



Not all victims of crime are receiving support to help them recover from harm

(National Press Release)

Greater victim awareness of restorative justice throughout the criminal justice system is being called for by Richard Monkhouse, Chair of the charity, Why me? after publication of a report backing the findings of a 2016 Justice Select Committee report.

The Why me? report, based on freedom of information questions put by the charity to the Ministry of Justice, showed how patchy the provision of restorative justice remained but how high victim satisfaction was where RJ meetings between victims and offenders were organised, is published this week as part of International Restorative Justice week. The Why me? research was prompted by the Justice Select Committee report in July 2016 which indicated equal access for victims, regardless of geographic location, has not yet been achieved.

According to The Office of National Statistics more than 95% of victims of crime are unaware of their right to request participation in restorative justice and are therefore, denied the opportunity to understand and recover from the harm done to them.

Mr Monkhouse, a retired magistrate and former chair of the Magistrates Association, said,

“In areas where restorative justice is being offered, the response from those harmed is positive. There are excellent examples of best practice but this is not yet consistent across England and Wales.

The Criminal Justice System is too focussed on process and the offender and this needs to change if victims -who are said to be central to the system of justice - are not to be left behind.”

Director of Why me? Lucy Jaffé said:

“Currently there is no duty upon police and crime commissioners to publish on their provision and delivery of restorative justice. We feel this information is essential and should be in the public domain.

“There is work ongoing by the Ministry of Justice to develop a national performance framework for restorative justice services and we have sought to encourage this with our recommendations. ”

The Valuing Victims Reports (Part I, published 17th October and Part II published 21st November) offer comprehensive analysis of the investment and monitoring arrangements for restorative justice services by police and crime commissioners across England and Wales

Between 2013 and 2016 the Ministry of Justice allocated a £23 million to police and crime commissioners (PCCs) to set up and develop restorative services in their areas. Since April 2016 funding for restorative justice has no longer been ring-fenced. Research by Why me? shows local funding arrangements for Restorative Justice services can be complex and vary significantly across police and crime commissioner areas.

The Valuing Victims Report reports on best practice and highlights how police and crime commissioners in Durham and Sussex are looking to monitor in more detail the benefits to victims. For example, in Sussex over 80% of victims who took part in restorative justice reported positive outcomes saying they felt safer, were coping better and had hope for the future.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Why me?

Why me? is a national charity campaigning for greater access for victims of crime to Restorative Justice throughout England and Wales and facilitates restorative justice conferences. It was founded in 2009 by Will Riley who has himself been the victim of an attempted burglary at his home; he confronted the intruder, a fight ensued, and Will handed the man over to the police. The burglar was Peter Woolf, a known career criminal, who was convicted and sent to prison for the crime. They met again in a Restorative Justice meeting and that event changed both their lives.

Valuing Victims Reports 2017 Parts I and II

The Valuing Victims Reports are a comprehensive analysis of the investment into and delivery of Restorative Justice services by police and crime commissioners across England and Wales between 2013 and 2017.

<https://why-me.org/valuing-victims/>

Restorative Justice

The Ministry of Justice defines Restorative Justice as “the process that brings those harmed by crime, and those responsible for the harm, into communication, enabling everyone affected by a particular incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward.”

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/375581/restorative-justice-action-plan-2014.pdf

It is a process involving the victim and the offender and in which both must be willing and agree to participate. Not all victims will want to take up the offer and it won't be appropriate in all cases but when it takes place it can empower the victim and rehabilitate the offender. It may take the form of a face-to-face meeting with a trained facilitator present or a written exchange via a trained facilitator.

A willingness to forgive the offender it is not a precondition to participation and a lot of participants do not forgive and never intended to – it can be about getting answers, a step to aid recovery and enabling the offender to understand the impact of their actions.

Government Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (2015)

Section 7 (p34) of the Code refers to Restorative Justice as follows:

7.7 If the offender is an adult, you are entitled to receive information on Restorative Justice from the police or other organisation that delivers Restorative Justice services for victims in your area, including how you could take part

7.9 If the offender is under the age of 18, you are entitled to be offered the opportunity by the Youth Offending Team in your area to participate in Restorative Justice where appropriate and available

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/476900/code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime.PDF

Justice Select Committee Report (2016)

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmjust/164/16404.htm>