



Restorative Justice in Safeguarding Adults with Hate Crime and Discriminatory Abuse: Exploring the Evidence

Journal:	<i>The Journal of Adult Protection</i>
Manuscript ID	JAP-09-2023-0024.R2
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	Restorative Justice, Restorative Practice, Safeguarding Adults, Discriminatory Abuse, Hate Crime, Safeguarding, Older people, Mental health, Learning/intellectual disabilities

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this article is to consider what safeguarding responses to discriminatory abuse and hate crime might learn from existing research on restorative justice and to drive practice development based on available evidence.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This article is based on a scoping review of literature using four academic databases and reference harvesting. This comprised a critical appraisal of 30 articles, which were thematically analysed to appreciate the benefits and challenges of restorative justice responses to hate crime and how this might inform safeguarding responses to discriminatory abuse and hate crime.

Findings: The analysis identifies four domains where learning can be drawn. These relate to (1) theory on restorative justice, (2) restorative justice practices, (3) perspectives from lived experience of restorative justice and hate crime, and (4) an appraisal of critiques about restorative justice.

Originality/Value: This article connects the emerging evidence on restorative criminal justice responses to hate crime to the 'turn' towards strengths-based practices in adult safeguarding. Although this provides a fertile environment for embedding restorative practices, we argue certain precautions are required based on evidence from existing research on hate crime and restorative justice.

Keywords: Restorative Practice, Restorative Justice, Safeguarding Adults, Discriminatory Abuse, Hate Crime

Introduction

In safeguarding adults policy and practice, 'discriminatory abuse' and 'hate crime' describe harms that are motivated by prejudice or hostility. These terms are sometimes used synonymously but this masks important differences (Mason, 2023). Discriminatory abuse is a safeguarding category in English adult social care policy, as per the statutory guidance for the Care Act, 2014. It relates to support and protection for people who have care and support needs and are targeted, for example through slurs or harassment, due to their protected characteristics (such as race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender

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3 identity, gender, and age) (DHSC, 2023). Hate crime refers to a criminal offence which is
4 motivated by hostility or prejudice based on one of five protected characteristics (race,
5 religion, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity) (Allen and Zayed, 2022). Both
6 forms of harm affect disabled people and many people with care and support needs have
7 other (often multiple) protected characteristics (Mason, 2023). Both phenomena are under-
8 reported – discriminatory abuse is seldom recorded by safeguarding professionals as a
9 category of abuse (NHS Digital, 2022; Mason et al, 2022) whereas hate crime reporting,
10 whilst increasing, is considered an under-estimate (Allen and Zayed, 2022).

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16 The first national analysis of Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) in England (Preston-Shoot
17 et al, 2020) reported practice omissions and low reporting in this area. As a result, there has
18 been growing interest in discriminatory abuse. The Local Government Association (LGA)
19 established an advisory group to consider these omissions further, resulting in several
20 outputs including a practitioner briefing (LGA, 2022), a literature review (Mason et al, 2022),
21 a SAR analysis (Mason, 2023), and a self-assessment tool for local authorities (Biswas
22 Sasidharan, 2023). The charity Research in Practice (RiP) has also published a blog (RiP,
23 2022) and a podcast (RiP, 2023). This activity indicates momentum and interest in
24 developing professional responses to discriminatory abuse. However, a gap remains
25 regarding what types of professional support might help (Mason et al, 2022).

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28 Restorative justice encompasses a range of practices that focus on restoring harm in
29 response to crime, in contrast to retributive or distributive justice. As such, it involves a
30 substantial change in the way that responses to harm are applied (Gavrielides, 2012).
31 Instead of focusing on punishment, restorative justice focuses on the wellbeing and dignity of
32 those who experience harm, working through values of mutual concern and dialogue to
33 collectively explore how harm can be repaired (Zehr, 2015). In criminal justice, restorative
34 justice processes involve a 'diversion' from formal pathways of prosecution, which can
35 comprise a range of models, such as referral to mediation or restorative panel processes,
36 which bring both parties together (Gavrielides, 2012). Other approaches do not involve
37 dialogue with a person causing harm but involve community networks and supports.
38 Safeguarding practitioners may be surprised to hear that models they may be familiar with,
39 such as family group conferences, are also considered to be restorative justice approaches
40 (Walters, 2014; Parkinson et al, 2018).

