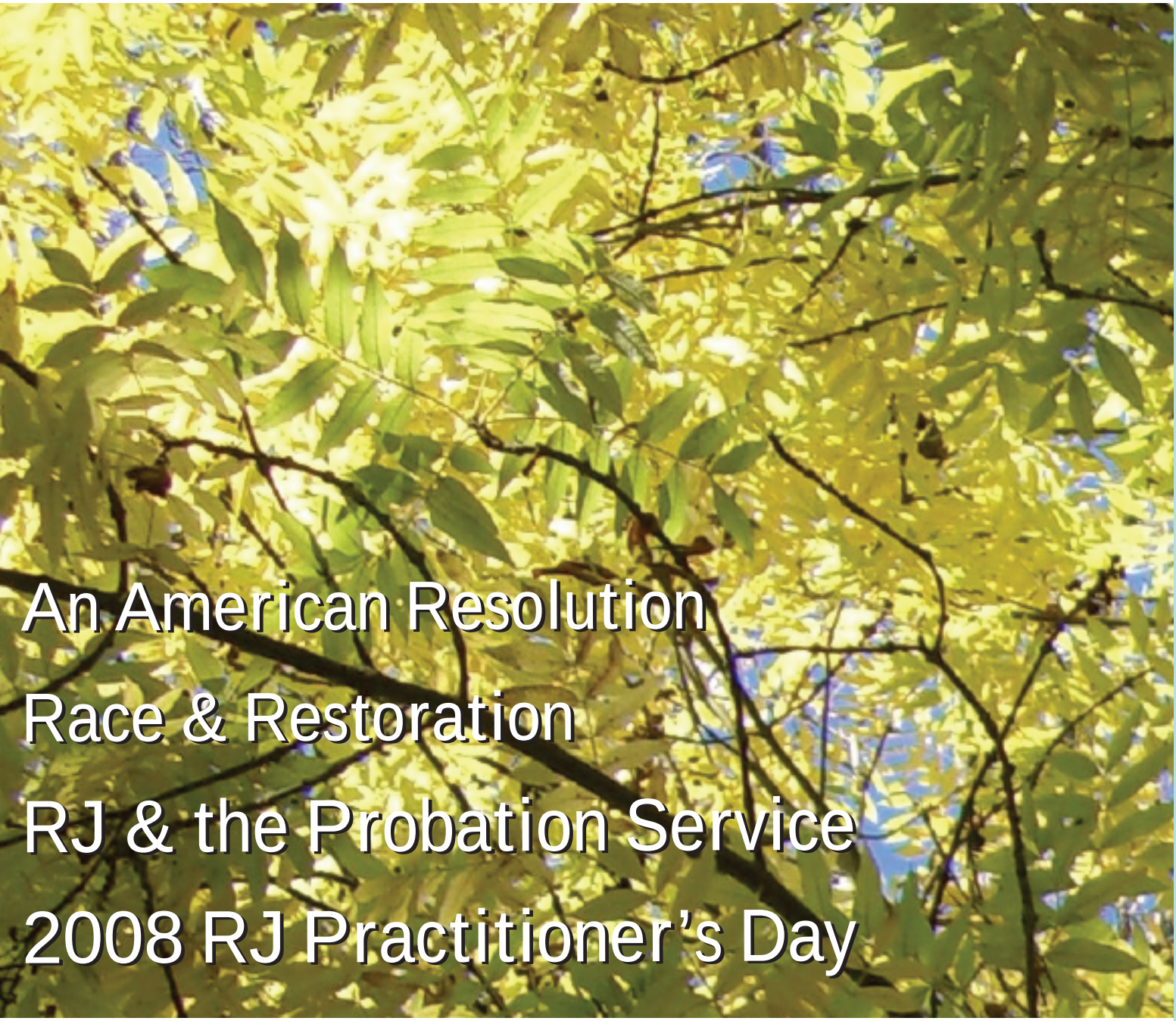
Autumn 2008

Restorative Justice Consortium

Resolution 31

News from the Restorative Justice Consortium



An American Resolution
Race & Restoration
RJ & the Probation Service
2008 RJ Practitioner's Day

Company number: 4199237
Charity number: 1097969

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Editor's note

Resolution is here to reflect Restorative Justice and Restorative Approaches in all their forms and developments. To this end we welcome your input and ideas. Please get in touch if you would like to submit an article, have suggestions for a feature, ideas for what you would like covered, news of an event or would simply like to share an experience with other readers.

