

Restorative Justice Manifesto

We envision a world where individuals and communities can reach their full potential. We envision a smarter justice system which rebuilds lives and saves money.

Many people affected by crime feel sidelined by the criminal justice process, which can keep them in the dark, revictimise them, and leave them with unanswered questions. They deserve better.

What if they could ask questions about what happened, explain the impact it had on them, and have a say in the next steps? Restorative Justice makes this possible by facilitating a safe, controlled meeting between the victim and the person who committed the crime. This dialogue is transformative for both parties; it helps people affected by crime to recover, and it helps people who commit crime to stop and to make amends.

Restorative Justice reduces reoffending by up to 27%, when people realise for the first time just how much damage they have done. An economic evaluation by Why me? found that the social benefit-cost ratio of Restorative Justice was £14 per £1 invested, including a direct return to the criminal justice system of £4 as a result of reductions in reoffending.

Restorative Justice is a smarter solution.

Victims' Commissioner, Baroness Newlove, described Restorative Justice as "a transformative tool that can empower victims to move forward."

Those who have taken part in Restorative Justice can attest to its power. Janika Cartwright was stabbed by her former partner while pregnant and eventually met him in prison for a Restorative Justice meeting after his conviction for attempted murder. She said, "Taking part in Restorative Justice was the key that unlocked the door to my future."

All victims of crime are entitled to information about Restorative Justice under the Victims' Code of Practice. But less than 6% of victims with a known offender recall being given this information. This needs to change.

What can you do?

What we need is a multifaceted approach, joined-up policy making, and crucially, visionary thinking from national political leadership.

It is within the grasp of an incoming administration to support people affected by crime on their path to rehabilitation.

Why me? consulted with Restorative Justice practitioners across England and Wales and asked them what policy changes would make a difference in their lives and the lives of the people they support.

1. A National Restorative Justice Action Plan

National leadership means that every victim is supported, no matter who they are or where they live.

One of the biggest barriers to access is the inconsistency across England and Wales. At the moment, people affected by crime face a 'postcode lottery' when trying to access Restorative Justice. This leads to confusion and frustration for both victims and service providers.

Until 2018, a National Restorative Justice Action Plan was in place. This needs to be renewed to ensure national standardisation of the services available to victims of crime, using joined-up thinking to support the people who need it most. This should be accompanied by the appointment of a Minister for Restorative Justice with strategic responsibility for delivery across England and Wales.

2. The right to be referred to a Restorative Justice service

Victims should be able to decide for themselves whether Restorative Justice is right for them.

At the moment, victims aren't being supported to access Restorative Justice, despite their Victims' Code entitlement. Restorative Justice services have high levels of satisfaction, but the vast majority of victims have no recollection of an offer being made. Non-legislative measures and the Victims' Code on their own are clearly not sufficient.

Establishing the right to be referred to a Restorative Justice service in primary legislation would put Restorative Justice on a stronger footing.

Restorative Justice will still only take place when both parties give consent, and when the sensitivities of a victim's experience and their relationship with the perpetrator have been thoroughly considered.

3. National information and awareness campaign

People can't choose Restorative Justice if they don't know about it.

Awareness of Restorative Justice is low and inconsistent. We need a national Restorative Justice information campaign targeted at professionals and the public, designed in consultation with Restorative Justice experts.

People who are in a position to refer, such as police officers and probation services, need to understand how to communicate Restorative Justice effectively to victims of crime. All police forces and frontline employees need to receive mandatory Restorative Justice training.

By implementing these three things, you are taking smart action in order to tackle reoffending, create safer communities, and ensure that people affected by crime can move forward.



Transforming lives through
Restorative Justice

Why me? works with people affected by crime and conflict. We build greater access to Restorative Justice through campaigns, communications, and a direct service, so that people can recover and rebuild their lives.

Why me? is a member of the Advisory Board to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on RJ, the Victim Commissioner's RJ Advisory Group, the Restorative Justice Council, the European Forum on Restorative Justice, the Criminal Justice Alliance and Clinks; we convene a regular Restorative Justice Victim Law group comprising voluntary sector organisations with an interest in securing better access to RJ for people affected by crime.

For any questions about this manifesto or to arrange a meeting with us, please contact: sara.dowling@why-me.org.