

## **A Why me? 2019 survey of Police & Crime Commissioner websites**

### **Purpose: To review how easy it is for victims to find out about Restorative Justice**

This Why me? research project examined how Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) promote Restorative Justice online, specifically looking at this from the perspective of a victim. We developed 7 criteria which we applied to each PCC area. The criteria covered issues such as “Was it easy it to find information about Restorative Justice”, “Was there an explanation about Restorative Justice?” and “Were there case study examples?”. Initially we used the Google search engine and typed “PCC ‘area’ Restorative Justice” as the starting point for the research. We acknowledge there are other ways victims may seek out this information but feel this is a realistic proposition for the research.

The following summarises general findings for each of the criteria, a separate individual analysis report has been circulated privately to each PCC area.

#### **Criteria 1: Is it easy to find information about Restorative Justice?**

Whilst the Victims’ Code places a responsibility on the Police to provide all victims with information relating to Restorative Justice, evidence from the British Crime Survey shows that just 7.5% of victims in 2017/18 recalled being offered the opportunity to meet their offender. Victims will also seek out information from a variety of sources so easily accessible websites are an essential source.

41 PCC areas have easily accessible information. All websites were easy to find through a Google search. Some of the areas were more difficult to find than others as they appeared lower down the Google search results, and some had a number of different websites for the PCC.

One example of good practice is the [Cleveland region](#), it has a clear layout, with drop down boxes providing more detailed information. Another good example is the [Sussex region](#), with easy access to the website, which has a video at the very top of the page answering what Restorative Justice is, and a drop down box, with answers to questions the reader may then have.

## **Criteria 2:** Is there an explanation about Restorative Justice?

An explanation of what Restorative Justice is and how the process works is essential for victims. Clear non jargon paragraphs should allow the reader to give consideration to their own circumstances and help them decide next steps. The explanation should emphasise that the Restorative Justice process seeks to give victims a voice as well as holding the offender to account for the harm caused. Clarification should also be provided that the process will not always end in a physical meeting with the offender and that other options may be more appropriate e.g. a letter exchange. Reference to statistics and the use of graphs may assist but should not be overused.

The 41 PCC areas have a clear explanation about what Restorative Justice is and how that specific area uses Restorative Justice. Some of the websites have more information than others. The [Bedfordshire region](#) is a really good example of this, as they have two clearly laid out paragraphs explaining what Restorative Justice, they then have a link to another section of the website which has a step-by-step process and how it works. [Hampshire](#) is also another good example, the information on their website is very clear. The first paragraph is aimed at the victim and engages the reader on an emotional level.

## **Criteria 3:** Are there clear contact details?

The ability for victims to 'self refer' or to simply contact someone for more information is important. The mechanics of how a victim can do this should be a consideration. Providing options for different ways of contacting the service and placing the contact details at the top of the page are simple measures which help victims.

32 PCC areas have contact details available somewhere on their website. These however are not always clear and are not all specifically for contact with Restorative Justice services. Some contact details are solely for the police area. The [Hampshire PCC website](#) lays out the contact details in a simple and clear format. Two-thirds down the page there is a subheading 'I want to find out more' underneath which is a phone and an email address as well as two website links which provide useful references with lots of information. Another good example is the [West Yorkshire region](#), who have their contact details at the bottom of the page under the heading 'What is Restorative Justice?'. Under this heading is a phone number and an email address as well as a website link underneath to find out more about how the local Police use Restorative Justice.

## **Criteria 4:** Are there case study examples?

Case studies are beneficial for victims as they allow them to see how the process works and how other victims felt about the process. 12 PCC areas have case study examples that are mentioned on the website or have a link to Restorative Justice case studies. The [Cleveland website](#) has an excellent example of this, with 5 different case studies, featuring crimes from shoplifting to arson. [Norfolk](#) have 6 case studies on their website.

Why me? suggest it is good practice in the Restorative Justice process to ask victims to write their experience on the process and how they felt before during and after. If you intend at

any point to publish these or use them as case studies, the individuals must be informed and give their consent. If your PCC area does not have readily accessible case studies, then link to the [Why me? website](#) or see the [Restorative Justice Council](#) case studies.

**Criteria 5:** Is there information about the benefits of Restorative Justice for victims and/or offenders?

There is a significant body of information available in regard to the benefits of Restorative Justice for victims and offenders. It is suggested that these should be presented briefly initially, keeping the benefits to about equal amount for victims and offenders with links to additional references giving a reader a choice to access if needed. Statistics and tables could assist but should not be overused.

8 PCC websites have listed some form of benefits for the victims shown on their website. The [Cheshire area](#) website has a clear bold heading, with a drop down box below with information for the victim, the offender, and general information about benefits as a whole. [North Wales](#) also have a clear layout. They have two sections, one listing benefits to victims and the second on how the offender can change. These two sections hold some of the most vital information within the website for the victim and offender. [Nottinghamshire](#) have given information in bullet point form on the process and how it can help both victim and offender, talking through benefits each individual could potentially get from the process. It also allows for the individual to prepare themselves if they decide to go through with the process and helps them to understand the benefits of each other.

**Criteria 6:** Is there information about volunteering as a facilitators?

8 PCC areas have information about voluntary work on their website. Not all websites have voluntary work specifically for Restorative Justice though. On [Durham's](#) PCC website, there is a clear section with information on how to become a volunteer. It answers questions on what the facilitators do and the benefits for them, as well as contact details on who to get in touch with to become a facilitator. This was the only website that specifically had information on how to volunteer for Restorative Justice. Other sites had voluntary work listed, but it was unclear on what the role was.

**Criteria 7:** Are Why me? or other websites referenced?

9 websites have Restorative Justice referenced somewhere on the site, including reference to Why me?. [West Midlands](#) have a tab 'police and partners' which lists links to helpful organisations including website and phone numbers. The information is clear and not hidden away so that the individual looking for the information can easily find it. [Warwickshire](#) has the Why me? '[Repairing the harm](#)' video on their site, with links to other websites too. Please contact Why me? for information about using material on our website.

More information from [Trevor.watson@why-me.org](mailto:Trevor.watson@why-me.org).

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