

The Evidence for Restorative Justice

In 2001, the UK Government funded a large scale study into the effectiveness of Restorative Justice. Its findings were presented in four reports by Joanna Shapland et al.

Report 1: [Implementing Restorative Justice Schemes](#)

Focuses on the processes of development and setting up of the three restorative justice schemes

Report 2: [Restorative Justice in Practice](#)

Focuses on the process of restorative justice up to the end of the restorative justice event and any follow-up of outcomes

Key findings:

- Victim participation was very high where cases involved young offenders
- Where participants were given a choice of restorative justice event, indirect mediation was more commonly chosen than direct mediation or conferencing. However, restricting the choice to a direct meeting with the offender did not reduce participation rates.
- In conferences and direct mediations key participants spoke for relatively equal proportions of time.
- Though emotion was shown in conferences, they were conducted safely, with little aggression.

Report 3: [Restorative Justice: The views of victims and offenders](#)

Focuses on the experiences and views of participants, particularly victims and offenders

Key findings:

- Almost all of those who experienced a face-to-face meeting did not regret it.
- Overall, 85% of victims and 80% of offenders were very or quite satisfied with the JRC conference itself
- Over half of JRC victims said the process had provided them with a sense of closure, with another 20% saying it had done so to some extent.
- Just under four-fifths of JRC offenders also thought it would lessen their likelihood of reoffending
- There were only six offenders and six victims who were dissatisfied overall (out of 152 offenders and 216 victims interviewed)
- 74% of JRC offenders and 78% of victims would definitely or probably recommend restorative justice to others for similar offences
- Dissatisfaction revolved around disputes between victim and offender regarding the offence, or difficulties in communication
- Conference victims and offenders were significantly more satisfied with what the criminal justice system had done with their case than control group participants

Report 4: [Does Restorative Justice affect reconviction?](#)

Focuses on whether Restorative Justice reduces the likelihood of re-offending and whether it is value for money

Key findings:

- Offenders who participated in restorative justice committed statistically significantly fewer offences (in terms of reconvictions) in the subsequent two years
- There were no statistically significant results pointing towards any criminogenic effects of restorative justice (making people worse)
- The extent to which the offenders felt the conference had made them realise the harm done was significantly and positively related to decreased subsequent reconviction.
- There were mixed outcomes regarding value for money