

Restorative Justice Works!

The Positive Effect of Restorative Processes on Re-offending

- There have been numerous studies carried out across the globe focusing on the relationship between restorative justice and re-offending.
- Key findings from 46 studies are highlighted in this report.
- We acknowledge that research in this area can be somewhat mixed. Of the forty-six studies identified, seven had some mixed results (where this occurred, the mixed findings are noted), two had neutral results and three were found to have negative results.
- The belief is widely held across the world that RJ, when carried out properly, does have a positive effect on re-offending. Once it is established what 'good practice' looks like and which programmes are using good practice, further research should be carried out. Only then will we be able to see the all the benefits of a restorative process.
- Definitions of key terms are available at <http://www.restorativejustice.org.uk/?Glossary>.
- What follows is a summary of key findings taken from a more detailed literature review. This full report is available, including more detail on each study and a list of references, at http://www.restorativejustice.org.uk/?Resources:Research:UK_2006.

Year	Author	Country	Type of RJ	Result	Control Method
POSITIVE RESULTS					
2003	Nugent, Williams & Umbreit	US	Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM)	This meta-analysis included 14 studies and 9,037 juveniles. The Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM) youth had a recidivism rate that was 26% lower than the non-VOM youth. It was also noted that when the VOM youth did re-offend, they committed less serious offences than their counterparts.	Meta-analysis ¹
2001	Latimer, Dowden & Muise	North America	Victim-Offender Mediation / Family Group Conferencing (FGC)	In examining 35 studies (27 VOM and 8 FGC), this meta-analysis found that 72% of studies reviewed reported a decrease in recidivism rates – the mean decrease of all studies was 7%. However, while some programmes reduced re-offending by as much as 38%, others led to increases in re-offending by up to 23%.	Meta-analysis
2001	Nugent, Umbreit, Wiinamaki & Paddock	US	Victim-Offender Mediation	In examining 1,298 juvenile offenders, this meta-analysis showed that VOM participants had a re-offence rate of 19% compared with 28% for juvenile offenders who did not go through VOM. This 32% reduction was found to be statistically significant.	Meta-analysis
2005	Hayes	US	Conferencing	This re-evaluation of McCold and Wachtel’s 1998 Bethlehem Restorative Justice Policing Experiment showed that only 10% of violent offenders in conference re-offended, compared to 36% of violent offenders in court. There was no statistically significant effect on re-offending for property offenders.	Random Allocation ²
2000	Sherman, Strang & Woods	Australia	Conferencing	The RISE project showed a 38% decrease in re-offending for young violent offenders. This study also showed a very small increase (6%) in re-offending by drink drivers and no difference in repeat offending by property offenders.	Random Allocation
2000	McGarrell, Olivares & Crawford	US	Conferencing	The Indianapolis Juvenile Restorative Justice Experiment examined first time juvenile offenders. Six months after the conference, there was a 40% reduction in re-offending. Twelve months after the conference, there was a 25% reduction in re-offending.	Random Allocation

¹ This is the process of using statistical methods to combine the results of different studies on a similar topic.

² This is a method where all participants in a study have the same chance of being assigned to a study group, rather than allocation being assigned by the investigators, clinicians, or participants.

Year	Author	Country	Type of RJ	Result	Control Method
1998	McCold & Wachtel	US	Conferencing	The Bethlehem Pennsylvania Police Family Group Conferencing Project resulted in a 20% re-arrest rate, compared with 35% re-arrest rate in the control group. There was no statistically significant effect on re-offending for property offenders.	Random Allocation
2005	Triggs	New Zealand	Conferencing	32% of the offenders who took part in a conference were reconvicted. This was significantly lower than the average rate for the ten matched comparison groups (36%).	Comparison group ³
2005	Bryant, Siegle, Jabbar & McGeorge	US	Mediation	In examining domestic violence cases, this study showed that only 3.6% of mediated cases were re-charged compared to 37.5% of court cases.	Comparison group
2005	Vanfraechem	Belgium	Conferencing	In examining juvenile offenders who had committed a serious offence or a series of crimes, this study showed that 78% of the juveniles who took part in a conference had no new crimes recorded in the judicial files compared to 22% who were not involved in conferences.	Comparison group
2005	Saez	US	Victim-Offender Mediation	This study looked at VOM with first-time juvenile offenders of non-violent crimes. In 94% of the cases, the youth participants had not re-offended. This contrasts with the 38% relapse rate for first-time, non-violent youth offenders who proceed through the traditional juvenile court system and other probation programs.	Comparison group
2002	Luke & Lind	Australia	Conferencing	Conferencing produced a reduction of up to 15 to 20% in re-offending across different offence types and regardless of the gender, criminal history, age and aboriginality of offenders.	Comparison group
2002	Judge	UK	Family Group Conferencing	Re-offending rates for those who completed the conference were 31.6% for the year one sample (2000) and 7.1% for year two (2001). These rates contrast greatly with the 69% re-offending rate of under 21s on community penalties.	Comparison group
2001	Miers et al	UK	Victim-Offender Mediation	West Yorkshire, the scheme that dealt with the most serious offenders and generated the greatest amount of victim involvement, was the only scheme out of the seven examined, for which the retrospective study indicated a significant effect on reconviction rates - 44% of those participating in the scheme were reconvicted within two years compared with 56% of the control group.	Comparison group

³ This is a method where a group of study participants who do not receive a treatment or intervention are compared against a group that do receive the intervention.

