

## Who can initiate RJ?

RJ can be ordered by a court as part of a pre- or post-sentencing process, but that is by no means the only way in which the process can be initiated.

Firstly, a victim may request RJ at any stage after the offence.

An offender who wishes to make some form of reparation to their victim may also request RJ.

Other agencies involved in the criminal justice system, such as the probation service or prison service, support workers or welfare agencies, and other parties who have suffered as a result of the crime - spouses or children of a victim perhaps - can request RJ.

RJ will only move forward when both the victim and offender have agreed to take part, and in circumstances where the offender has accepted responsibility for causing harm.

It will be guided by a skilled facilitator, trained to negotiate the often sensitive challenges that can be involved in any RJ process. They will work to reassure and inform the victim and offender, to maintain progress at the victim's pace and to reach a restorative outcome that may be a face-to-face meeting or "RJ Conference". This can involve the victim, the offender and perhaps affected third parties such as families and friends on both sides.

At the end of this conference the ideal outcome is that victim and offender have a shared understanding of the impact of the events that occurred, that some form of reparation has been agreed between the parties, and that the victim has some sense of closure and feels they can "move on" with their life.

## Restorative Justice in the Thames Valley

Thames Valley Restorative Justice Service (TVRJS) is at the leading edge of Restorative Justice (RJ) in the UK and is part of a registered charity, the Thames Valley Partnership (TVP).

Established in 2001, originally as part of the Justice Research Consortium, TVRJS works collaboratively with statutory and voluntary partner agencies at the forefront of research, development and delivery of adult RJ in England and Wales. We work at any stage of the Criminal Justice System both within the Thames Valley area and beyond. Our status as an internationally-recognised centre of excellent practice is based on our wealth of experience and expertise.

The Partnership was one of the first organisations in the UK to be awarded the Restorative Justice Council's Restorative Service Quality Mark (RSQM) - reassurance that victims and offenders can have confidence in the quality of service offered.

A recipient of The Howard League's prestigious Community Sentence Award in 2010, Thames Valley Restorative Justice Service is justifiably proud of its track record within the discipline.

TVRJS also offers training for facilitators and others wishing to practise RJ in a variety of applications and environments. Please contact us for details of what we can offer.

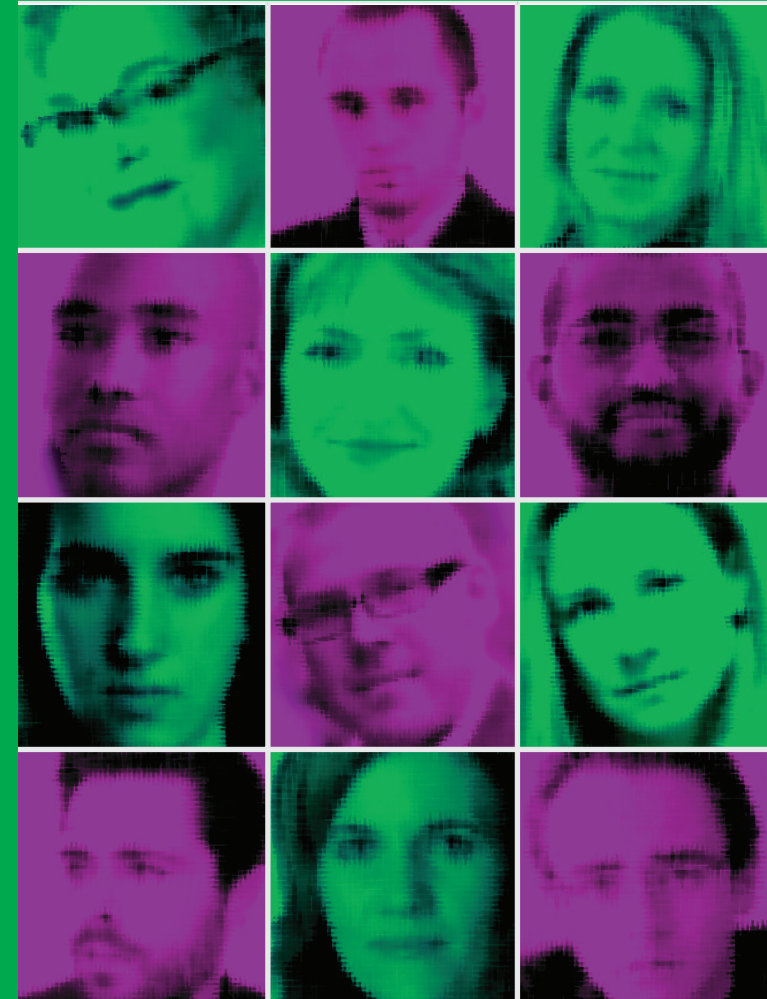
*"I think TVRJS truly are a national leader in RJ practice and it has been a privilege to work on this RSQM assessment. I have learnt a lot and am humbled by the quality, enthusiasm and evidenced debate that I have seen and heard from this organisation and its service."*