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43 Restorative justice responses to discriminatory abuse have not yet been clearly articulated
44 but they align with safeguarding adults policy in England, which has increasingly
45 emphasised strengths-based approaches and active participation by those affected (DHSC,
46 2023; DHSC, 2019; DHSC, 2017). Mason et al (2022) argue for the development of practice
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3 around discriminatory abuse in safeguarding adults work and Healy and Dray (2022) have
4 suggested that safeguarding might provide a missing link for hate crime cases. They argue
5 that this may offer a more wellbeing-oriented approach than traditional criminal justice
6 routes. Restorative justice is therefore likely to find affinity and interest in safeguarding
7 practice.
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11 The use of restorative justice is controversial when it comes to addressing hate crime. Hate
12 legislation was designed to enhance sentencing for perpetrators, as a means of recognising
13 the additional harm caused. This means that the penalties available to a judge are
14 strengthened when dealing with hate crime, reinforcing a strong philosophy that criminal
15 justice or community sentencing is more suitable than diversionary alternatives. Hence,
16 some consider restorative justice as undermining the seriousness that such offences are
17 treated with (Iganski, 2008). Importantly, many police reports do not result in prosecution,
18 which Walters (2014) has described as a 'justice gap'. This can be dispiriting for the person
19 who has reported harm in the hope of justice through prosecution. In this context,
20 restorative approaches provide an enhanced sense of wellbeing separately to prosecution
21 outcomes, providing an alternative response that may remedy the disappointment with any
22 'justice gap' that occurs (Walters et al, 2021).
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31 This article sets out to evaluate these debates further by providing a review of existing
32 literature on applications of restorative justice practices in relation to discriminatory abuse
33 and hate crime. In particular, it considers what can be learned from restorative justice
34 theory, restorative justice practice, lived experience perspectives, and critiques of these
35 approaches. It concludes by reflecting on the challenges for applying this approach in the
36 field of safeguarding. In the article, the term 'restorative justice' is used to reflect specific
37 references from criminological research and we have avoided terms such as 'restorative
38 practice' or 'restorative approach' because, as we will show, these terms are imprecise. We
39 have also avoided the terms 'victim', 'perpetrator', and 'offender' due to their mismatch with a
40 safeguarding ethos, adapting these terms where they arose in source material, by referring
41 to those experiencing or causing harm. Although the literature is analysed to inform English
42 safeguarding policy on discriminatory abuse, the search was not restricted to any country
43 and the findings can inform responses to hate or discriminatory harms internationally.
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55 **Methodology**

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57 Four academic databases (Web of Science, Social Care Online, JSTOR, and Google
58 Scholar) were used to identify articles. The inclusion criteria comprised: publication within
59 the last ten years, written within the social science disciplines, and incorporating specific
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3 search terms (“hate crime” or “discriminatory abuse” plus “restorative” or a synonymous
4 term, namely “Strength*Based” or “Family Group Conferenc*” or “Mediation”) within the title
5 or abstract. We excluded book reviews or articles that made only incidental references to
6 the topic. Grey literature was included given the valuable sector-specific insights that
7 voluntary sector publications or policy documents might provide. This led to the identification
8 of 26 sources and four others were added through reference harvesting, resulting in a total
9 of 30 included sources.
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15 Included literature was read by the first author to ensure over-arching familiarity with the
16 results and the articles were divided between three other authors to allow for interpretations
17 to be discussed prior to analysis. Each article was critically appraised in relation to purpose,
18 methodology, theoretical approach, findings, and strengths or limitations. A thematic
19 synthesis approach was adopted to analyse the results (Thomas and Harden, 2008),
20 bringing together ideas from the literature to develop new meaning through initial
21 familiarisation, coding, and development of initial descriptive themes that remain close to the
22 included source material. These were then worked into analytic themes that provide
23 interpretations to answer our research question, namely what can be learned from existing
24 research on restorative justice and hate crime to inform safeguarding practice when
25 addressing discriminatory abuse. The research team met to discuss and refine the themes
26 allowing transparency in their development.
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37 **Findings**

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39 In this section, four themes are presented relating to learning from restorative justice theory,
40 restorative justice practices, perspectives of people with lived experience and critiques of
41 restorative justice.
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47 ***Learning from Restorative Justice Theory***

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49 Restorative approaches have a distinctive ethos but are difficult to anchor theoretically.
50 Every article in this review referred to underpinning principles of restorative justice, but there
51 are (often silent) contradictions amongst the range of ideas that are nested within this term,
52 reflecting some degree of definitional ambiguity (Gavrielides, 2012; Hobson et al, 2022).
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56 As a starting point, Robinson and Hudson’s (2016) four-part typology of restorative justice
57 distinguishes four theoretical strands: reintegrative, psychotherapeutic, communitarian, and
58 insurgent. The first two of these strands focus on stakeholders at opposite sides of a dyad –
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3 the person causing harm or the person experiencing harm. Reintegrative approaches focus
4 on reintegrating people who have caused harm, sometimes through apology and
5 demonstrating the impact their actions are appreciated. This strand recognises that those
6 who have caused harm may also be subject to social disenfranchisement and exclusion.
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8 Rather than focusing on punishment, reintegrative restorative justice emphasises dialogue
9 with and between the person harmed and the person causing harm through conferencing or
10 mediation (Walters et al, 2021). Although safeguarding approaches focus on supporting a
11 person who has experienced harm, those closely involved with safeguarding practice will
12 recognise that harm can occur within families and in other close relationships (Walters and
13 Hoyle, 2012). Reintegrative theory may help address this complex practice issue.

