



# PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVES ON DIVERSIFYING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICE

*Broadening cultural and ethnic  
representation in leadership and policy  
development*

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# Introduction

## Background and aim of the project

The aim of the project was to explore practitioner perspectives on the issues around broadening cultural and ethnic representation of restorative practitioners in the field, with a focus on supporting opportunities for participation in leadership and policy development. The hope was for the project to provide restorative justice practitioners with some space to engage in dialogue on the barriers and the opportunities for diversity in leadership and policymaking in the UK restorative justice sector. The framing and structure of the project was broad to avoid presupposing the makeup of the group that would respond to the open invitation to participate in the project. The intention was for the group, as it came together through the process and then took the project forward, to define the issues that were important to them. In this way, the project themes and outcomes that formed the basis of discussion, were partially co-produced with participants.

The intended outcomes of the project were:

1. To conduct a series of events that bring together a group of restorative practitioners for discussion that could potentially form the basis for continued work, supported by the Restorative Justice Council, on issues of access and inclusion.
2. To collate, summarise, and disseminate the discussions for practitioner and academic publications.

The project used a series of online learning events (focus group style), culminating in a blended online/in-person day event held at the University of Gloucestershire in March 2022.

The work was funded by the University of Gloucestershire 'Research Culture' fund, which provided financial support for participants to come to the face-to-face session. It had ethical clearance from the University of Gloucestershire, School of Natural and Social Sciences ethics panel. The Restorative Justice Council, as a UK sector advocacy group, participated in the final session to help provide support for taking forward some of the suggestions for actions identified by the participants.

The material in this report represents a summary of participants' discussions. The reflections and suggestions for actions are not the recommendations of the authors; they belong to the participants in the project and are a representation of the issues brought forward during the project.

## Project team

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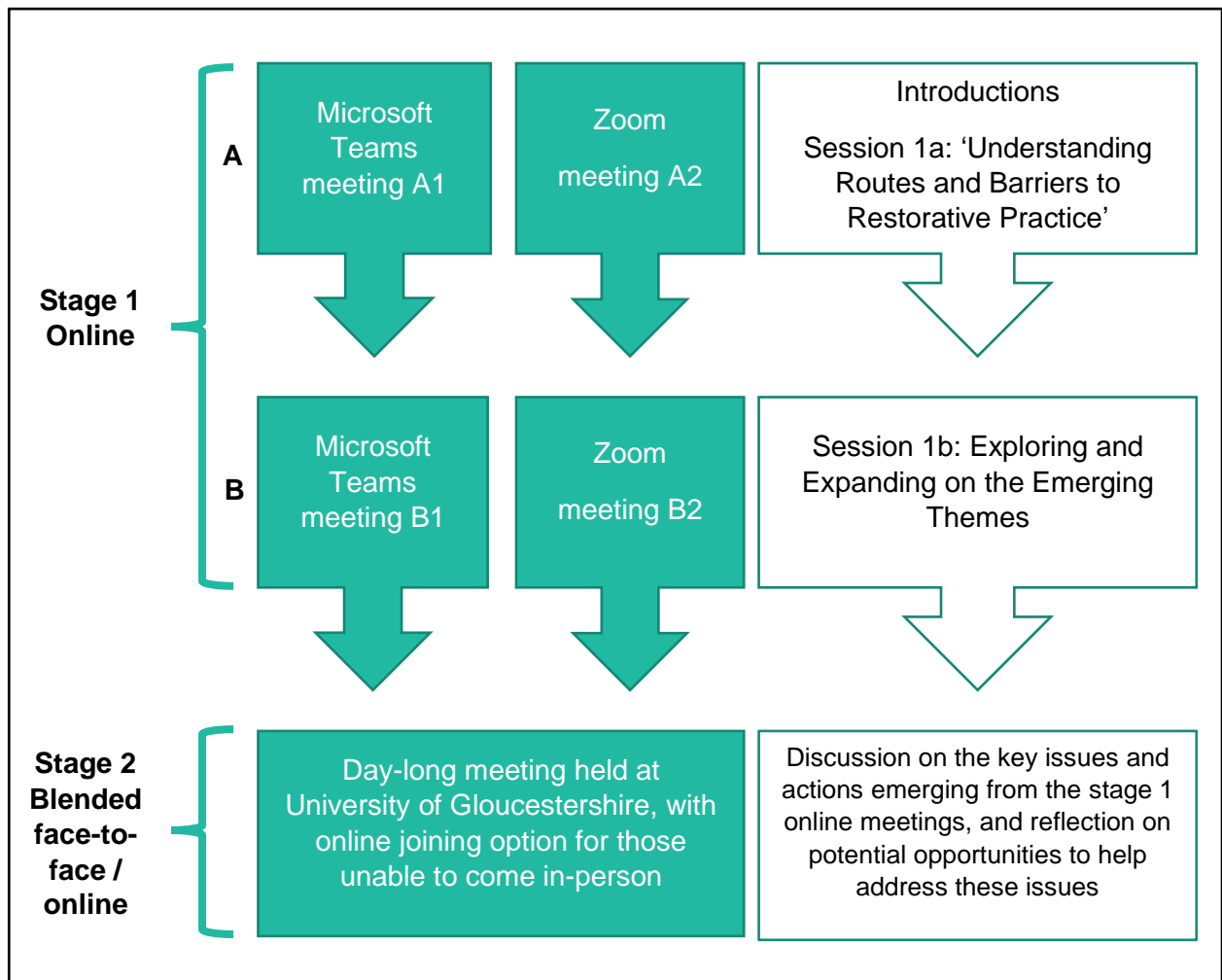
## Method

### Overall project design

The project was organised around a series of focus-group style learning events that sought to engage restorative practitioners on their perspectives around broadening representation amongst underrepresented cultural and ethnic groups, and to consider opportunities for engaging in leadership and policy making. Participation was solicited through an open invitation, advertised by the Restorative Justice Council, and amplified through different networks and word of mouth. Demographic data was not collected from participants, although many participants were open about their identity during the sessions.

The intention was for those taking part to shape the conversations and the outcomes. To enable this, the series of sessions built on one another with the themes from the first online sessions providing the context for the second online sessions. Together these online sessions provided the themes for the final online/in-person day meeting. Figure 1 shows the relationship between the stages of the project.

**Figure 1: Breakdown of the project phases**



The research team organised and facilitated the sessions but did not take part in the discussions. Practitioners that took part in the sessions agreed to recording, transcribing,

and summarising the sessions. Individual names and the names of organisations are not used in this report.

## **Stage 1, online sessions**

The stage 1 online sessions introduced and contextualised the project, introduced practitioners to each other, and the group then generated themes for broader discussion. There were two virtual sessions in this stage, each lasting 2 hours, and two weeks apart to allow for those participating to reflect on the outcomes of the session. To support participation, each session was run twice: at different times of the day, and using different virtual conferencing tools (Microsoft Teams and Zoom). Although practitioners were encouraged to go to the corresponding second session, work and other commitments meant that there was some movement between groups.

The sessions were facilitated by two of the research team (Clair and Monica), both are experienced restorative practitioners. The approach to discussion within each session was modelled on restorative conversations.

