, drug use, prostitution and prison – are interspersed with banter about football and discussion of positive interests and options. The girl and her father are smiling and relaxed at the end when Don gives them his number in case they need support or advice in the future. "Nicking people is one per cent of what I do," he says later. "The rest is about helping them."

The Retail Theft Initiative is to be rolled out across the Thames Valley and introduced to other selected police

Portrayals of prison life



The Prison Film Project invites the public to think again about the impression they get of prison from its representation in film and TV, says Sean O'Sullivan

Sometimes it is suggested that one of the pressures on those making sentencing decisions in criminal cases is the belief that the public think that the courts are 'soft on crime'. This begs the question of how the public can make such assessments.

The Prison Film Project, funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's Rethinking Crime and Punishment initiative, will provide an opportunity for us to revisit our ideas of prison life – through a consideration of its portrayal

in film and TV. The project is organising a series of screenings of prison films and TV dramas – old and new – with supporting talks and discussions.

The Prison Film Project is launched on the weekend of 5-7 March 2004 at the National Film Theatre in London and will tour to Birmingham and Glasgow. There is an exciting programme of events to accompany the screenings.

● For details visit www.theprisonfilmproject.com

forces. Says Joanna Mears: "We know that most prolific offenders start with shop theft, so this is a way of getting to them before they reach the second, third, or fourth rung of the ladder towards a criminal career.

"If they are under 10 – the age of criminal responsibility – they are able to attend RTI with their parents' consent. They attend the whole programme but no formal reprimand will be given. We see this as a hugely important way of nipping offending behaviour in the bud.

"RTI helps the police by saving us time, it helps the community by tackling re-offending, it helps families by tackling their problems and it helps retailers by telling them why thieves are targeting their stores," Joanna concludes. "It is a proven success and it benefits everyone."

● RTI has produced a CD-Rom on its work. To borrow a copy or for more info, contact Pat Herkes, RTI Project Coordinator, on 01908-686064; email: pat.herkes@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk

Joanna Mears is now developing six national conditional cautioning pilots, due to start in April. Run along RJ principles, conditional cautions will be used with adults who would otherwise have been going to court for the first time, and who might have received a conditional discharge. Conditional discharges currently account for 30 per cent of court work so this will lift a huge burden from the courts.

"Conditional cautions will run along the lines of the RTI in that they will find out what people's problems are and help them to address them," says Joanna. "There will also be opportunities to do reparation work or attend an RJ conference.

"Conditional cautioning gives people an opportunity to deal with their criminal behaviour, or attend court and face the consequences."



Gearing up: a trainee at Huntercombe YOI restores an old bike for children at a special needs school

Chain reaction

Trainees at Huntercombe YOI near Henley have been busy repairing bicycles which will be donated to children at special needs schools in the Thames Valley. The bike workshop was opened in November at an evening that also saw the launch of the Sodexho Centre of Catering Excellence, Channel Huntercombe (a radio station with video link); and a bricks workshop. All the workshops will offer trainees the chance to gain qualifications such as NVQs.

The bike workshop was the brainchild of Joe Harrison, the Inside Out Trust's Regional Coordinator for the South West and Wales.

"The work provides an opportunity for the trainees to make a really worthwhile contribution to their local community," says Joe. "Many of these boys have never been actively encouraged and praised before. They haven't engaged with society as they feel they have nothing to offer. Projects like this show them that they can play a very valuable role and encourage them to engage."

Graduates of the scheme will receive an Open College Network workshop skills qualification at entry level. Forty-one bikes have been restored so far, and once the

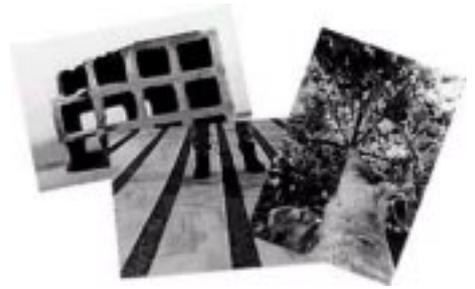
video project is established, staff at Huntercombe hope to use footage from the recipient schools to motivate more boys to get involved.

Thames Valley Partnership is supporting the bike project, and has also been involved in forging links with catering company Sodexho, which has sponsored new learning facilities in the kitchen with the aim of training boys at Huntercombe to fill shortages in its workforce once they are released.

Huntercombe is hoping to find work experience placements for trainees on all the projects. "We are seeking to establish more links with local companies, many of whom have already played a key role in supporting the development of our trainees," says Terry Kenyon, head of Learning and Skills.

- Huntercombe is still seeking recipient schools for the bikes and would also like to hear from local employers willing to provide work experience to trainees. For more information call Roger Beattie on 01491-643128

- For more information on the Inside Out Trust, call them on 01273-833050 or visit www.inside-out.org.uk



A Vision for a safer society

Thames Valley Partnership has relaunched its website. On it, there is an interactive section entitled 'Creating the Vision'.

The 'Vision' is based on an event last year where participants took part in a programme of 'job swaps', and a panel comprising Thames Valley Police Chief Peter Neyroud, Common Purpose Chief Executive Julia Middleton, BBC journalist David Akinsanya and RCP Director Rob Allan led a 'Question Time' session.

The website poses provocative questions raised on the day and there are a wide range of contributions. You are welcome to join in by emailing via the site.

Our revamped website also contains info on all our projects and electronic versions of our publications. It's all at: www.thamesvalleypartnership.org.uk

RJ News is published by

Thames Valley Partnership,
Townhill Barn, Dorton Road,
Chilton, Bucks HP18 9NA
Tel: 01844-202001

Editor: Rebecca Leathlean
Designer: Lorraine Milburn
email: rebecca@thamesvalleypartnership.org.uk

www.thamesvalleypartnership.org.uk

www.thamesvalleypartnership.org.uk

Family matters

Oxfordshire Youth Offending Team has received a grant from the Children Fund to pioneer a Family Group Conference project for Oxfordshire, to support families of young people between the ages of eight and 13 who are at risk of offending.

The unique aspect of Family Group Conferences is that following a discussion which may include several professionals, the family withdraw into a room for 'private time', to develop a plan for addressing concerns that they themselves identify. They might, for example, draw on their wider family



network to ensure that elements of their plan are met. Families typically take ownership of plans they create rather than relying solely on professionals to sort out their problems.

Anyone who is working with a family under stress where there are concerns about a young person may refer to the project, based at the Ark-T Centre.

- For more info contact Pete Wallis, Restorative Justice Manager for Oxfordshire YOT, on 01865-774506



Rethinking Crime & Punishment is a strategic grantmaking initiative of the Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation