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Meanwhile, psychotherapeutic approaches centre their attention on the person who has experienced harm, establishing what they would like to happen to restore the effects of the harm and helping them to re-construct a sense of wellbeing. For example, Murry et al (2022) link the concepts of justice, wellness, and healing as a product of a restorative process. This aligns well with the strong focus on the wellbeing principle in safeguarding practice and resembles a Making Safeguarding Personal approach (Lawson, 2018). Social workers are likely to be familiar with psychotherapeutic approaches from their broader knowledge base, rendering this strand relatively transferrable to a safeguarding context. Critiques of the first two strands include highlighting their focus on individual harms, rather than on the structural and societal context in which these harms occur. These approaches also depend on idealising those who experience harm as willing to talk and to forgive, or those who have caused harm as willing to apologise. In safeguarding, this would also rely on a person having mental capacity to engage with a restorative justice approach.

A third approach offers a communitarian ethos, looking towards mutual support and shared responsibilities within social and community networks. The concept of social (rather than individual) repair is emphasised as a communal duty. Zehr's (2015) acknowledgement of indigenous traditions that inform restorative justice is particularly important here. Robinson and Hudson (2016) refer to indigenous methods of dispute resolution such as the South African philosophy of Ubuntu where individuals are not seen as separate to their community, providing a shift from Eurocentric privilege for logic and procedure towards human togetherness and community. Critiques of a communitarian approach suggest that institutionalising indigenous ideas into bureau-professional practices is reductionist and that it is patronising to cherry-pick indigenous knowledge. The scope of this approach has also been critiqued as many people do not live in the close-knit community settings that offer ready opportunities for support (Robinson and Hudson, 2016). Safeguarding practitioners will recognise that this strand fits well with some strengths-based approaches that

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3 emphasise community resources (DHSC, 2017). This might also work well when working
4 with contextual safeguarding issues, such as cuckooing or exploitation that affects a wide
5 range of community members, as well as individuals (Mason et al, 2022). Notwithstanding
6 the attraction of a communitarian approach, genuine inclusion of the community was rarely
7 identified in studies of restorative justice (Hoyle and Rosenblatt, 2016) suggesting that
8 current practices lack meaningful community representation.
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13 Insurgent restorative justice aligns with critical theory and advocates that restorative
14 practices should address structural injustices, such as unfair economic circumstances, and
15 should be handed over to communities and those who have been harmed rather than being
16 controlled by welfare or criminal justice professionals. This strand has been critiqued based
17 on a perceived contradiction between a desire to award responsibility to individuals who are
18 harmed and advocating that professionals should do more to address structural or social
19 justice issues (Robinson and Hudson, 2016). However, this critical approach should not be
20 dismissed, given that hate crimes are embedded in wider discriminatory discourses (Mason
21 et al, 2022). Murry et al (2022) draw on Paulo Freire's critical consciousness approach
22 (enhancing the recognition of oppressive social forces to empower participation in collective
23 action) to address widespread prejudice in society. It enables practice to "depersonalise
24 discrimination and locate the root in systemic oppression rather than in individual and
25 community characteristics" (Murry et al, 2022, p.3). Increasingly, safeguarding responses
26 have been challenged to work at this structural level, particularly around discriminatory
27 abuse, and this strand of restorative justice theory may be of assistance here (Mason, 2023;
28 Mason et al, 2022).
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42 ***Learning from Restorative Justice Practices***

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44 There is significant diversity when it comes to delivery of restorative justice practices.
45 Transferring such practices to safeguarding adults has the potential to create pathways
46 towards restoration and repair rather than a focus on punishment, or safeguarding through
47 risk management (Hobson et al, 2022; Molloy et al, 2023).
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51 Restorative justice practices have been applied in a range of settings from post-conflict
52 situations (Liebmann, 2016), youth justice (Hobson et al, 2022), and schools and universities
53 (Kayali and Walters, 2021). The literature also demonstrates generic applications (e.g.
54 Gavrielides, 2014; Chakraborti et al, 2014) and studies focusing on particular 'strands' of
55 hate crime, harming those with mental ill-health (Carr et al, 2019, Hafford-Letchfield et al,
56 2021), learning disability (Terras et al, 2019; Healy, 2020), dementia (Terras et al, 2019), or
57 other protected characteristics including sexual orientation, gender identity (Bertelli and
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3 Vigianni, 2022; Walters et al, 2021), and race (Gavrielides, 2014; Davis, 2020; Kaplan and
4 Inguanzo, 2020).