In between the first and second sessions in stage 1, the research team sent an email to those that participated to provide initial short summaries of the issues discussed, a reminder of the focus for the following session, and reflections on questions that had arisen during the sessions.

### **Stage 1 session A**

This began with a series of initial questions, designed to help the group introduce themselves to each other and to stimulate discussion on the themes of the project.

- *What attracted you to the project?*
- *What are “under-represented” groups?*
- *What do you understand by “broadening cultural and ethnic representation”?*

Following these, two further questions (with prompts) were posed, which were discussed in breakout groups and fed back to the whole group:

#### *Question 1: Understanding routes into restorative practice*

- What was your route into becoming a restorative practitioner and how did it develop?
- What have your personal experiences or observations been in relation to diversity?
  - Have you or others you know of been included or excluded, othered?
  - What does this look like? What does this feel like? What are your thoughts? And what are your needs?
- How does the restorative field compare with other areas of work/ life?

#### *Question 2: Barriers for under-represented groups*

- How accessible are the routes into becoming a restorative practitioner for under-represented groups?
  - What about accessibility to leadership roles / contributing to policy development?
  - What are the barriers for under-represented groups to contribute to discussions about the future of restorative justice?

The team received some reflections from the first session and revised some of the structure to accommodate the feedback. This included shifting the content of the second sessions

from discussing 'opportunities for further engagement in leadership and policy development' in the restorative justice sector to a discussion of the emergent themes from the first session. In response to feedback from the first sessions, these second sessions had more time in breakout groups for discussion and plenary feedback. Two participants raised concerns around terminology, specifically that the issue of diversity was not more expressly framed as 'racial' diversity, instead using the terms 'cultural and ethnic' diversity. Consequently, an email was sent to all participants the reason for the broad framing and structure in order to provide room for participants to the group the opportunity to define pertinent issues.

### **Stage 1 session B**

Following the first session, the research team analysed the transcripts of the first plenary discussions to identify the emerging themes of the two groups. These emergent themes formed the basis of the discussion in each group's second sessions.

### **Stage 2, day-long workshop**

The second stage of the project involved a blended, face-to-face/online day-long workshop, held at the University of Gloucestershire. This workshop involved the same participants meeting through a blend of in person and virtual attendance. The University were able to pay travel and accommodation for those that wished to attend. The Restorative Justice Council attended this meeting to listen to the issues that were raised and offer some support in moving forward with the participants' suggestions for actions.

The day-long workshop focused on the key themes that emerged from the online discussions in stage 1.

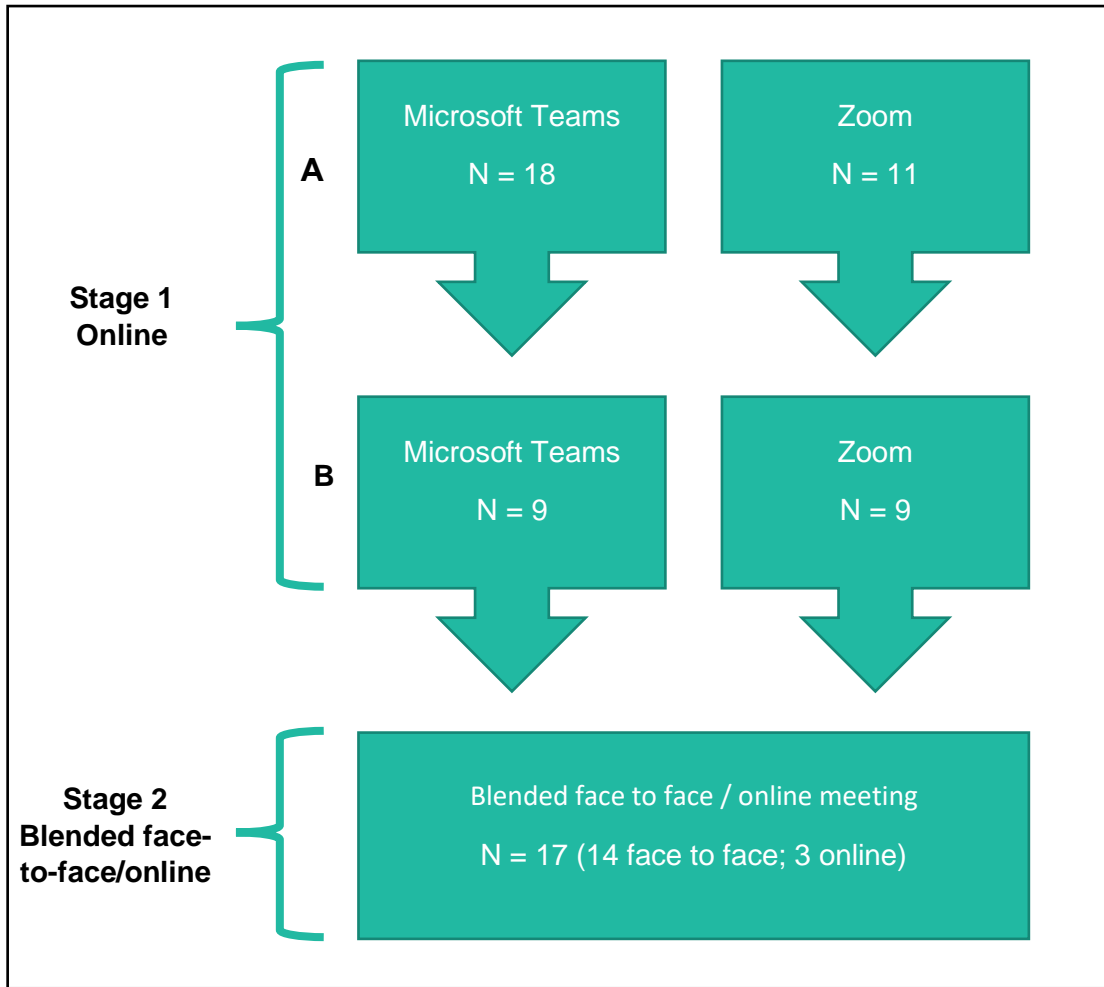
Facilitators divided participants into four groups, which were and invited to select a theme to discuss in the groups. The groups were provided with a selection of art and stationery materials and the choice to create a visual representation of their discussions; one of the research team joined the virtual group to record and note their conversations. Each of the four groups presented their suggested in a plenary session at the end of the day.

### **Participation**

Participants came from across the restorative sector, representing organisations that engaged with restorative work in diverse settings, including criminal justice, youth work, community work, education, and mediation services.



Figure 2: Participation at each stage of the project



# Summary of participant discussions

The material in this report represents a summary of participants discussions. The reflections and suggestions for actions are not the recommendations of the authors; they belong to the participants in the project and are a representation of the issues they brought forward during the project. The report summarises the participant discussions under two main headings: '*understanding routes and barriers to restorative justice*' and '*key themes and response actions*.' It finishes with a summary of the project.

## 1. Understanding routes and barriers to restorative justice

### Common experiences

The first sessions opened with an exploration of what brought participants to engage with this project. The consensus across the groups was that this was an important subject and individuals were keen to have an opportunity to explore shared experiences as people of colour and to be part of a process of restructuring practice (see Appendix A for a selection of responses).

Participants identified several ways that they had come to work in the restorative justice sector, this included routes through police services, schools, universities, working with excluded children, youth offending teams (YOTs), mediation services and through Restorative Justice Council practitioner accredited routes. Some mentioned that they got involved out of curiosity or because they recognised a need for restorative justice and sought out training. From many of the responses, it was clear that becoming a restorative justice practitioner was subject to having awareness and access, as stated by one participant, '*Demographics are quite important in terms of how people get into this and who is heard and who isn't*'. The issues of awareness and access were echoed through the remainder of the sessions.

As part of the discussion in the first phase of the work, participants discussed some of their first-hand experiences and observations as restorative practitioners in relation to diversity and the barriers they considered to exist for under-represented groups. Participants identified that under-represented groups in restorative justice included:

- racialised and minoritised groups;
- Black African & Black Caribbean;
- Bangladeshi and the wider Asian community;
- Europeans, particularly Eastern Europeans since Brexit
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and other sexual orientations and gender identities (LGBTQ+) populations;
- offenders, whilst also acknowledging the overrepresentation of Black offenders;
- those with disabilities and neurodiversity;
- people whose voices are less loud or who feel less able to contribute to discussions;
- people with literacy issues.

Participants identified various forms of social exclusion that they felt created barriers to a more inclusive restorative justice community:

- tokenistic approaches to the inclusion of underrepresented groups;

- restorative justice practice, as voluntary work, creating barriers to becoming involved
- experiences of discrimination in some recruitment and interviewing process
- the cost of restorative events as problematic to many
- Information technology poverty impacting on access to online events (e.g., training/discussion event).

Other common experiences expressed by participants included:

- confusion in the language of restorative practice;
- a lack of cultural awareness and diversity;
- the persistence of inequality and discrimination particularly as it relates to certain groups;
- the effects of unconscious bias within the restorative justice sector;
- the lack of representation from diverse groups in the restorative justice sector.

An important conversation early in the sessions focused on discussions around the difficulty of considering representation in leadership in policy development without first considering how to generate greater diversity and representation amongst practitioners. There was consensus that, if people were '*not at the table in the first place*' then their voices and perspectives were not there to '*feed into development and policy making*'. This insight shifted some of the focus of this project from leadership and policy development, to diversifying restorative justice and practice more generally.

### Illustrative quotes

The following are examples of the issues raised during the online sessions, provided as illustrations of the broader issues raised during the discussions.

*'Some of the people in our group, including myself, spoke about our experiences, our personal experiences within RJ within criminal justice ... speaking for myself, I had witnessed, I had seen, I had experienced, racism, but not to the extent that you could actually report it and expect anything to come out of it at the end of the day.'*

*'I feel like it's quite interesting to see how restorative justice is explored in this country and how, you know, there are issues with diversity in the field itself in terms of practitioners, but also uptake in terms of people...doing restorative justice.'*

*'I have been to many events ... and generally you are the only one, the only person of any colour there, at predominantly White events.'*

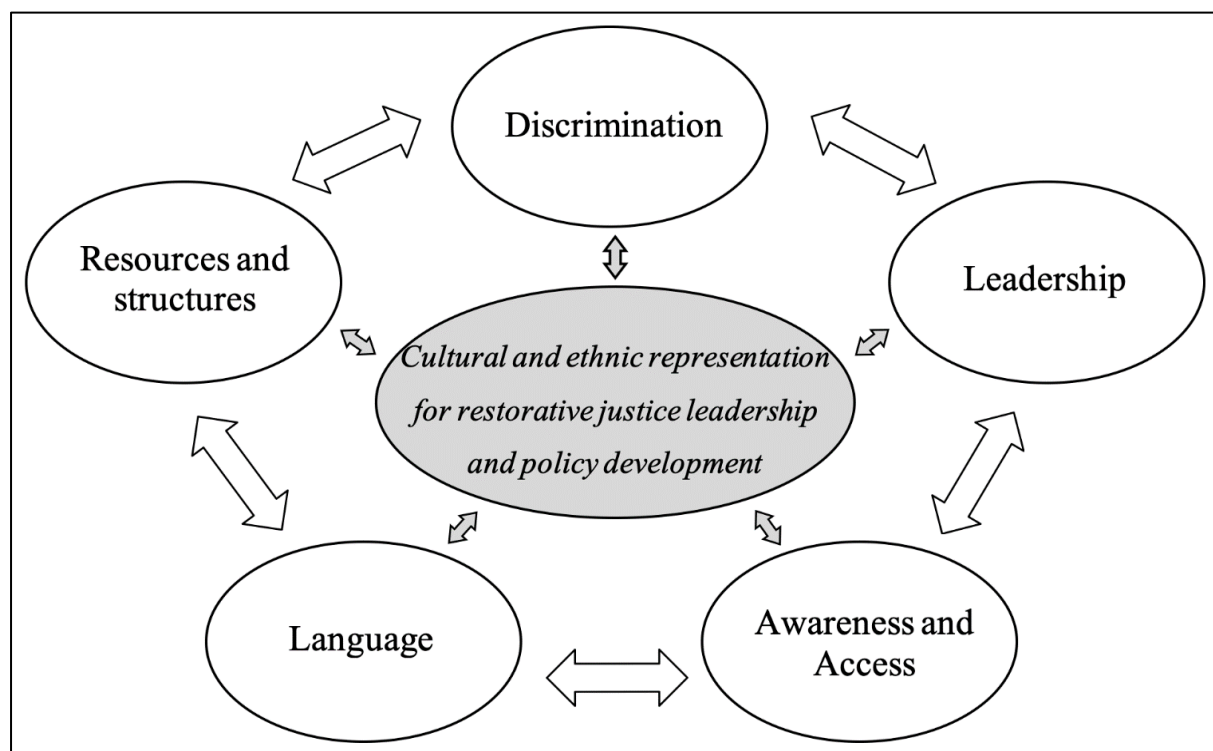
*'I just feel a lot of the time the conversation just sort of gets swept under the carpet. I think that we have so many reports that highlight disproportionality but when it actually comes to actually talking about it and tabling it up, quite minimal... it's not just about Black people but, however, at the same time I think that when it comes near to the subject matter of Black people...that's the one that gets shoved under the carpet.'*

### Key themes to emerge from Stage 1

Emerging from the online sessions that formed the first phase of the project were a series of themes, constructed from the participants conversations. These were: *awareness and*

access; discrimination and leadership (these two themes were disaggregated during the final session); language; resources and structures; and leadership. These are interconnected, interdependent, and non-hierarchical themes (see Appendix B, Images 1 & 2 of visual representation of the interconnectedness of restorative justice and the effect of barriers). As represented in Figure 3, these themes formed the basis for the discussion in the day-long conference at the end of the project.

**Figure 3 Key themes emerging from stage 1 of the project**



## 2. Key themes and participants suggestions for actions

Participants identified key themes that present barriers to a more diverse restorative justice environment. In each case, they sought to identify a range of considerations and suggestions for actions.

### Theme 1: Awareness and Access

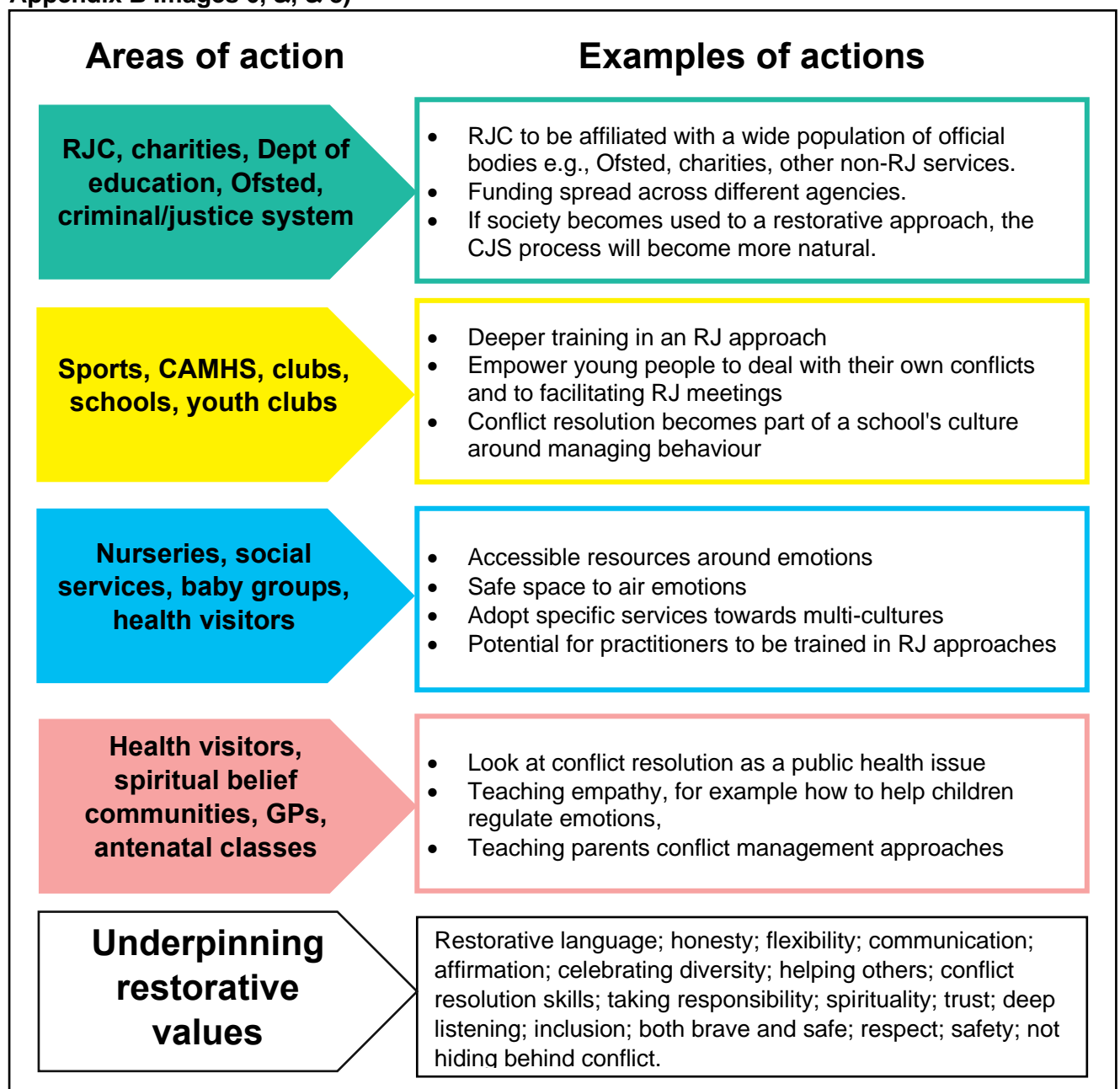
#### **Key issues raised by participants**

Participants agreed that awareness of restorative justice within communities is limited. It was felt that restorative justice is often restricted to specific sectors and consequently the offer of restorative justice is not *'broad enough'*. Even within sectors where restorative justice is more widely offered, such as the criminal justice system, it was recognised that a lack of awareness remains and *'victims are not aware that they have those services available for them'*. The lack of community awareness has implications for who has access to restorative justice and thus contributes to under-representation. For example, it was noted that *'it's not reaching people from ethnic minority communities'*. In addition, some participants felt that restorative justice practitioners were more likely to be adults (older/often retired White middle

class) and that there was a need to reach out to a younger population and include them in the growth of the restorative sector.

Participants felt that broader public awareness of restorative justice needs to be improved, that *'we need to share restorative justice with the public so that it becomes embedded in daily life'*. To improve representation and access to restorative services, it was felt that restorative justice needed to *'go out into the community'* and that steps should be taken to focus on specific communities and under-represented groups. One of the groups suggested a range of activities through an 'awareness and access layers' tower (see Figure 4). The representation created during the all-day session guided the viewer through the different layers of society and how restorative values, skills, and processes could percolate and effect changes in every layer (see Appendix B, Images 6, 7, & 8 for the original representations created by the participants).

**Figure 4: Representation of the participants' 'awareness and access layers' (See Appendix B Images 6, 7, & 8)**



### **Illustrative quotes**

The following are examples of the issues raised during the online sessions, provided as illustrations of the broader issues raised during the discussions.

*'I wonder if the offering of restorative justice is, seems to be a niche offering where it's not ... wide enough ... how it's been offered in terms of, I guess, like maybe community grassroots kind of groups.'*

*'Restorative justice isn't widely known enough. You know, even though there's the Victims Charter [Code], people, you know, that's been put together, when you talk to people or when you reach out to victims of crime or people who have been victims of crime and start talking about restorative justice, they're not aware of what it is.'*

*'The whole area of RJ is seen as a white, middle class offer. So to break this perception this has to be done in awareness raising, careful consideration of the messaging'*

*'I think if possible, we should aspire to model restorative core principles in the co-design not just delivery, working "with". I think too often we develop programs or write bids without listening first. I think truly restorative projects need to be co-produced with people with the lived experience of whatever the issue is. I appreciate that's not always easy'*

### **Participant's suggestions for the theme of 'awareness and access'**

#### **Restorative values and services should be embedded at various levels within society to provide greater awareness of the opportunities restorative approaches can offer.**

This includes applications across society, for instance:

- in schools, restorative approaches should become part of the 'eco-system', staff should be trained, and restorative champions could be appointed to support development. To do this, organisations such as the Restorative Justice Council could engage with organisations such as Ofsted and the UK Department for Education to support this work.
- when embedding into other organisations, restorative training should feature throughout the organisations from the top, down.

#### **Media campaigns to promote representation and access to restorative services.**

These might include:

- utilising different forms of media e.g., television and internet;
- clearer messaging that restorative practices are 'for everyone';
- intentional messaging that diversity needs to be represented and promoted throughout.

#### **To promote greater awareness through better messaging**

- A reframing of restorative justice that provides clear messaging through media campaigns that explain key elements of restorative justice and reflects social diversity to reach a broader population.
- Provide support and assistance to community leaders to promote restorative justice messaging.

### **Establish a national awareness strategy, supported by one or more national celebrity leads for restorative justice.**

This could entail:

- at the national level a high-profile celebrity to be the face of the campaign (although caution was advised when nominating an appropriate individual);
- at the local level, community leaders that can champion this within their local areas.

### **To conduct further research on increasing awareness of restorative justice in diverse communities.**

This might include:

- a pilot project that looks to better understand the needs of diverse communities and how to better raise awareness in these communities (to include not just restorative justice but more broadly restorative approaches);
- oversight by an academic institution to ensure this is conducted in an ethical manner and to evaluate the impact of awareness campaigns;
- using a more collaborative approach to initiating and structuring any project by working with the diverse communities from the onset.

## **Theme 2: Discrimination**

### **Key issues raised by participants**

Participants spoke of evidence of the persistence of discrimination in different organisations, over many years, despite the recommendations proposed within the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry<sup>1</sup> (1999) on specific steps needed to address institutional racism. Whilst participants referred to under-representation and discrimination as being about race, they also referred to other minoritised and marginalised groups such as LGBTQ+.

One participant spoke about a degree of fluidity of excluded groups, observing that some groups had moved from the periphery to the mainstream over time whilst others had remained. There was agreement that Black men continue to be over-represented in the criminal justice system and under-represented in restorative justice. Another participant talked about the importance of recognising unconscious bias which seeps into all areas of daily life. The participant explained that various forms of unconscious bias affect the practice of restorative justice, including the apparent lack of diversity in the field. In addition, these biases had an impact on people being wary of the restorative justice process thereby affecting participation. Participants felt that unconscious bias and discrimination have led to the restorative justice sector being represented almost exclusively by '*White British senior-level management*', which needed to be addressed with some urgency. Participants stressed that it is '*not just the responsibility of the marginalised*' but the responsibility of everyone, including those working at senior levels within the restorative justice sector.

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<sup>1</sup> Macpherson, W. (1999). The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. Report of an Inquiry by Sir William MacPherson of Cluny. Retrieved from [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/277111/4262.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277111/4262.pdf) (last accessed 12 April 2022).



### **Illustrative quotes**

The following are examples of the issues raised during the online sessions, provided as illustrations of the broader issues raised during the discussions.

*'I don't know how you guys are structured but it's quite difficult to see where we fit ourselves in...within the whole structure, within the whole structure of the RJC...'*

*'We discussed that demographics are quite important in terms of how people get into this and who, who is heard and who isn't heard.'*

*'When we break it down in fine detail, what I discovered was ... all jobs that we had, you had to have a certain level of qualification and the minimum was an A-Level standard. And, don't get me wrong I'm not saying people from communities, like I know very well educated people, but if we're talking about having people from diverse life experiences, you know, some of those people do not have qualifications because they disengaged with education and haven't got back into it yet or, or as young adults are just starting to.'*

*'[restorative justice organisations have] an implicit responsibility to reach out to those people who are, who don't have a voice. Because you can't have true justice without people's opinions being heard.'*

*'I have been to many events and generally you are the only one, the only person of any colour there, at predominantly White events.'*

*'I think, also, in the way it is applied, so that was the theory and then the way it's applied ... sometimes it's like just sprinkle a few Black people in there or one or two and it makes the whole thing diverse, like just sprinkle in and stir. And so, um, it is in that context that I say that diversity seems to be, uh, misunderstood and misapplied.'*

### **Participant's suggestions for the theme of 'discrimination'**

#### **To support greater understanding of unconscious and institutionalised bias and how it serves to discriminate and perpetuate racism and inequality.**

This can include:

- revisiting the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (MacPherson, 1999) to create a "step change", i.e., a significant change in policy and attitude;
- management thinking more creatively about recruitment and employment policies and practices in order to begin to address under-representation within the sector (for example by thinking about the locations recruitment occurs, the documents required for applications, and the language used for communicating about restorative justice).

#### **To establish in the sector a range of support/network groups of good practice for practitioners from diverse backgrounds, not simply as talking shops but as forums where innovative strategies and actions can emerge.**

This can include:

- supporting the development of a directory of restorative practitioners to facilitate communication between diverse groups;



- establishing dedicated practitioner groups, for example practitioners spoke about a Black restorative practitioner group;
- the sector should work on recruiting more people from diverse backgrounds through new approaches to recruitment. Suggestions included reaching out to community groups, kickstart programs for the unemployed, advertisement and awareness raising in hospitals, doctor's surgeries, schools, and libraries;
- acknowledge and address unconscious bias through regular training, not just of practitioners but also of all for management staff.

### Theme 3: Language

#### **Key issues raised by participants**

Participants discussed language in reference to the 'words' used and communication more broadly. They made for more use of visual material and emotional literacy. Participants felt that addressing these issues could have the potential to improve engagement with the restorative justice offer. There is a strong link in this context with the theme of Awareness and Access, for instance where *'people with literacy issues may not be able to access restorative justice services.'*

Although none of the groups in the all-day workshop group chose to focus on language, it was a strong theme in the virtual sessions of phase 1 and issues related to this were present across the other discussions during the day-long workshop, which included:

- language and terminology that is used within restorative practice;
- language used in recruitment and advertising for practitioners; and
- language used in the Restorative Justice Council website and in the practitioner registration process.

Participants regarded these elements as barriers that contributed to under-representation.

There was discussion over use of the term "restorative justice", and some participants suggested the term restorative practice was a more appropriate umbrella term as it included restorative work in areas other than the criminal justice system. This was particularly the case with work in schools, healthcare settings, workplaces, and communities. On the other hand, participants also regarded the term restorative practice as potentially confusing in terms of the existing funding sources and structures. For example, participants suggested the police may not see it as relevant.

There was an expressed urgency for the language used in restorative justice to reflect cultural differences and awareness, including the acknowledgement of English as a second language for some communities. There was discussion on the language used by the Restorative Justice Council and other organisations being 'middle class' and inaccessible, especially relating to practice, registration, training provision, policy, and other information. This could affect recruitment, retention, and is therefore another contributory factor to under-representation.

There were also some more general concerns on the types of language used within the sector. This included concerns around the assumptions made about the relationship between poverty and diversity, particularly the need to address these issues separately. There were similar concerns on language around terms for "victims" and "offenders", and the related stigma, an issue that participants felt needed to be addressed more meaningfully to reach society more widely.

### **Illustrative quotes**

The following are examples of the issues raised during the online sessions, provided as illustrations of the broader issues raised during the discussions.