Chris Igoe, Editor
E:chris@restorativejustice.org.uk

Resolution is the quarterly newsletter of the:
Restorative Justice Consortium
Albert Buildings
49 Queen Victoria Street
London
EC4N 4SA

T: 020 7653 1992
F: 020 7653 1993
E: info@restorative justice.org.uk
W: www.restorative justice.org.uk
Company number: 4199237
Charity number: 1097969

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Introduction

Welcome to the Autumn edition of *Resolution* ... Many of you will know that this will be my last introduction to this newsletter, as I prepare to leave the Consortium before the end of the year. I will take this opportunity to introduce the RJC's plans for 2009.

2008 was a key year for RJ in England and Wales with the publication of the final report into the Ministry of Justice RJ pilots, launched 7 years ago. The evidence provided by this report adds its weight to that of the previous reports, documenting the power of RJ to meet the needs of victims of crime as well as the setting up of the pilot projects. With this evidence that RJ can provide cost savings for the criminal justice system as well as reductions in future offending, the RJC will be pushing for more resources and a more systematic approach to providing RJ for all those who want to use it over the coming year.

In 2009, the RJC will complete its accreditation project, mapping out the format of future accreditation of RJ. The project has been warmly welcomed by many stakeholders who recognise the need for recognised and accredited quality standards for RJ practice. As RJ becomes more and more widely available, the quality of provision and the ability of projects to guarantee a recognised level of service become more and more important - this project is the first step along this process, a key opportunity to consult and enthuse those who will in future be dealing with provision of RJ.

Also in 2009 we will see the implementation of the recommendations resulting from our Membership development project - preliminary feedback has shown enthusiasm among members for more events and provision of development opportunities by the RJC - we are exploring social enterprise opportunities that should allow us to provide this in such a way as to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the RJC. You will see gradual changes to the services offered by the RJC and in preparation, possibly change in our membership fees. All this will be introduced over the coming months and communicated to members through our bulletins and this magazine.

2009 will see the arrival of my successor and a continuation, and continued development of the work of the RJC - we welcomed an extremely large and varied audience at the RJ Practitioners Day this year - an illustration of the increasing recognition of the wide application of RJ and the ethos of our work. I wish all of you the best of everything in developing this work - and look forward to hearing great things when I return from my travels!

Harriet Bailey, Chief Executive

About Us

Restorative Justice allows the people most effected by crime and conflict to deal with its effects.

Restorative Justice can give victims the chance to tell offenders the real impact of their crime, to get answers, receive an apology and move on with their lives. It holds offenders to account whilst giving them the chance to understand the real impact of what they've done and to do something to repair the harm.

Restorative principles are also being used successfully outside the Criminal Justice System, for example, in schools, workplaces, care homes, health services and communities, often without the labels of *victim* and *offender* being necessary.

The Restorative Justice Consortium is the national voice for Restorative Justice.

We provide information about Restorative Justice to the public; support and resource our members who deliver Restorative Justice and promote the development and use of Restorative Justice.

News in brief

Lancashire to become a Restorative County

Lancashire will be launching its strategy to become the first Restorative County in England & Wales on the 4th of December.

The strategy is based on giving everyone who works with children training in restorative approaches - developing restorative ethos, culture & language throughout the county's Children's workforce. Lancashire's multi-agency approach includes the police, social services, Youth Offending Teams, charities, educational psychology services and of course Lancashire's 700 schools.

Schools are seen as the hub of the project with all school staff receiving awareness training and with some staff receiving additional training to facilitate restorative conferences. School children will have the opportunity to become peer mediators, receiving training in listening skills and helping other children find solutions to their own problems.

Chief Police Officers establish RJ group

ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) has recently formed a Community & Restorative Justice steering group.

The aim of the working group is to consolidate best practice and set out clear, consistent multi-agency guidance in relation to community and restorative justice. Among other things the steering group will identify and support local RJ champions and advise and support police forces who are currently practising RJ or are keen to develop their own RJ strategies.

The group includes a diverse range of experts representing a wide spectrum of interests. Members include the Home Secretary Jacquie Smith and representatives from the Youth Justice Board, the Crown Prosecution Service, Victim Support and the RJC.

Promoting RJ in the Criminal Justice System

In October, Harriet Bailey, Chief Executive of the RJC spoke to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Penal Affairs to raise awareness of the results of recent Ministry of Justice research.

Author, Peter Woolf and Will Riley, Chair of Why me? spoke of their experience of RJ and of the impact that this had had on their lives. Harriet presented the context within which Peter and Will were offered RJ - Peter's last crime was committed in an area covered by the Ministry of Justice pilot projects and the pair were lucky enough to be offered RJ and to be part of the cohort that went on to take part in a conference. Will was very lucky to received the offer of RJ - currently less than 1% of victims of crime have this opportunity.

Many of those present at the event, having heard so much about RJ over the years, assumed that the service was more widely available. Victims of adult offenders have very little opportunity to access RJ at present and Peter and Will's case illustrates the power of RJ. When added to the results of the Ministry of Justice research completed this year, it illustrates the power of RJ to help reduce re offending and serve as a catalyst for change.

The need to act on these results and dramatically increase the availability of RJ is urgent, not something that has been happening gradually over the last few years - we need to make RJ more available in order to meet victims' needs as well as reduce re-offending in a cost effective way.

Since this meeting, the RJC has had further contact with the Ministry of Justice and attended a meeting with Maria Eagle MP. The RJC continues to call for wider access to RJ for victims of crime, through increased provision of RJ services. We will continue to work together with government departments to make this a reality.

Restorative Reprimand huge success in Dorset

Dorset Police have released figures showing their pilot of the Youth Resorative Disposal or 'Restorative Reprimand' has had a 98% victim satisfaction rate and reduced first time entrants to the Youth Justice System by 44%.

The Restorative Reprimand is a new tool used at the discretion of police officers and with the consent of the victim involved aimed at offences committed by ten to seventeen year olds. A Restorative Reprimand can require a meeting with the victim to be held and reparation to be made.

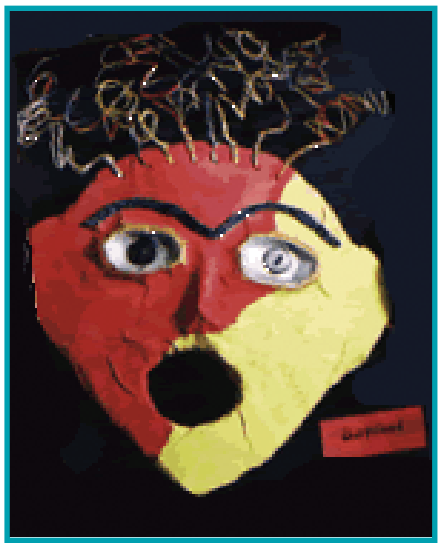
With traditional Reprimands offenders simply receive a warning not to commit further offences. However that warning is recorded as a criminal offence damaging the young person's future prospects and may be seen as a 'badge of honour' by their peers. If the requirements of a Restorative Reprimand are carried out and no further offences are committed, the young person will avoid having a criminal record.

Dorset is one of eight counties officially piloting Restorative Reprimands, with similar results emerging from Norfolk at the time of writing. Police enthusiasm for the scheme is so high that forces such as Devon & Cornwall are already running their own local pilots. The RJC will be working to ensure that Restorative Reprimands are rolled out across the country. Ed

2008 Restorative Justice Practitioners' Day

This October the RJC were proud to host the Annual Restorative Justice Practitioners' Network Day. The event brought together over 130 practitioners from all over the UK, representing the whole spectrum of professionals practising in Restorative Justice from schools to prisons. The aim of the day was to provide training through a diverse range of workshops, the chance to meet fellow RJ enthusiasts from different areas and to encourage reflection on restorative practice.

Arousing our interest with a stirring opening speech, Belinda Hopkins traced the origins of Restorative Justice from a twinkle in the eyes of a pair of Canadian practitioners to the vibrant and growing movement it is today. Speaking from her experience using restorative approaches in schools and care-homes, Belinda spoke passionately of the ramifications and insight one area of practice can bring to other disciplines and the shared principles that bind our work.



The majority of the day was spent attending a selection of the workshops available. The workshops ranged from practical guidance which could be used directly in practice such as Peter Wallis and Vicki Smith's workshop on their new victim empathy pack for young offenders to theoretical discourse in Paul Crosland's "Do I want to feel safer or be safer?"

Excellent day - extremely informative & well organised

The Big Taboo? presented by Marian Liebmann and Marilyn Taylor explored the controversial area of Restorative Justice and its applications in cases of domestic violence. Domestic violence, like sexually harmful behaviour, has long been a no-go area for Restorative Justice due to a number of factors including concerns about the duplicity of offenders, the effect of power imbalances on the meeting dynamic and opposition from women's groups who fear RJ might reduce the numbers of prosecutions for domestic violence which is already low (5-7% of cases reach court).

The best value RJ event in the year

Marian started the workshop by relating the key findings of her joint research project with Lindy Wooton into RJ and domestic violence funded by HMP Cardiff. Their synopsis of the experiences of other countries led to an identification of six key features of successful practice: safeguards at every stage, thorough & specific training, on-going support, adequate resources, follow up work and a holistic/multi-agency approach. Marilyn followed this by sharing the experience of Daybreak, a UK organisation that has secured funding to use restorative approaches to tackle domestic violence when the violence involves children (Doves program) and the elderly (Bluebird program).

Very helpful for new RJ workers in the field

From the Shetland Islands, Clair Aldington presented a dynamic workshop on Art Approaches to Restorative Justice. Clair illustrated how restorative practitioners can use art as a method of reparation that encourages the offender to see the victim in a different light by considering what they would like to receive. Take for example the young person who after breaking into a woman's home drew her a picture of a rose by way of reparation because he saw what an avid gardener she was. Art also allows offenders and victims to explore and express their feelings in an enlightening and accessible way - this is particularly powerful when a people have difficulty expressing themselves verbally or in writing.

Really important to have an accessible, practitioner led event which encourages reflective practice - keep it going

The workshop ended inviting delegates to explore their own feelings about a challenging time in their life using an exercise Clair uses with young offenders. Delegates started by identifying emotions they felt during their challenging time and then, using pencils, crayons, pastels and

material, portraying the emotions on a face mask. This proved a fun and enlightening experience which I urge readers try themselves using the materials now available on our website.

I learned so many practical things which I'll use in my working practice

Barbara Tudor closed the day reflecting on the challenges facing practitioners across the spectrum of Restorative Justice, particularly in the probation service at present. These challenges are being met with the passion of practitioners, whilst the movement continues to gather support, the pressure on government and authorities to find funding for this works mounts. We are at an exciting and crucial stage of Restorative Justice's development, we have the evidence that RJ reduces reoffending and meets the needs of victims, we have the opportunity with the Prime Minister pledging to 'put victims first' to show that the use of RJ wil strenghten the Criminal Justice System.

Continue to fight the fight, that RJ can work

The RJC would like to thank Mediation Support Ltd and the Mediation and Reparation Committee of the former Mediation UK for helping organise the event. We also extend our warmest thanks to the speakers and presenters who made the day possible and provided such a wide range of workshops. Final thanks go to all the practitioners who were able to attend and for your kind feedback.

Pictures provided by Clair Aldington are of masks created by young offenders.

For more information including materials for all the day's workshops please visit www.restorativejustice.org.uk/?Events or email info@restorativejustice.org.uk

Ed

Restorative Approaches in Education - Tackling prejudice-based bullying

The philosophy of Restorative Justice has previously been used only in the sphere of the Criminal Justice System. One of the main problems with school behaviour systems is that they are loosely based on the Criminal Justice System. We can learn from the use of Restorative Justice in the Criminal Justice System to improve how we deal with bad behaviour in schools.

Clair Aldington, Shetland Arts Development Agency

Traditional systems in both criminal justice and education favour an adversarial model to prove innocence or guilt through the application of rules and the cut and thrust of argument. By contrast Restorative Justice focuses on the harm caused and encourages dialogue between the people involved to repair the harm. This approach is now being used to support both courts and schools as part of their ethos towards resolving conflict.

The term "restorative approaches" has been used to include a range of models, which implement the concept of Restorative Justice. This enables schools to use a menu of approaches to deal with various types of conflict between pupils, teachers and parents. The tenet that binds these approaches together is the will to repair harm rather than focus on the rules being broken.

There are many definitions of restorative justice, basically focused on a model in which people come together and find solutions to the wrong or harm. To me restorative approaches are an ethos that places the value of relationships at the heart of resolving conflict. This is a process that involves acknowledging thoughts and feelings, understanding, and learning to create harmony, in a fair and empathetic way.

This definition explicitly puts relationships at the centre in contrast to the present system in schools and in the Criminal Justice System focus on the evidence and blame. In the case of prejudice and Hate Crime these intangible feelings are evidenced through perception, and are deeply personal for those who feel them. Those thoughts and feelings are just as valid as 'hard evidence' in these situations. The need to learn is crucial dealing with prejudice and Hate Crime; conflicts can be an opportunity to learn how we affect each other, what values we hold, who will support us and what solutions we can come to.

The restorative approach puts the needs of the people in conflict at the heart of the process. When working in schools, one of the first things I realised was that the labels of victim and bully/offender were not helpful in identifying what those needs actually were. Often assumptions are made about what young people need with the result being that neither party are satisfied with the outcome.

What's more, in the Education field Hate Crime does not translate well from criminal jargon. The term 'prejudice-based bullying' is used instead to encompass conflict arising from homophobia, racism, faith, disability or gender. How schools tackle this is often through the ubiquitous Zero Tolerance policy. The end result being exclusion from the school, incapacitating the person causing the behaviour and deterring anybody else who may copy or use that behaviour.

But this fails to address the needs of the person being victimised, which often includes the fear of retaliation, and a need to understand why this happened in the first place. Then there is secondary victimisation, where the young person suffering from the prejudice-based bullying must also deal with the social isolation from peers or the school because no one acknowledges the prejudice as the underlying reason for the bullying.

For the person excluded, the link may not have been made between their behaviour and the reason for the exclusion. Will they have some insight into their behaviour and recognise the harm they have caused?

I must make one thing clear; a lot of schools are using restorative approaches, some as conscious programmes and others as part of their common sense approach. For me, at the heart of the process are empathy and the need for those involved to participate.

Empathy is vital for those who have been harmed and those who did the harming. In schools, rarely are the victim and bully static roles. Schools often have to deal with this interchanging nature of conflict. The role of empathy is crucial in getting young people to talk about their feelings and understand what others might be feeling.

The goal of the restorative approach is to repair the harm and find a new peaceful way forward. The starting point is what happened from the perspective of the individuals involved. When bringing young people together this is very important, as everyone wants an opportunity to have their say. Often, if they get to tell their side they believe only that must be true. However, the restorative approach is a process where everyone is given the opportunity to speak. The challenge is getting people into the room and creating a safe mental place for this to happen. But people do engage in restorative approaches for many reasons. The power of empathy stops us dehumanising each other and helps bring people into that safe mental space.

What is particularly important for people who have been harmed, is the need for closure. How do we put things behind us and move on without the fear of recurrence? Particularly in prejudice-based bullying, restorative approaches, through the humanising affect of empathy, help us attain understanding and closure even when no agreement is reached.

Schools are here to educate. The restorative approach can be a powerful learning tool, in which prejudiced attitudes and stereotypes are challenged, in a human process. By excluding people from our communities are we hoping that they will have a magical moment where they will see the error of their ways, understand the harm and change their behaviour? Those young people harmed by prejudice-based bullying are expected to deal with it, but are left wondering what will happen next time they meet that person.

Conflict can be a positive learning experience for all those involved - it just depends on what we want out of it. The power of relationships is crucial to changing the labels we place on each other when in conflict. The restorative approach is offering schools a way of challenging those labels, humanising each other, whilst educating each other.

Luke Roberts is the Restorative Approaches Coordinator for Lambeth and a Research Associate with the Prison Reform Trust for BAME projects. You can contact Luke at lroberts@lambeth.gov.uk

An American Resolution: restorative approaches in schools

Restorative Justice as an alternative to the standing criminal justice system in the US has been growing, slowly. The US Department of Justice promotes RJ as a juvenile focused method of dealing with low level criminal activity, particularly in schools. The school day becomes the window of opportunity for adversaries to settle scores, bringing street justice, antisocial and criminal activities into school buildings. Sometimes problems initiated in school, flow outward. Most often, the identified adversaries are only the token actors for larger groups.

One successful use of RJ is the City of Rochester New York Police Department's Juvenile Accountability Conferencing (JAC) program. Rochester in the mid 1990s saw a significant upswing of city school violence. Uniformed police School Resource Officers (SRO) were placed into upper-level schools. Metal detectors and entry guards were put into place. Knives and brass knuckles were being confiscated. The inward and outward flow of problems rose. Tensions ran high among students and their parents. Suspensions and expulsions became the only tools the schools had to deal with disruptive and antisocial behavior but created difficulty in themselves; Students fall behind, parents & communities must deal with students outside of school and schools lose out financially.

The Police Department's Family Services division turned to Restorative Justice conferencing as a means to improve outcomes for minor school altercations. The initial project was developed by Leonard Wildman and Thomas Dwyer, from traditional RJ Family Group Conferencing methods. The JAC program began in the late 1990s. It continues today with the department's coordinator and a small cadre of volunteer certified RJ peacemaker-facilitators (of which this writer is one).

JAC conferences are initiated with a basic school incident report delivered to the Police Department after which school personnel pursue more detailed information immediately. Statements are taken from involved parties and witnesses. The parties must admit their involvement before the conference can be conducted. The administrator schedules the conference and directs the parents to attend. Removing pre-conference responsibilities from the facilitator allows the school to process the incident quickly. Frequently, JAC conferences are held the day following an incident.

The case of Latisha and Kiana is an example of how JAC works. Latisha seemed to be a shy, reserved, bespectacled seventeen year old girl. Kiana, also seventeen, appeared to be a more vocal and dramatic girl. The incident was a fight in a McDonald's restaurant - an unusual call for JAC service, as the actual altercation took place outside of the school building. Months previous, Latisha had been bullying Kiana verbally and by text message including name-calling, trash-talking and threats of harm. Kiana had taken interest in Latisha's boyfriend. Somewhere in time the boy headed in new directions away from both girls. Latisha blamed Kiana for the move. Latisha embellished the story she told her friends. It was repeated often by Latisha's friends to Kiana directly, and to Kiana's group of friends. Both girls found themselves in the restaurant. Latisha, the shy one, went over to Kiana and swung at her. Kiana punched Latisha in the head and down to the floor they went. The restaurant manager stopped the fight and threw them out. On the way out Kiana saw Latisha's glasses on the floor and stomped them to pieces. Police were not called. News of the fight reached the school, and JAC was notified.

All conferences begin with an explanation which makes clear that though JAC is a Police Department program, the facilitator is completely neutral and neither a police officer nor a judge. The desired goal is to bring the matter to an end through the efforts of the parties concerned and to agree a fair and achievable resolution, similar to a contract. When a contract is successfully completed, the matter is ended. Like a contract, if the terms of the resolution are not completed successfully, there are consequences. It is hoped that by this conference and a successful resolution the parties will avoid those consequences and be able to complete the school year without further incident. The only official police matter is the

What place for Restorative Justice in the Probation Service?

When I started in the Victims Unit of London Probation some 3 years ago, I was told that very quickly I would loose all offender empathy, as I saw first hand all the pain that they caused to the victims. Now, I find myself in the position where the more I meet up with offenders, I see people who, in many cases are victims of their own life experiences, and that through confronting those behaviour patterns in an empathetic manner, real change can be achieved.

As a qualified mediator and trainer, I have been able to use my training and experience in my work in the Victims Unit to work between victims, family members and offenders to mediate and facilitate transformational experiences which have impacted into the lives of the people concerned. I am repeating one case study so that those working with offenders are aware that there is some potential for Victim Offender Mediation from a Restorative Justice perspective.

The case involved one of the youngest sex offenders to receive a custodial sentence in London - for a serious sexual offence involving younger siblings. Youth Offending Teams and Social Services had had little success in engaging with the family to assess the welfare of the children, so it is agreed that we will try to approach this from a Victims Unit perspective. This is quite an unusual case as the mother of the victims is also the mother of the offender.

When introducing myself there is real defensiveness on the door step as the family already feel re-victimised by neighbours, newspapers and other agencies. Tension is running high in the household. The mother asks "How are you different from all the other Services that have been bothering us" and I tell her "We are just here to help you, and not to judge you". A little trust and confidence is built and I am invited into her home and the start of a relationship is established. Mum is feeling angry, bitter and betrayed by her eldest son stating "All I want to hear about him is if he hangs himself in his cell".

At a similar time, in the Secure Unit, the Young Offender is heading into his own anger and depression, unwilling to open up or engage with staff - only having one focus - to meet with his mum, even though he knows he has done wrong. The Clinical Psychologist's work with the offender is being hampered by negative behaviour, and the Youth Offending Team worker informs me that the offender has been attempting to write to mum directly and is requesting Victim Offender Mediation.

As a victim led service, permission is sought from Mum to meet with the offender to establish any help which could be given to help him to face the crime from a realistic perspective. Over the months Mum's outlook has softened and she agrees that the meeting between myself and the offender can go ahead without any guarantee of her involvement, as she wanted to hear what he had to say.