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2001	Miers	Western Europe	Victim-Offender Mediation	In Austria, in the case of first-time offenders, re-offending among the sample was less than half that of the control group; where they had previous convictions, the proportion was about two-thirds. In Germany, a research project showed that with the successful mediation cases, the average rate of re-offending was two thirds that of the control group. The author notes that these were the two big successes and that further research was needed but that there was consensus that RJ did not produce worse offending rates compared to court.	Comparison group
2000	Evje & Cushman	US	Victim-Offender Mediation	In examining six Victim-Offender Reconciliation Programmes (VORPs), the study showed that for five of the six programmes the recidivism rate of the VORP participants was less than that of the control group ranging from 21% to 105% less. The sixth programme showed an increase in re-offending but the authors note that the sample was too small to be statistically significant.	Comparison group
2000	Stone	US	Victim-Offender Mediation	In examining juvenile recidivism, this study found that 41.6% of the comparison group re-entered the system whereas only 20.3% of the offenders taking part in the VOM re-entered the system.	Comparison group
2000	Hines	US	Conferencing	This study in the US examined the Woodbury Police Department Community Restorative Conference Program and found that re-offending rates for juveniles had fallen from 72.2% to 33.1% and that even for repeat offenders, rates had been reduced to 51.8%.	Comparison group
2000	Katz	US	Victim-Offender Mediation	Less than 1% of the VOM participants re-offended compared to more than 8% of the comparison group.	Comparison group
1999	Griffiths	Australia	Conferencing	In comparing youth participating in group conferences with youth on probation it was found that 37% of the probation youths received further sentencing orders for re-offending compared to 21% of the conferenced youths.	Comparison group
1998	Bonta, Wallace-Capretta & Rooney	Canada	Restorative Programme	5.3% of Restorative Resolutions clients were subsequently convicted of a new offence, compared to 16.1% in the control group. Authors concluded that the project could be expected to reduce overall recidivism by 13 to 22%.	Comparison group

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1998	Stone, Helms & Edgeworth	US	Victim-Offender Mediation	There was very little difference in return rates to court for the two groups. The average return rate for mediated youth was 34.2%; for the non-mediated, it was 36.7%. Youth processed by experienced mediators tended to do better than those who were handled by less experienced mediators.	Comparison group
1997	Wiinamaki	US	Victim-Offender Mediation	This study of juvenile property offenders participating in VORP in the US showed a 38.4% reduction in re-offence associated with VOM participation.	Comparison group
1996	Nugent & Paddock	US	Victim-Offender Mediation	Juvenile offenders in this study showed a 37.5% reduction in re-offence associated with VOM participation.	Comparison group
1995	Nugent & Paddock	US	Victim-Offender Mediation	Youth who took part in this VORP were less likely to offend than those youth exposed to the traditional court proceedings: 19.8% VORP compared to 33.1% non-VORP. The severity of re-offence for the VORP youth was less severe than for the non-VORP youth.	Comparison group
1995	Moore & Forsyth	Australia	Family Group Conferencing	In Wagga Wagga the proportion of offenders re-apprehended within nine months was almost unchanged (30% before FGCs, 28.2% after); however, the significant difference was that far more were being dealt with by caution (19.1% before, 47.3% after) and fewer by courts (reduced from 81% to 52.7%).	Comparison group
1992	Umbreit & Coates	US	Victim-Offender Mediation	Four VOM programmes studied showed that 18.1% of offenders who took part in mediation committed a new offence, compared with 26.9% of those who did not participate. Of the re-offenders, 41% of those in the mediation group committed less serious offences than before, but only 12% of those in the comparison group.	Comparison group
1992	Dignan	UK	Victim-Offender Mediation	The Kettering Adult Reparation Bureau was examined for this study and concluded that in the mediation/reparation sample 81.5% were not reconvicted compared to 79.5% in the control group. The difference is too slight to be statistically significant but shows that the experimental group did not re-offend more.	Comparison group
1990	Marshall & Merry	UK	Victim-Offender Mediation	55% of offenders experiencing direct mediation showed a reduction in criminal behaviour, compared with 45% of the control group, although samples were too small to be statistically significant.	Comparison group