*'Language is a big subject...we all agreed that that's a very important part of how we reframe the whole idea of what restorative work is'*

*'People thought there was a very middle-class kind of approach in terms of the language and the way in which we work and this ideas of when we advertise and recruit and the consequences of, you know, retention and promotion is a very kind of middle-class type of thing to do where you need qualifications and knowledge to do stuff. So, when you, for example, when you go into a community, you know all that kind of stuff is a kind of barrier, you know, it's a barrier in itself'*

*'the language is become tricky...I think restorative justice sits under the tree of restorative practice. I think it should be the RPC - Restorative Practice Council with restorative justice sitting underneath it.'*

*'Something that was really really interesting ... was actually the fact of having poverty and un-representation in the same sentence because actually straight away that's giving a message that that, sending off a message straight away and actually it's not that all Black people are poor, and sorry I'm not emphasizing on Black it's just that was what was dominant in our conversation. So actually, it's about actually those two headings should actually be separate'*

### **Participants' suggestions for the theme of 'language'**

**A re-positioning of restorative justice approaches across the sector, which includes a revision of language to make it more accessible.**

This might include:

- making communication more visual;
- including emotional literacy as part of communications;
- revising some of the language used in the sector to make it more accessible;
- promoting commonly understood language to improve intelligibility;
- finding, using, and agreeing to language appropriate for engaging people, breaking down concepts, and framing restorative justice with communities and with potential practitioner recruits;
- consider changing name of the Restorative Justice Council to Restorative Practice Council;
- finding out what practices and language are used within different communities and cultures to enhance communication with those groups.

## **Theme 4: Resources and Structures**

### **Key issues raised by participants**

For participants, the largely voluntary nature of restorative work was considered a major challenge which also affected the diversity of people involved. They felt that restorative justice services, more than other services, is based on volunteers. As one participant put it, *'volunteers are not truly free'*, as expenses and other training needs still had to be met.

Participants said that they felt Voluntarism created a *'postcode lottery'* to restorative services, due to the varying affordability of childcare, travel, accreditation, and professional development fees, as well as the ability to take time off work. These factors were highlighted as accounting for *'why most of the volunteers are middle class'*; that *'not many from the Black community'* were involved; and that there were gaps with *'younger generations'* participating, *'or people who cannot afford to be philanthropic'* being included.

Participants were clear that the sector involved specialist and demanding work, and there was agreement amongst the participants that those working in the field should be *'remunerated appropriately'*. There was also agreement that there should be greater career progression routes and opportunities, which would help to avoid the disparities and discrimination that currently exists between paid and unpaid practitioners. Concerns were articulated that the widespread practice of using of volunteers blocked professional improvement.

For paid practitioners, there was concern that whilst the types of cases, skillsets, and training have changed and, in many cases become more complex (for example in post-sentence cases), pay scales have often remained the same.

Participants expressed concerns over funding for restorative services. This included the linking of restorative provision with the police through Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) funding, which was described as *'police top-heavy'*. They identified this as a barrier for some under-represented groups, particularly those that may view policing as not being inclusive or representative. Further, PCCs delivery of victim-led restorative justice was perceived as a barrier for offender participation; as one stated, *'every PCC in this country sells restorative justice as a victim tool... [but] if the offender don't come to the table, there is no RJ'*.

Participants also felt that short-term funding was problematic and there were pressures in the competition for funds between national and local, grassroots organisations.

Participants felt that resources for effective restorative provision were inadequate, leading to inconsistent provision nationally. They felt that this was compounded by stakeholders such as probation, police, Victim Support, and MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) at times working in problematic ways, for instance in *'gatekeeping'* (i.e., not sharing information or resources) even when agreed information sharing procedures (GDPR compliant) were in place.

There were concerns over inconsistent resource availability for supporting practitioners' wellbeing, for example adequate time for supervision, support, and reflective practice.

There was also concern over the attitudes towards restorative justice at the government level, including the PCCs and the Ministry of Justice. Several participants voiced that there seems to be a problematic approach to the value of restorative justice, a misunderstanding of the holistic nature of the process – that it is there for both the victim and the offender. The lack of understanding of the holistic nature of the restorative approach that has a direct impact on funding, as one participant explained: *'we turned a lot of those people around. But then the Ministry of Justice decided, like that, we'll pull the plug on that, and we'll go down a different avenue. And it just ended up with recycling the young people back outside again committing more offences back in, whereas we had total control of those young people not everybody, but I can honestly say that 85% of them, we actually turned them around. And it was really good.'*

A better understanding of restorative practices leads to better funding and support for restorative services, as one participant stated, *'we've just got a new PCC who we thought wasn't interested in it but is, um, and is prepared to put money into it, but there's not enough money coming from the government and the working party is trying to get the government to recognise that they could save a lot of money and they could reduce recidivism, um, by getting more and more practitioners.'*

Finally, it is important to note that participants repeated across the sessions the need for greater support networks for practitioners to come together to share experiences, to encourage professional development, and to learn from each other. Participants explained that there were insufficient opportunities for coming together which is important generally, but especially important for those of minoritised identities to provide a safety net and mutual support. Support networks would also provide a powerful recruitment tool, *'having people come together regularly could be powerful and would have a focus on recruiting people into RJ.'*

### **Illustrative quotes**

The following are examples of the issues raised during the online sessions, provided as illustrations of the broader issues raised during the discussions.

*'People should get paid so it is recognised as work or else volunteers will be predominantly White middle class (philanthropic) people.'*

*'We wouldn't expect a teacher to teach free, we wouldn't expect a social worker to work for free, we wouldn't expect a counsellor to work for free; RJ should be bracketed within that strata as far as remuneration.'*

*'sometimes this work can be mentally and physically draining and I think, you know, the idea of sometimes disengaging from this work is as important as engaging in it too.'*

*'I know in the Lawrence enquiry, uh, many many years ago there was this step change was very much looked at, about how we move from here to how we move to there and that angle at which we go. Do we go, ah, sharp rise, do we go a lesser rise, how do we do it? For me, a step change is "bang": we need resources and we need some effort, time, energy, money putting in to get us from here to there, not on a gradual slope, little two percentage kind of increase; we need a good 45 percent ramp up ASAP. And this is all stuff that's, you know, known from the Lawrence enquiry and stuff anyway. So, resources is really really important.'*

### **Participants' suggestions for the theme of 'resources and structures'**

#### **A need for a rethink of funding structures to help improve under-representation.**

This could include:

- properly funded, national restorative justice services;
- the (re)introduction of more secure funding for restorative justice services and professional routes into restorative justice;
- a shift from a model largely based on volunteering to one of paid employment;
- a sector fair pay review to explore how remuneration for restorative practitioners, could help to address under-representation;
- access to longer-term funding streams;
- more opportunities for roles in restorative justice management.

### **A government appointed a restorative justice minister to support greater awareness of and access to services.**

This could include:

- supporting an evidence base to show that restorative justice is a specialist field with tangible results in a variety of areas, including gang violence, hate crime, and a fragmented society;
- lobbying for more roles in the field.

### **The importance of Police and Crime Commissioners conducting ongoing auditing of internal and commissioned services in order to support representation.**

These would focus on issues such as:

- reviewing the diversity of their teams;
- reviewing the diversity within the organisations and practitioners they contract,
- providing responsible parties' paths to becoming restorative justice practitioners.

### **The creation of 'safe spaces' for practitioners and minority groups.**

These would help:

- create spaces for reflection;
- encourage peer-support networks, awareness, and well-being.

## **Theme 5: Leadership**

### **Key issues raised by participants**

Participants observed a disproportion in terms of who benefits from restorative processes, under-representation in staffing structures, representation in organisational leadership positions, and representation more broadly within the restorative justice sector. They considered this to be a “systemic” issue.

