

## Paul's Story

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Paul, a university lecturer, suffered a fractured eye socket, broken nose and extensive loss of blood, when he was beaten by attackers who forced their way into his home in August 2014.

He and his family were enjoying a normal evening when the doorbell rang and a gang of four men pushed their way into the house and demanded cash.



Paul's wife, Samantha, was threatened by the attackers whilst his eldest daughter, Eloise, and her boyfriend, managed to barricade themselves in an upstairs room and call the police. Two officers arrived within 8 minutes and the four men were subsequently arrested, convicted and jailed for a total of 64 years.

## The Trial

"The violence and viciousness of their attack deserved long sentences which they received.

"However, I took little pleasure in seeing these men sent to jail. After the trial there were many questions that we felt were left unanswered.

"I was treated well as a victim, the justice system was excellent and the two police officers were incredibly brave in rushing in to save me.

"Restorative Justice offered the chance of being able to ask those questions that we felt remained unanswered after the trial."

## Restorative Justice

The victim and the offender are both involved in the Restorative Justice process and both must be willing and agree to participate.

A willingness to forgive the offender it is not a precondition to participating in Restorative Justice. Many participants do not forgive and never intend otherwise – rather, it is frequently about getting

answers, a step in the recovery process and, for the offender, a chance to understand and confront the impact of their actions

## The Meeting

Paul, along with Sam and Eloise, met one of the attackers, serving a jail sentence of 19 years, at the High Security Prison where he was detained. They each had different reasons for wanting to meet him: Paul wanted to find out why he had done it; Samantha wanted to tell him how she felt; and Eloise wanted to find out whether he was going to change his ways.

In the end it turned out that Eloise's reason was the only one that mattered as the attacker said he did not know why their house had been chosen and that he already knew, from seeing her reaction on the night, how Samantha felt.

"I was pleased because it was important for Eloise to see him as more than just a monster, and helpful for us to talk to him, because ultimately we don't want his life to be wasted.

"At the end of the meeting I took the decision to shake his hand. It was not pre-planned but just felt the right thing to do. The act of forgiving someone is cathartic and empowering; but you can't do that unless you believe the apology to be genuine. That is why Eloise, in concentrating on the future and exploring how he was going to change, got it right, as it was his determination to change his life around that convinced us that our attacker was truly sorry for what he had done."