Year	Author	Country	Type of RJ	Result	Control Method
2005	Mirsky	UK	Restorative Practices	At this home for looked-after children in the UK, after implementing restorative practices in the home, sanctions were reduced by 59%, calls to police by 40% and offending levels by 33%.	Compared rates before and after introduction of restorative practices
2000	Nelson	US	Victim-Offender Mediation	Youth referred to the Restorative Justice program who met with their victims had 80.8% fewer referrals than the year prior.	Compared offending rates before and after mediation
1998	Wynne & Brown	UK	Victim-Offender Mediation	This local Victim-Offender Unit found that, based on the Home Office prediction scale for reconviction, their group had a predicted rate of 54.2%. The actual rate of reconviction for the mediation group was 49.3% and of those who were convicted, 54% committed less serious offences.	Compared offending rates before and after mediation
1999	Matthews & Larkin	Canada	Sentencing Circles	This study examined both adults and juveniles and found that there was an 80% decrease in recidivism for those who participated in the circles.	Looked within participant group only ⁴
1998	Carr	US	Victim-Offender Mediation	A minimum six-month criminal history check was made on the 165 youth mediated. 89% of these youth did not recidivate.	Looked within mediated group only
1996	Wynne	UK	Victim-Offender Mediation	An earlier UK study in 1996 examining a local Victim-Offender Unit found that for offenders who participated between 1985 and 1987, there were 75% with no conviction after one year, and 68% with no conviction after two years; For offenders who participated in VOM in 1989, 78% had no conviction after one year, and 58% had no conviction after two years.	Looked within mediated group only
2004	Hayes & Daly	Australia	Conferencing	After three to five years following their conference, only 56% of the young offenders in the sample went on to commit one or more offences.	Looked within conferenced group only
2003	Hayes & Daly	Australia	Conferencing	Post-conference results from the South Australia Juvenile Justice programme (SAJJ) showed that 60% of the sample had no official contact with police, 17% had one contact, and 23% had two or more contacts.	Looked within conferenced group only

⁴ In the 'looked ____ only' studies there was no comparison group. These studies used the follow-up period after the rj intervention to find out if participants re-offended.

Year	Author	Country	Type of RJ	Result	Control Method
2002	Hoyle, Young & Hill	UK	Restorative Caution	25% of offenders either desisted from crime or reduced their offending at least in part because of the restorative caution. "Compared with a study of the effectiveness of traditional cautioning, this suggests that restorative cautioning halved the likelihood of re-sanctioning within a year."	Looked within conferenced group only
2001	Maxwell & Morris	New Zealand	Family Group Conferencing	Six years after their conferences, more than 40% of young people were not reconvicted, or were convicted once only, and not much more than a quarter were classified as being persistently reconvicted.	Looked within conferenced group only
1999	Willcock	UK	Restorative Caution	This second evaluation of the Retail Theft Initiative in the UK showed that re-offending rates for first and second time offenders had been reduced from 40% to 17%.	Looked within cautioned group only
1996	McCulloch	UK	Restorative Caution	This first examination of the Retail Theft Initiative showed a substantial drop in the re-offending rate for first time offenders. Of the 422 offenders attending the Retail Theft Initiative, 13% re-offended, compared to the 51 offenders who were remanded who had a rate of 59% re-offending.	Looked within cautioned group only

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NEUTRAL RESULTS

2004	Wilcox, Young & Hoyle	UK	Restorative Caution	Compared Restorative Cautions by Thames Valley Police with traditional cautions in Sussex and Warwickshire. Found that there was insufficient evidence to suggest that restorative cautioning was more effective than traditional cautioning in terms of reducing re-sanctioning rates. There was also no evidence that restorative cautioning had increased re-sanctioning rates.	Comparison group
2002	Walker	US	Conferencing	This report describes a study of conferencing in Honolulu and included 102 first-time juvenile offenders who participated in 85 conferences. The overall re-arrest rate for conferenced youths was no different than for all youths in Honolulu. However, juveniles who were arrested for non-violent offences did not escalate to arrests for violent crimes, while similar juveniles who participated in traditional programs had a significantly higher arrest rate for subsequent violent crimes.	Comparison group

NEGATIVE RESULTS

2002	Bradbury	US	Mediation	This study examined a juvenile restorative justice initiative. The report compares a two-year cohort of program youth with similar youth from the state custody program. One-year recidivism rates were virtually equal [59% vs. 53%].	Comparison group
1996	Neimeyer & Shichor	US	Mediation	This study focused on a large VORP program operating in California with juvenile offenders. Recidivism results were mixed. A sub-sample of 131 youth who went through mediation were matched with 150 youth who were referred but did not participate in VORP. The mediation group had a slightly higher rate of re-offending: 28% compared to 23%.	Comparison group
1993	Roy	US	Mediation	This study compared two contrasting programs. 29% of the Elkhart [VORP] youth re-offended during the follow-up period, compared to 27% of the Kalamazoo [court-imposed restitution] youth.	Comparison group

About the Restorative Justice Consortium

The Restorative Justice Consortium was formed in 1997. It brings together a wide range of people with an interest in restorative justice. These include organizations, policy makers, practitioners, academics etc. from many different contexts and from across the world.

The objects for which the Consortium is established are:

"To promote restorative justice for the public benefit as a means of resolving conflict and promoting reconciliation by:

- (i) Promoting the use of restorative justice in the criminal justice system, in schools, in the workplace and elsewhere in the community in situations where conflict may arise;
- (ii) Developing and promoting agreed standards and principles for evaluating and guiding restorative practice;
- (iii) Advancing education and research on restorative justice and the publication of the useful results of that research"

The Restorative Justice Consortium is a registered charity.



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