

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE IN THE UK – IN THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM, IN EDUCATION AND IN FAMILY SOCIAL WORK

Summary. The article discusses the model of restorative justice in the United Kingdom, the organization of the restorative justice in London and the UK. Restorative Practice is being developed in many contexts, including schools, children and families' social work departments and services for the elderly, in the UK, at present, to enable open and constructive communication, ideally before any serious incident has happened. Also article is about the principles and key components of Restorative Practice.

Keywords: Restorative Justice, Restorative Practice, victim, offender, mediation, communication, shame, reintegration.

Thank you for inviting me to the University of Mogilev. I feel very privileged to be part of this exchange of knowledge and ideas. This is my fourth visit to Belarus and I have learnt so much from you. I have also been inspired and motivated by your commitment to developing skills, knowledge and practice.

I am a social worker (possibly the equivalent of a social pedagogue in Belarus?) and have specialised, over the years, in youth crime and specifically in repairing the harm caused by youth crime, using Restorative Justice. I am a Manager in a Youth Offending Team, financed by our Ministry of Justice and our local Council, in a multi-racial, inner city area of London.

My team of restorative justice (RJ) and reparation officers have a duty to contact all victims of youth crime and offer support and the opportunity to take part in a restorative process. We work with victims and offenders at all stages of the criminal justice system and at all levels of seriousness – we work within prisons, we work in family homes and sometimes just in our office reception area, when conflict erupts!

RJ is described by our Ministry of Justice as a 'process that brings those harmed by crime and those responsible for the harm, into communication, enabling everyone affected by a particular incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward' [3].

While most of our victims do not want to meet the offender face-to-face, many have questions to ask, comments to make, the need to stop fearing the offender and the need to receive an apology, or at least, an explanation. When victims and offenders do meet face-to-face, after careful assessments of risk and preparation of all concerned, the benefits are enormous. Victims report feeling a

sense of closure, a sense of 'getting something back' that they had lost. Offenders have described a new sense of self – of moving from an offending identity to 'I'm the kind of person who can face up to my mistakes and try to make things better' (criminological desistance theory calls this the 'redemption script') [1].

Restorative Justice involves a clearly defined 'harmer', communicating either directly or indirectly with a clearly defined 'person harmed'. It takes place when a crime or anti-social incident has occurred. It is part of a wider concept of Restorative Practice. Restorative Practice is being developed in many contexts, including schools, children and families' social work departments and services for the elderly, in the UK, at present, to enable open and constructive communication, ideally *before* any serious incident has happened.

The International Institute for Restorative Practices defines Restorative Practice as 'the use of informal and formal processes that precede wrongdoing, those that proactively build relationships and a sense of community to prevent conflict and wrongdoing' [2].

Restorative Practice underpins our Social Care Practice Framework in my local area. We are working to implement it in situations of family breakdown – when children have to be removed from their families, for example; when young people are at risk of being excluded from school; when a placement with a foster carer is at risk because of a young person's behaviour; when an elderly person complains about their carer (family or otherwise).

I would like to present the principles and key components of Restorative Practice to you. If people would like more detailed references to the texts mentioned in the slides, please let me know.

To finish, Restorative Practice is a deceptively simple idea – almost 'common sense' – but I have been struck, in my working life, by

- how frequently those delivering social care;
- fail to be clear about their actions to clients
- tell rather than ask
- don't allow space for distressed people to vent their emotions
- don't even try to include clients in making decisions about their own futures.

Literature

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