Importantly, participants agreed that there were broadly two kinds of leadership: leadership by consensus which exists in communities; and leadership by appointment which exists in organisations (see Appendix B, Image 3 of the visual representation of the dialectic triangle of leadership types). For instance, there was discussion on how some types of *'leadership can get dismissed, and that actually people are doing leadership roles but might not be getting recognised.'* Participants felt that there is a *'community of people doing great work but are unfunded and unrecognised'*. Therefore, there was a need for a better balance between these varied forms of leadership (see Appendix B, Images 4 & 5 of visual representation of the need for balance). They felt that organisations would do well to identify, engage, and partner with community leaders and thus, actively encourage participation from a greater diversity of people.

Participants talked about how personal experiences influence their ability to engage and that *'we all have our own experiences that we bring to the table and how we experience things differently because of our histories'*. The participants identified Black people in general and Black men being noticeably absent from leadership and policy making; *'...if there aren't enough Black men to work with Black boys ... then train those that are there to do it'*.

Practitioners felt that there were barriers in the way of representation and shared common experiences of being the only non-White present at events such as conferences.

Participants felt there was an urgent need to *'go out and get community representatives...that look very different to the rest of "the Board"'*. Participants felt that there was a general perception that restorative justice was a White, middle-class offer, and that there was a need to overcome this perception. The promotion of more diverse leadership requires a greater level of awareness-raising, and that action to address discrimination and increase awareness would also impact leadership.

Another related element that emerged from this study was the need for a more grass roots approach to leadership. This approach requires a recognition that restorative justice is not new and has long historic roots in many cultures and especially in Black culture: *'I observed that among the facilitators I was the only Black person ... and I just thought, you know, restorative justice is very much part of, you know, our culture as Black people and I did not know why they did not have enough people'*.

This type of grassroots approach would require organisation to start from existing skills at a cultural and familial level, which are developed and refined to improve existing tools, instead of proposing top-down solutions. Therefore, *'when you don't have that diversity and the richness... you're missing out on that leadership level because actually in fact, many people that are from different countries, whether it's from the Caribbean or Africa, ... restorative is a natural way of life. Yeah, so actually you're missing out on the richness of not having that diversity in the first place because there's a lot to learn there.'*

Finally, participants also recognised gaps in cultural competence and understanding of restorative approach principles amongst existing leadership. These skills are essential for a more diverse future of restorative justice. There was a call amongst the participants for training of supervisors and all those in leadership roles in the fundamentals of restorative practice and in cultural competence.

### **Illustrative quotes**

The following are examples of the issues raised during the online sessions, provided as illustrations of the broader issues raised during the discussions.

*'so we spoke about, um, just lack of leadership, um, generally, and leadership positions, so someone in our group, um, I don't know if you want me to call your name but you can do that yourself, um, spoke about that she attended the conference and actually just by a visual what she saw and actually the visual of what she saw was a room full of White men.'*

*'A lot of leadership going on is not reflected/not recognised...The leadership structures look differently than at grassroot level. The structure for applying for quality mark might not mirror culturally embedded problem solving and peace-making in the community'*

*'If BMEs are, if Africans or people Black or Black people are not included in RJ leadership and decision-making bodies, then these bodies do not reflect the increasingly multi-cultural profile of the UK.'*

*'We need to listen to existing strengths and challenges experienced by a community and their local representatives, they know their community and its diverse nuances, not us. I think we need to share training and support and ongoing supervision (agree with [participant]) and not think we have the answer or the model, it needs to adapt and be accessible.'*

## **Participants' suggestions for the theme of 'leadership'**

### **To develop projects to increase leadership within the restorative justice sector**

- This should begin with awareness work in diverse communities and can be done in collaboration with an academic institution to oversee and evaluate the impact of the project. The aim would be to encourage people to see the benefits of restorative justice.

### **To actively promote leadership through increasing awareness and devising strategies designed to share power with people from marginalised groups.**

This can include:

- raising awareness of restorative justice through campaigns with a diversity focus;
- adequately resource recruitment and use creative approaches to address imbalances in representation;
- addressing race/ inequality/ discrimination - not just with the marginalised;
- actively encouraging and resourcing participation of people of colour;
- creating an annual leadership summit open to everyone across the sector.

### **To identify where there are gaps in representation in order to develop a targeted approach to increasing participation.**

- For example, where there is a dearth of Black men in leadership roles – direct attention to identifying Black men and boys in recruitment for practitioners.

### **To train existing leaders and management teams in restorative practices and to enhance their cultural competence**

To include:

- regular and ongoing diversity training that provides for cultural awareness and enhance ability to acknowledge discrimination, this would include learning skills to deal with existing social barriers to diversity and to communicate with people from minoritised backgrounds;
- training in restorative approaches to enhance general communication skills and to ensure buy in at all levels.



# Summary

The themes that emerged from the participant discussions contain several key areas of action that the group felt could support the to diversification of restorative justice practice. Importantly, participants made it clear that, prior to having a conversation about broadening the representation in leadership and policy development, restorative justice as a field needs to become more inclusive. The further development of inclusive practices and policies can actively deal with systemic discrimination and create an environment that supports leadership becoming more diverse.

At the final day-long events hosted in this project, participants suggested a series of recommendations to support meaningful change in the restorative justice sector. These spanned across policy (e.g., appointing a restorative justice minister, rethinking the funding structure of the sector, embedding restorative practices from cradle to grave), approach (e.g., reframing and changing language and messaging around restorative justice and diversity, devising awareness campaigns in specific communities, establish new connections across other key ministerial and non-ministerial sectors), and support (e.g., practitioner networks.), ranging from more immediate actions to longer range aims to be achieved.

## Participants suggested initial actions:

At the end of the day-long session, participants identified a series of potential initial actions:

- 1. The creation of practitioner support groups, with a more immediate call by a large segment of participating practitioners for a Black practitioner group**
  - a. These practitioner networks would require a safe space to network (based on Restorative Justice Council's model developed during the pandemic) led by members of the group to promote self-awareness, well-being, and specific outcomes.
  - b. These groups could begin small and then grow and promote recruitment of new members.
  - c. Create a directory of restorative justice practitioners to facilitate and enhance diversity and inclusion.
  
- 2. Devise a collaborative pilot project focused on increased awareness and aimed at drawing in diverse communities**
  - a. Identify the needs of the communities and the benefits of restorative justice and restorative practices more broadly.
  - b. Assist community leaders in promoting restorative practices.
  - c. Include academic oversight (ethics, processes, evaluation).
  - d. Create an evidence base for value and need of restorative justice and restorative practice.
  
- 3. Further opportunity for diverse practitioner groups to feed directly into the APPG**

Practitioners were keen to get the process started and listed a selection of questions that arose in reference to these initial actions:



- Who will be responsible for initiating and steering these actions?
- Who will commission the pilot?
  - What will be the role of the practitioner support groups in this? Highlighting that it is important to ensure that this is done from the bottom up with representation from different communities
  - Where will the pilot project be rolled out?
- How will young people be encouraged to get involved in the entire restorative justice process?

## Participants' longer-term actions:

In the longer term, discussions took place around taking further steps to meaningfully effect change across the sector. These suggestions included:

**Revisiting** the MacPherson report and consider how to enable change in the restorative sector, including reviewing team diversity across the related sectors.

