

The RJ process

Participation in the Restorative Justice process can be ordered by a court, but it will not go ahead without your agreement to participate and engage with it. Sometimes, the victim of a crime will request RJ because they wish to meet the offender to understand more about why they became the victim, and to talk about how the crime has affected them physically or emotionally.

RJ can also be suggested by probation officers or the police service or other agencies involved in dealing with crime and its consequences, or indeed it can be requested by the offender who committed the crime, at any stage of the criminal justice process. One element in particular is essential: the offender must have accepted some responsibility for causing harm.

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

The facilitator will begin by meeting with you and the victim 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 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 to share an understanding of the impact of the harm. It is an opportunity for the offender to understand the consequences of their actions and for the victim to ask questions, and receive an apology and reparation from the offender if they so wish. Victims also benefit from the opportunity to understand why they were victimised in the first place. They can also explain to the offender the impact the crime has had on their lives, which can create a sense of being listened to.

RJ is not 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 then fail to do so will also have this taken into account either at the point of sentence or as part of a community rehabilitation order or post custodial supervision.

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 children and spouses may suffer if a wage-earner in the family is imprisoned or loses their job as a result of their crime. Often, it may be reassuring for you to know there are familiar people in the room as you face up to the consequences of your actions.

Your facilitator will work with your 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 victim.

Meeting with these other parties, as well as meeting the primary victim of your offence gives you the opportunity to take responsibility, acknowledge the impact of your actions, and to make reparation to some or all of those affected by what you have done.

That is why we describe the process as "repairing the harm". It can help to repair the harm to your victim, to you as an individual, and to your community, by giving you a greater understanding of the consequences of your actions, and helping you to avoid re-offending.

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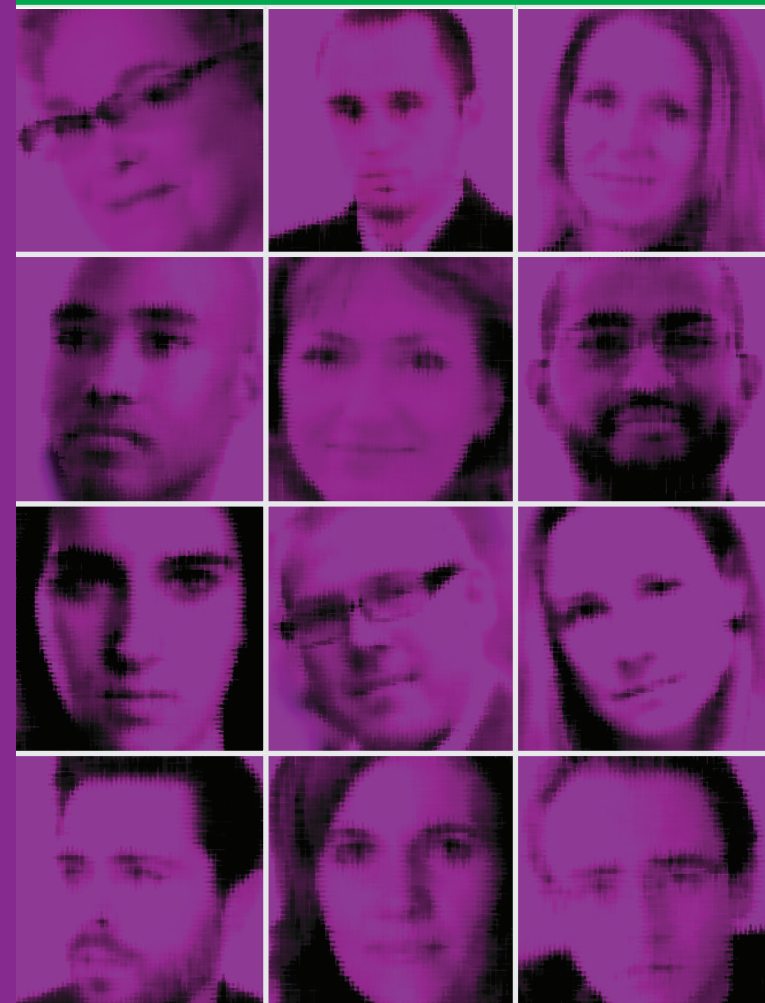
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THAMES VALLEY
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
SERVICE

Make amends.
Repair the harm.
Avoid re-offending.

An introduction to the
Restorative Justice process



The consequences of committing a crime can reach far beyond breaking the law.

When you have committed a crime, the chances are you have caused much more upset and damage than is immediately obvious from the technical description of the offence. The theft of items with sentimental value to the owner reaches far beyond their financial worth. An injury caused to someone may impact the family that has to care for them in their recovery. A death caused by careless or malicious behaviour can be devastating for a partner or children left behind.

Restorative Justice (RJ) is a process that will raise your awareness of the wider consequences of your crime, allow your victim to explain the harm you have caused, give you an opportunity to apologise, make amends where possible, and help you avoid the risk of re-offending in the future.

It is designed to bring together victims and offenders so that you can provide answers to the many questions the victim might have. In return, you have the opportunity to acknowledge what you have done and explain how events came about as they did.

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

This leaflet can only give you a brief introduction to RJ. For more information, or help in deciding if RJ is right for you, please visit our website or speak to us in confidence.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.tvrjs.org.uk • Tel: 01844 202001



"It still affects me, every single day."



"I would say the meeting with him helped me to make a decision and answered a lot of questions."

What Restorative Justice is:

- Restorative Justice (RJ) is about communication between victims and offenders. It gives victims an opportunity to both ask questions and explain to offenders the real and wider impact of their offence.
- Any criminal offence causing personal harm can be considered within the RJ process
- As an offender you will be encouraged to take responsibility for your actions and their consequences for the victim and given the opportunity to explore how you can make amends.
- As part of RJ you will be invited to meet face-to-face with your victim, though this will only be the case if the victim agrees and feels your commitment to the process is positive and genuine.
- Although it can be initiated by the court pre- or post-sentencing, RJ can also be requested by you, the offender and by victims. Other agencies involved in the legal and social support system can also initiate the process, such as the prison service, probation service or the police.
- Many offenders report being pleased with having taken part, saying it was difficult but worthwhile. Evidence shows that offenders often feel better able to move on with their lives after taking part in RJ and find greater resolve to make positive changes.

79%*
of offenders
thought that
RJ would
reduce the risk
of re-offending

What Restorative Justice isn't:

- Restorative Justice (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 and an offender to meet face-to-face within the process though it is encouraged. 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. It 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 examining historical events, but the service is happy to consider the potential for the benefit of participants.

74%*
of offenders
would
recommend
the RJ process
to others