Source: The Restorative Justice Council (RJC), awarding body and RSQM assessor

## THAMES VALLEY RESTORATIVE JUSTICE SERVICE

Supporting the victim.  
Challenging the offender.  
Repairing the harm.

Using Restorative Justice in the legal process to empower victims and address reoffending



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# A criminal penalty alone may not redress the distress and injury caused to victims or be enough in itself to help an offender to reform.

Passing sentence in court may represent a particular milestone in the judicial process, but it is unlikely to be the end of the matter for the victim or the offender.

Victims may remain troubled; by thoughts that they have been singled out, that the incident, or something similar could happen again, by the aftermath of an injury, or by the death of a family member or loved one.

Offenders may not realise or fully understand the consequences of their offence and the impact it has had on those around a victim and their community. Those with a genuine remorse may not know how to make amends or turn their behaviour around.

Restorative Justice (RJ) is one process available that can help to address these issues. 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. Offenders are held to account for what they have done and encouraged to take responsibility and make amends. RJ therefore aims to increase the empowerment and wellbeing of the victim after the crime and informs the experience of the offender in planning their life for the future.

Suitability for RJ is judged solely on whether the process will be safe and whether those affected wish to participate. 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, will be arranged with the consent of the parties.



*“To see people and look them in the eye and make them know what they’ve done to you and how you’re coping, it feels good.”*



*“I was happy with what I got out of it and I felt safe and it felt well planned out... it could have messed me up but it has cleared up a few things in my mind about what happened.”*

## Research on RJ shows\*:

- **95%** of victims participating in conferences thought they were approached in the right way
- **72%** of victims said their conference had provided them with a sense of closure.
- **85%** of victims were satisfied or very satisfied with their RJ conference
- **80%** of offenders were very or quite satisfied with their RJ conference
- **74%** of offenders would recommend to others
- **78%** of victims would recommend to others
- The RJ process is a very powerful catalyst for change with Restorative Justice shown to be a tipping point in the motivation of those offenders who are minded to avoid re-offending
- RJ reduces the frequency of further offending by **14%**
- **79%** of offenders thought RJ would lessen the risk of re-offending
- **83%** of conferences discussed specifically how to stop the offender from committing similar types of offences again
- Many offenders commented that having taken part in a conference helped them feel more able ‘to get on with life’
- 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
- All victims’ services and criminal justice agencies benefit from RJ in terms of reduced costs as a result of less frequent further offending.

## Successful outcomes:

These key research outcomes refer specifically to the practice of the Justice Research Consortium of which Thames Valley criminal justice agencies were members.

- Less post-crime impact on employment for victims as a result of RJ conferencing (Angel 2005 PhD Dissertation University of Pennsylvania)
- Less post traumatic stress symptoms for victims as a result of RJ conferencing (Angel 2005 PhD Dissertation University of Pennsylvania)
- Less feelings of violent revenge against the offender on the part of those victims who had participated in an RJ conference compared to those in the control group (Sherman et al 2005)
- Lower adjudication rates for those prisoners who experienced RJ conferencing in London prisons, post conviction, pre sentence. (Sherman et al unpublished 2005)

Source: report by Professor Lawrence W. Sherman, Wolfson Professor of Criminology at Cambridge University and Dr Heather Strang Australian National University - ‘Restorative Justice, The Evidence’ published by Smith Institute February 07 [www.smith-institute.org.uk](http://www.smith-institute.org.uk)