

## The RJ process

Participation in the Restorative Justice process is entirely voluntary for a victim.

Sometimes a court may order that an offender go through the process, but that will only be with the engagement and consent of you, the victim.

However RJ does not have to be part of the court sentencing process. It can be requested by the victim of a crime - or indeed by the offender who committed the crime - at any stage of the criminal justice process. It might be at the suggestion of probation officers, the police service, Victim Support or other agencies involved in dealing with crime and its consequences. One element is essential: the offender must accept responsibility for having caused harm.

A trained and skilled facilitator will always be assigned to help guide you through the process, reassure you as it develops, and support you in understanding the responses and restorative opportunities open to you.

This facilitator will begin by meeting with you and the offender separately. From these meetings they will get an understanding of what has taken place and how the events have affected the parties involved - which may include family dependents, neighbours or others. They will begin to prepare the ground for a restorative process that may lead to a face-to-face meeting, known as a "Restorative Justice Conference", which often includes other affected parties.

Ultimately, the RJ process offers victim and offender an opportunity, together, to share an understanding of the impact of the crime: for the offender to understand the consequences of their actions and the victim to ask questions, and perhaps receive an apology and reparation if they so wish. Victims also benefit from the opportunity to understand why they were victimised in the first place. They can explain to the offender the impact the crime has had on their lives, which can create a sense of being listened to.

Victims often describe being empowered by the process which means that they no longer live in fear of going out and leading a normal life. For some victims it may mean they can now go out to the local shops, collect their child from school and not be afraid of a chance meeting with the offender in the street.

## How others can help you

The RJ process may seem a little daunting to begin with, but it is not something you have to face alone. As well as having a facilitator available to answer your questions, you can involve family or friends who you wish to support you through it.

In many instances they may be indirect victims of the events themselves, for example physical injury to a wage earner might have affected the whole family if they are off work for a period and lose income as a result. Often, it is simply more reassuring to know there are familiar faces in the room as you deal with your thoughts and emotions.

Your facilitator will work with these supporters as well as you, to make sure they understand how they can help you through the lead up to, and the period after, a meeting with the offender.

Seeing the extended set of people who are affected by their crime as well as the immediate victim can often have a telling influence on an offender, who may not have thought through the full consequences of their action. Experience shows that this exposure often has an important role to play in helping offenders come to terms with their own behaviour, encourage them to apologise and make reparation to their victim in some way, if the victim so wishes. This may make the offender less likely to re-offend.

That is why we describe the process as "repairing the harm". It can help to repair the harm to you as an individual, and to your community, by reducing crime levels in the future.

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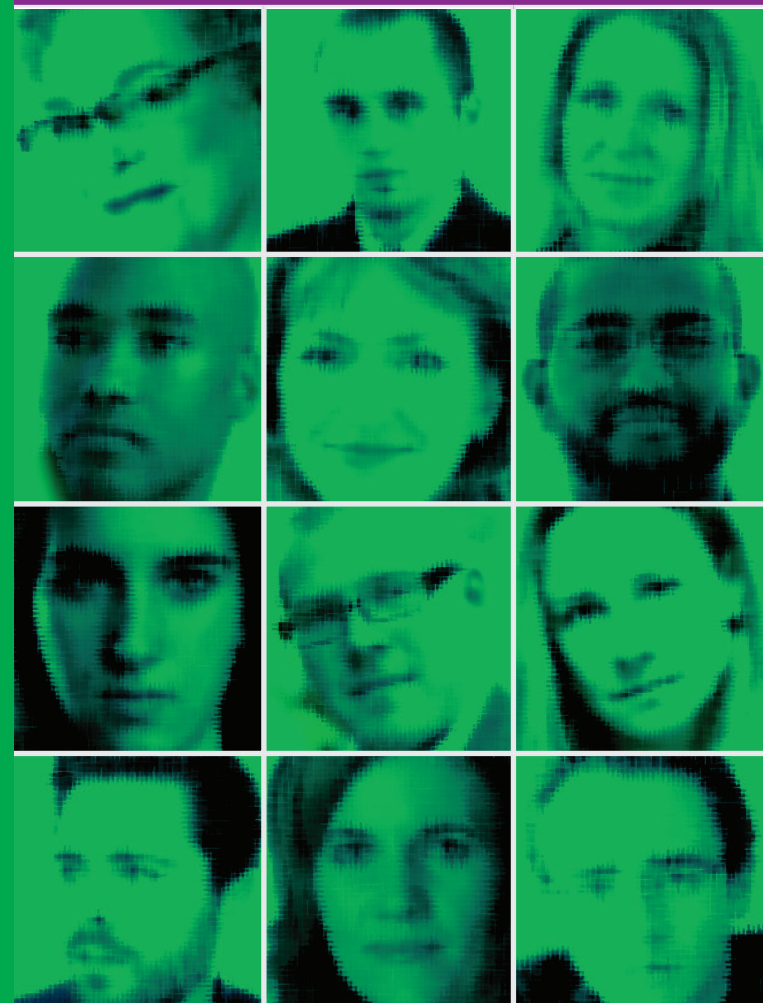
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THAMES VALLEY  
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE  
SERVICE

