

Press Release



Research published today by the Ministry of Justice shows that 85% of victims and 80% of offenders were satisfied with their experience of a Restorative Justice conference – a meeting between the victim and offender with supporters of each present.

The Report (title) also showed that;

- 78% of victims who took part in RJ conferences said they would recommend it to other victims
- 90% of victims who took part in an RJ conference received an apology from the offender in their case; as compared with only 19% of victims in the control group
- Only 6 victims, and 6 offenders, out of 152 offenders and 216 victims interviewed, were dissatisfied with the RJ conference after taking part
- Around 80% of offenders who took part in the RJ conference thought it would lessen their likelihood of re-offending.
- Victims who had been through a Restorative Justice conference were more likely to think the sentence the offender had received was fair, than victims in the control group who did not participate in RJ
- This research compares with just 33% of victims who think the CJS meets their needs; and 41% of victims who think the CJS brings offenders to justice [British Crime Survey 04-05]

This English research tallies with research from around the world showing the extremely strong victim benefits from restorative justice; and that RJ can give offenders the insight and motivation to stop offending.

In 2006 a Smart Justice poll with Victim Support showed that 51% of victims think that offenders having to meet their victims would stop them committing further crimes while the British Crime Survey 2004-05 shows that around half of all victims want access to RJ.

But whereas RJ is now an option for victims of young offenders, less than 1% of victims of adult offenders who want it have access to RJ. In the light of today's research the Restorative Justice Consortium (RJC) and Smart Justice are calling for much greater provision of RJ for victims who want to take part.

Harriet Bailey, CEO of the RJC said:

"Today's research from the Ministry of Justice shows just how much difference RJ can make to victims. Meeting the offender in person, telling them the real impact of their crime on you and your family, getting an apology and some answers, can really help victims move on after a crime. RJ can help build confidence in the Criminal Justice System. And this research shows offenders think RJ helps them stop offending. We hope the Government will act on their own research and make RJ available to all victims who want it."

Lucie Russell, Director of SmartJustice said:

"Punishment in the form of prison doesn't change people, because offenders don't have to face up to what they've done or the affect the crime has had on their victims. Restorative justice puts victims right at the centre of the criminal justice process. They get the opportunity to confront the offender and the offender is faced with the impact of their crimes head on".

Will Riley, who met and fought with a burglar in his home, and went on to take part in the RJ research leading to today's report, said:

"From being extremely nervous about opening my front door, fearing that I would find a burglar behind it, prior to the conference, post, I haven't given it a moments thought."

Peter Woolf, the man who burgled Will's home, said:

"To realise you're responsible for another person's pain is more powerful than you can understand. I felt angry with myself. I felt ashamed. Once I felt like that, I knew nothing could be the same again."

Professor Joanna Shapland, the author of the report said today:

"Restorative justice is about bringing offenders and victims together to discuss how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future. Victims' and offenders' views on the process and its outcomes are thus very important and were a key element in our independent evaluation of three restorative justice schemes which dealt primarily with adult offenders."

Sir Charles Pollard, former Chief Constable of Thames Valley said:

"Everyone knows that victims of crime are disenfranchised by the traditional criminal justice system and that public confidence is low. Here is something that overcomes both of those problems. Satisfaction levels in the 90% range is massive, right at the top end of anything in the public services.

Restorative Justice is something whose time has clearly come."

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For interviews please contact:

Lucie Russell, SmartJustice

Office: 02076897734

Mobile: 07931507873

Mobile 2: 07931 380 952

or

Harriet Bailey, RJC

Office: 020 7653 1992

Mobile: 07903 778 252

Notes to Editors:

1. The report, Restorative Justice: the views of victims and offenders - the third report from the evaluation of three schemes is published today by the Ministry of Justice
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/research190607.htm>
2. The RJC is the independent umbrella body for restorative justice in England and Wales. Our 150 members include both organisations and individuals delivering restorative justice processes. Further information about our work, our press pack and links to other research findings on RJ, can be found on our website: www.restorativejustice.org.uk
3. Smart Justice campaigns for and promotes community solutions to crime. It is based at the Prison Reform Trust and funded by the Network for Social Change and the Big Lottery Fund.
www.smartjustice.org Our victims survey was carried out by ICM in conjunction with Victim Support between 19th December 2005 and 7th January 2006, 982 adults who were victims of crime were interviewed.
4. This research report is the third from Professor Joanna Shapland at Sheffield University. Her reports were commissioned by the Home Office to provide an independent evaluation of the Home Office Crime Reduction Programme Restorative Justice research projects. The first two reports, looking at how the schemes were set up, and at the RJ process itself, were published by the Home Office in 2004 and 2006, and can be found at:
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/rdsolr3204.pdf> and
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/r274.pdf>