**Rethinking** funding structures of the restorative justice sector and conduct a sector fair pay review, reintroduce ring-fenced funding for restorative services.

**Reframing** funding streams and opportunities available in the restorative sector and recreate professional routes into restorative justice.

**Reimagining** the messaging/positioning around restorative justice and restorative practice, including the choice of language and ways to become involved that are more inclusive and accessible.

**Retraining** management and staff across all relevant sectors in restorative practices and cultural competence.

In summary, the group felt that "this is about sharing power: *Sharing power with people of colour, sharing power with young people and young adults - what's stopping us!*"

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Responses from the first listening sessions

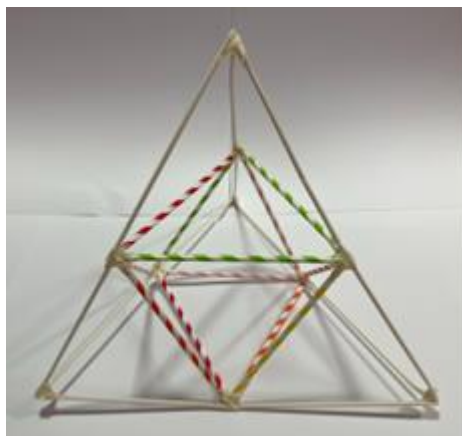
What attracted you to the project?	What are “under-represented groups?”	What do you understand by “broadening cultural and ethnic representation”?
<p>I've got to the stage now where I'm definitely going to make trouble. Good trouble. And the only way I can do that is by getting my voice heard and taking part in different forums. What I've been doing is not making a systemic difference so I've gotta try something different.</p> <p>Curiosity.</p> <p>As a person of colour to see the conversations that are taking place and what actions people want to see.</p> <p>Desire to see more research, more examples in order to restructure practice.</p> <p>Opportunity to restructure practice.</p> <p>Opportunity to share, investigate and improve.</p> <p>The topic and timing.</p> <p>To contribute to the discussions; to give a voice.</p> <p>The importance of the topic.</p> <p>I think it's particularly important to tailor restorative justice practices to cultural needs.</p> <p>To promote the uptake of RJ offer by Black people.</p>	<p>Disproportionately low numbers of a particular group of people in terms of their proportion to the whole</p> <p>I would define under-represented groups as people who are practising restorative practice...who are not represented at that level, that, that senior level.</p> <p>Anybody who's not at the table'.</p> <p>'Marginalised in terms of a shared experience of not being within a mainstream.</p> <p>'Marginalised' groups.</p> <p>'Racialised' and 'minoritized' groups.</p> <p>Cultural as well as ethnic differences.</p> <p>Europeans, particularly Eastern Europeans since Brexit are under-represented.</p> <p>Under-representation at senior management level.</p> <p>LGBTQ+ groups.</p> <p>Black African.</p> <p>Black Caribbean.</p> <p>Bangladeshi.</p> <p>Transexuals.</p> <p>Under-represented groups are fluid, dynamic, and over time move from the periphery to the mainstream.</p>	<p>It's a dynamic thing...about broadening cultural and ethnic representation. It's about allowing people to have a voice...in a kind of a shared space that is a safe space - not always a safe space - can be a dodgy space, or a kind of space that challenges and pokes the finger which can be dynamic, which I think is quite important in terms of being critical.</p> <p>Looked more at 'ethnic' than 'cultural'.</p> <p>Shared critical space.</p> <p>Widening the offer of RJ – a niche offering at the moment.</p> <p>Broadening the offer of RJ and whether the means, looking at the international level of operation and kind of learning from that is probably what we need to be doing.</p> <p>Getting into grassroots community groups and broadening the offer of RJ through them.</p>

## Appendix B: Images of the visual representations created in the final hybrid event

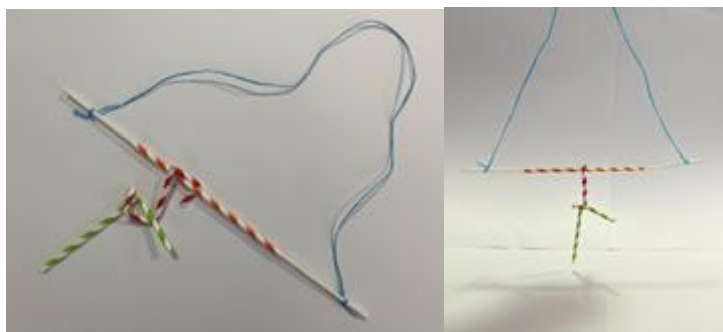
Images source and copyright: C. Aldington and the University of Gloucestershire



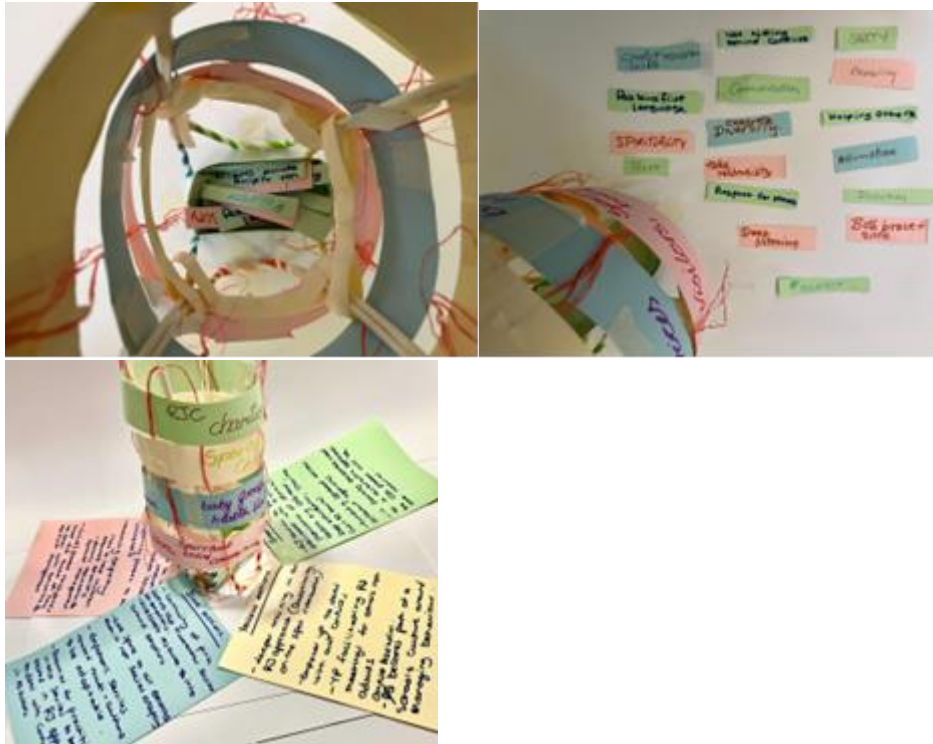
**Images 1 & 2:** Interconnections of restorative justice and barriers to partnerships.



**Image 3:** Dialectic triangle of leadership types.



**Images 4 & 5:** Restorative justice as a balancing act.



Images 6, 7, & 8: Awareness and access layers.