## Helping repair the harm that's been done to you

An introduction to the Restorative Justice process



# Being the victim of a crime is stressful and emotional.

It's not just the items stolen, the injury inflicted, or the damage caused, it's also the questions and feelings that go along with the experience: *Why was I picked out? Was the burglary opportunistic? Could it happen again? The offender has no idea what this has done to my life! It wasn't just me that suffered, it was my whole family too!*

You may find that Restorative Justice (RJ) has a role to play in helping you through this difficult period when you have been the victim of a crime.

RJ is a process designed to bring together victims and offenders so that you can get answers to the many questions you might have. It also gives you the opportunity to explain the full impact the offence has had on your life. In return, the offender has the opportunity to acknowledge the full consequences of what they have done and to offer some form of reparation.

RJ has been widely practised for many years and the evidence shows it has a positive impact for both victims and offenders, helping to repair the harm in individual cases, but also leading to a reduction in the rate of re-offending for the general benefit of our communities.

This leaflet gives you a brief introduction to Restorative Justice. For more information, or to help decide if RJ is right for you, please visit our website or speak to us in confidence.



*"I'd always had it in my head to meet him, but what (the facilitator) said made me feel better about doing it. Safer I guess."*



*"I could sit there all day and fire questions at him. I've got so much to ask."*

## What Restorative Justice is:

- RJ is about communication between victims and offenders. It empowers victims by giving them an opportunity to both ask questions and explain to offenders the real impact of the crime.
- RJ is safe. Rigorous risk assessments are prepared in relation to face-to-face meetings.
- In those cases where face-to-face meetings are not feasible, or the parties do not wish to meet, alternative methods of communication, such as a letter of apology, can be arranged with the consent of the parties.
- Offenders are held to account for what they have done and encouraged to take responsibility and make amends.
- Any criminal offence can be considered within the RJ process.
- In cases where the offender is not apprehended, or refuses to take part, a restorative outcome will be pursued in the light of the needs of the victim.
- Research indicates that RJ is cost effective and represents value for money. At best for every £1 spent in delivering RJ conferences, there is a subsequent £9 saving for the criminal justice system.

Restorative Justice provides a victim satisfaction rate of

**85%\***

## What Restorative Justice isn't:

- RJ is not open to convicted offenders who do not admit to their crime.
- RJ is not used as an alternative to a sentence, although RJ and any amends made by an offender will be taken into account when sentence is passed. Offenders who agree to undertake RJ and fail to do so will also have this taken into account.
- It is not essential for a victim to meet face-to-face with an offender within the process. Communication can be accomplished through written correspondence if that is more comfortable for the participants.
- This RJ service is delivered by TVRJS which is not a police agency. TVRJS is part of The Thames Valley Partnership, a charitable organisation devoted to developing safer communities by working across multiple agencies in local government and other statutory authorities, and charitable organisations.
- RJ is not time-limited. Cases from many years ago can be explored where there remain unresolved concerns for victims or offenders. There may be practical problems associated with exploring historical events, but the service is happy to consider the potential for the benefit of participants.

Restorative Justice provides a reduction in the frequency of re-offending of

**14%\***

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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