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7 Whilst theoretical affinities are not always specified, it is possible to map restorative justice
8 practices to approximate orientations (Robinson and Hudson, 2016). For example,
9 reintegrating someone who has caused harm might be achieved through restorative boards
10 that facilitate dialogue about impact. Mediation might fulfil a reintegrative goal, whilst also
11 facilitating psychotherapeutic aims around the wellbeing of the person harmed (Walters and
12 Hoyle, 2012). Family group conferences can serve communitarian goals given their
13 emphasis on network and communities. Whilst professionals can veto plans made by
14 families and networks, these conferences (rooted in indigenous Maori culture in Aotearoa
15 New Zealand) also fit with insurgent aims of handing back restorative justice to communities
16 (Robinson and Hudson, 2016; Parkinson et al, 2018). Peace-making 'circles' have potential
17 to fulfil insurgent goals. They bring community members together to lead discussions about
18 the causes and impacts of harm, considering how positive relationships can be built amongst
19 community members, and developing a detailed plan to foster healing in the community
20 (Umbreit et al, 2002).

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23 Restorative justice practices constitute a suite of approaches across a broad continuum from
24 formal to informal processes (Hobson et al, 2022). The interventions in the previous
25 paragraph occupy more structured approaches (to differing degrees), but restorative justice
26 practices can also be more creative. Liebmann (2016) proposes the use of arts-based and
27 creative methods to facilitate inter-cultural community dialogue. Equally, restorative justice
28 can be a preventative method, promoting dialogue in diverse communities to avoid conflict.
29 Community inclusion strategies can promote kindness within people's neighbourhoods and
30 increase the visibility of marginalised and vulnerable groups, which could enhance
31 understanding and tolerance (Terras et al, 2019). Clearly, these informal approaches fit well
32 with the prevention principle in safeguarding adults (DHSC, 2023; Gunner, 2018).

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35 The broad range of approaches offer many opportunities for adopting suitable strategies in
36 safeguarding work, though this diversity also provides ambiguity. Transparent
37 communication about what is being proposed by restorative justice might therefore be
38 problematic and it is important for both the person who has been harmed and the person
39 who has caused harm to understand what is meant by both hate crime and restorative
40 justice approaches in order to proceed (Gavrielides, 2012).

41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 ***Learning from lived experience perspectives on Restorative Justice*** 60