The meeting is arranged in the Unit and in a short period of time trust is built and a relationship established. The offender feels comfortable enough to begin to open up, share his inner feelings and take a degree of responsibility for his behaviour (although still feeling the need to blame others). Then the offender drafts a letter that could be shared with his mum. At the end of the session the Case Worker thanks me for my intervention and comments on how much the offender has been able to explore his feelings.

These are shared with his mum, along with a gift - a drawing of flowers from his Art GCSE

filing of the JRC conference with the Police Department and the school. Should there be further action by the school, police or a court, on this or future incidents between the parties, the report on file indicates that JAC was used and whether a resolution was prepared and agreed upon.

JAC conferences often have similarities. The parents are shocked by the behaviour of their children in school; and the students open up

about what has happened. Through careful listening and by asking appropriate probing questions the core problem is found. Usually the students do not realise how far back the root of their difficulty reaches and many times they were once good friends. At this point students usually become quieter and parents have much more to say. The wisdom shared from parent to child, is overwhelming. JAC gives the opportunity for all concerned to express deep feelings of how the incident has affected them: Parents often express outstanding passion, and fear, for the welfare and success of the children, supplemented by the school's desire for the children to succeed, stay in school and graduate on time.

That was the case with Latisha and Kiana. Concerns did not stop with the parents, school personnel expressed their deep concerns and the SRO added that their actions could have brought criminal charges and a criminal record. Both girls agreed they had taken the situation too far, especially since the boy issue had been history for a while and they had been good friends before. They both agreed the fight was childish and a mistake. Kiana admitted that she gets angry quickly. Latisha indicated she could forgive Kiana and could be friends again though Kiana just wanted to agree the affair was over.

The mothers agreed to keep an eye on their children's behaviour, and communicate directly with each other if they saw the trouble return. Kiana's mother agreed to help deal with Kiana's anger. Latisha's mother agreed to monitor Latisha's texting. The school put aside the pending suspensions, and required the girls to stay away from each other in school. Both girls promised to not speak to their friends about the situation and if asked say, 'it was over.' The last question to be addressed was the destroyed glasses. Latisha's mother asked only for the money to replace the glasses. Kiana's mother quickly told Latisha's mother that she would pay the amount, and that Kiana would pay the money to herself. All agreed. The resolution was signed and filed. Checking back at the end of the school year, the school administrator indicated that neither the two girls nor their friends had no further incidences of any kind, and that the money transfer had taken place. Latisha and Kiana both graduated from high school on time in June 2008.

This case does not represent the worst or the least of incidents handled by JAC. Regardless the nature of incidents, the school building and a lengthy school day is the arena for youth to act out the drama and turbulence that exists in their lives both inside and outside their school buildings. There are essential benefits to the educational process through the use of Restorative Justice principles, and immediate intervention services like the Juvenile Accountability Conferencing program.

James (Jim) A Termotto Sr is a Certified Restorative Justice Peacemaker with the Rochester NYPD. An ethicist and counsellor, Jim also acts as interim Director of Community Initiatives for Partners in Restorative Initiatives in Rochester New York. E: restorativejustice@frontiernet.net

Coursework. Mum takes a journey around her life, revisits painful areas and responds with her thoughts and feelings about the crime and the impact it has had on the whole family. After shuttling these to the offender, work begins in partnership with the Clinical Psychologist, enabling recognition of the past, engagement in the present and belief that change is possible. These reflections and regrets are again shuttled to Mum and finally both parties agree to meet and are prepared carefully for this process. On the way to the Unit Mum comments that she can't believe that she has arrived at the place of feeling comfortable to see her son face to face, as it is something she never believed she could do again. They both express concerns as to how they will react when meeting.

There is an initial tension as the offender is escorted into the room by his Care Worker, and they look at each other across the table. The tension gives way to an emotional scene as Mum spontaneously walks round the room - we all hold our breath…. and they hug. There is a moment of magic, as the professionals all look on in silence as both mother and son weep together. As the mediation starts, every person in the room is given the opportunity to share something they have done recently which they are proud of and then a discussion takes place around the subject of 'Facing the Future Beyond Shame' aided by a carefully prepared PowerPoint presentation.

In the break the offender shows his mum his room and says he cannot imagine how she could ever forgive him for what he has done, she tells him she would like to understand whey he acted as he did, that his behaviour was totally unacceptable, but that she has already forgiven him.

Owing to budgetary restrictions in London Probation, I was bitterly disappointed when I was instructed in August to wind down the RJ elements of my cases. As my involvement came to an end in this case, the Offender was responding to therapy and was painting a colourful mural as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Mum was preparing the ground to tell the siblings about the meeting. Both offender and victim were able to confront the harm of the crime and begin the long process of coming to terms with the consequences of what has happened and to face the future with renewed hope.

There is no quick fix in these situations, and the ripple effect of a crime can have disastrous effects in the lives of so many people. Victim Offender Mediation from a Restorative Justice perspective is a powerful tool that can address the harm, and allow the harm to be repaired. All too often, the criminal justice system operates as a revolving door for an offender which does little to interrupt the patterns of offending behaviour, and at the same time the victim does not always find the satisfaction and relief to their pain from a custodial sentence that they expect. Victim Offender Mediation impacts effectively on both situations.

The parties that I meet with have all but lost hope, and time after time, I have been able to uncover that nearly extinct flame and gently fan the smouldering ember so that the flame ignites again, the flame that is one of the most basic human needs - hope. The fabric of the family unit has never been more under attack, and what kind of society are we if we fail to take care of the most vulnerable members within it.

A wise man once said 'If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I?'

Now is the time to step up, are you ready?

Sharon Goldstone is currently working with the Victims Unit of London Probation. She is actively looking for opportunities to establish or engage with a Restorative Justice based project in the East London Area, particularly focused on families, children and young people.

You can email Sharon on sharongoldstone@aol.com

Events

For up-to-date information on RJ events go to: www.restorativejustice.org.uk/?Events

RJC Winter Forum

Restorative Justice in Prisons

Date: Wednesday, 21st January 09
Time: 10.30am - 3.30pm
Venue: HMP Bullingdon

The RJC's January forum event will be focussing on Restorative Justice in Prisons and will be hosted in Bullingdon Prison, which has been involved in restorative conferencing since 2000.

Topics for discussion will include Titan prisons and the national pilot of SORI.

Speakers and further information will be confirmed shortly.

This forum event is free for members and £15 for non-members.

For more information visit www.restorativejustice.org.uk, or email Gemma on gemma@restorativejustice.org.uk or call 020 7653 1992

RJC Spring Forum

Restorative Approaches and Young People

Date: Wednesday 22nd April
Time: 10am - 4pm
Venue: Diana Rooms (TBC)

With speakers covering restorative approaches used in schools and recent developments in the Youth Justice System including the Youth Restorative Disposal this event is free to RJC members

The Prison Reform Trust annual lecture

Warning from America: the social and economic impact of over-incarceration and how to avoid it

Date: Monday 8 December 2008
Time: 6.30pm
Venue: Congress Centre, London

To be delivered by Professor Bryan Stevenson, New York Law School & director of the Equal Justice Initiative and chaired by PRT president, Lord Hurd of Westwell, followed by a reception to welcome Dame Jo Williams as new chair of the Prison Reform Trust.

To find out more visit the PRT website www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk

Restorative Practices: A unifying framework for schools

International Institute for Restorative Practices

One Day Conference Events

Walsall - Wednesday 14th January
Leeds - Thursday 22nd January
Bournemouth - Wednesday 28th Jan
London - Thursday 5th February

Restorative practices provides the comprehensive framework for a whole-school approach, involving the entire school community: staff, students and families tying together a wealth of individual programs.

For more info go to www.iirp.org/uk

5th Annual Restorative Approaches in Education and Child Care Conference

Developing an emotionally literate response to disruption, conflict and anti-social behaviour

Date: 26th-27th February 2009
Venue: Think Tank, Birmingham

Speakers will be practicing professionals sharing best practice and their experiences of implementing restorative systems in their environments. Schools a focus on Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning/Teaching (SEAL/SEAT) and 'Care Matters'.

You can book your place through the Transforming Conflict website www.transformingconflict.org

This events listing is not exhaustive

For a full list of events on Restorative Justice and related fields please visit the RJC website

www.restorativejustice.org.uk

Restorative Justice Consortium

Join the RJC

If you believe in Restorative Justice, join the Restorative Justice Consortium and help support our work.

Members benefit from free copies of *Resolution*, monthly emails about the latest Restorative Justice news and events, free entry to our regular Forums and further discounts on all our events as well as the opportunity to place articles and advertise on the RJC website.

We rely on our membership to help us promote the use of Restorative Justice and add your support will help us do even more.

Join us now by downloading an application form from www.restorativejustice.org.uk/?Membership or call the RJC on 020 7653 1992 to sign up by phone or for more information.