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3 Hate crime and discriminatory abuse can have wide-ranging and devastating impacts on the
4 wellbeing of people who are targeted, often prompting changes to behaviour and routine to
5 avoid abuse, which can compound social isolation (Chakraborti et al, 2014). However, the
6 evidence is mixed regarding what people with lived experience want to happen when
7 addressing these harms. Significant debate exists over whether incident-focused, justice-
8 oriented solutions or preventative, community-oriented approaches are preferable
9 (Liebmann, 2016; Walters and Hoyle, 2012).
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13 Risk to those who have experienced harm can be a barrier to implementing restorative
14 justice responses to hate crime because of irreconcilable power imbalances, risks of
15 renewed harmful encounters, or even physical safety concerns (Gavrielides, 2012;
16 Gavrielides, 2017). For restorative justice to work, the participation of all parties is required,
17 and when employed effectively, people who have experienced harm describe the process as
18 empowering and value the opportunity to air their perspectives on the impact of the harm
19 (Gavrielides, 2017; Walters, 2020; Walters and Hoyle, 2012). Notwithstanding this,
20 significant ethical risks arise in bringing together a party who has been harmed with the
21 person causing harm through discrimination or hate, and unskilled facilitation could re-
22 traumatise or re-expose the person to further harmful encounters (Gavrielides, 2012, Kaplan
23 and Inguanzo, 2020). In safeguarding adults, restorative practice is unlikely to be ethical or
24 appropriate in cases where a person lacks mental capacity to opt in. On the other hand, a
25 restorative justice approach might be welcomed by those who have been harmed within
26 relationships that matter to them.
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38 Despite these caveats, many people who experience hate or discriminatory abuse or hate
39 crimes prefer restorative over punitive practices. Walters et al (2021) conducted a survey of
40 589 people who identify as LGBTQ+, showing that a majority favoured restorative justice
41 when it appeared it would help those who caused harm to understand the impact of their
42 actions, and enabled those who experienced harm to have a greater say in the process.
43 Those targeted also felt less fearful following the use of mediation and some participants
44 described empowerment from the process because it enabled opportunities to address
45 prejudicial attitudes and stereotyping (Walters and Hoyle, 2012; Chakraborti et al, 2014).
46 Walters et al (2021) offer some balance to this debate, underlining the importance of
47 respecting the views of people who have been harmed on whether restorative justice offers
48 a sufficient and proportionate response. For people who have lost faith in law enforcement,
49 due to the aforementioned 'justice gap', it offers an alternative route to justice (Kaplan and
50 Inguanzo, 2020). When embedded in safeguarding practices, restorative justice has the
51 potential to offer holistic responses to people with additional care and support needs who
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3 may be otherwise alienated from criminal justice routes, due to evidence gaps or fears about
4 formal reporting pathways (Carr et al, 2019; Mason et al, 2022).
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7 An outstanding issue relates to concerns about levels of engagement from those harmed or
8 causing harm and the wider community. Lack of awareness and engagement in restorative
9 justice for hate crimes was identified in an Italian study by Bertelli and Viggiani (2022),
10 though Italy has very low reporting rates for both homophobic and transphobic hate crimes
11 and does not have the extensive hate crime legislation and policy that exist in the UK.
12 Furthermore, Gavrielides (2017) showed that, in situations where people were offered
13 restorative justice interventions, most had received very little information about it. After
14 expressing concerns for physical safety, the next most common worry that people targeted
15 by hate crime reported was doubts about the sincerity of those who caused the crime
16 (Gavrielides, 2017). Thus, people who have caused harm need to evidence their buy-in to
17 the process.
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27 ***Learning from Critiques of Restorative Justice***

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29 As discussed, restorative justice approaches to hate crime and discriminatory abuse are
30 controversial and subject to critiques that must be considered when transferring learning to a
31 safeguarding setting. Although theoretical ambiguity has been explored above, other
32 criticisms relate to its legitimacy, complexity, applicability, and cost-effectiveness.
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36 In terms of legitimacy, restorative justice remains controversial when addressing hate crime
37 (Kaplan and Inguanzo, 2020). As discussed, the argument is that hate hurts more and
38 merits punishment (Iganski, 2008) from the criminal justice system. As a result, restorative
39 justice methods are not consistently used by criminal justice agencies in hate crime cases
40 (Walters et al, 2021). Yet many cases of reported hate crime fail to achieve a successful
41 outcome in court, and many others do not proceed to prosecution, which Walters et al (2021)
42 describe as a 'justice gap'. Consequently, people experiencing hate crimes may feel
43 severely disappointed by a system that fails to deliver justice – rendering the argument for
44 enhanced sentencing as a preference somewhat limited. Restorative justice in a
45 safeguarding context provides an alternative that focuses on the person's ongoing wellbeing
46 within their home and community environment, promising more than the prospect of
47 prosecution for the person who caused harm.
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55 Another concern raised is that restorative approaches are perceived as offering insufficient
56 response to the complexity of hate crime. The benchmark for restorative justice is to restore
57 the harmful effects of crime, but this is difficult because discrimination and hate-motivated
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3 harm may be driven by “deep-rooted causes” that are resistant to change (Gavrielides, 2012,
4 p.3627). As a result, some authors suggest that restorative justice may be more suited to
5 ‘minor’ or ‘low-level’ harms (Gavrielides, 2012, Hobson et al, 2022). By ‘minor’, Gavrielides
6 (2012) refers to the most common types of hate incident, such as name-calling, intimidation
7 and vandalism, notwithstanding the impact may be more than minor, particularly in cases of
8 repeated harm. Hoyle and Rosenblatt (2016) argue that maintaining restorative justice
9 methods in these cases could be interpreted as the ‘shallow end’ of justice, undermining the
10 affectual experience of harm. Safeguarding approaches should therefore proceed with
11 caution based on the appropriateness of this method to the desired outcomes and the
12 avoidance of compounding harm.
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19 There have also been concerns about the applicability of restorative justice in practice.
20 Hobson et al (2022), in their study on restorative justice and youth offending, identified
21 implementation concerns, particularly by police services, identifying challenges such as
22 inconsistent practitioner delivery, professional scepticism, as well as resistance and gaps in
23 capacity to implement. Other studies cite difficulties in collaborative practice and buy-in
24 amongst professionals (Healy and Dray, 2022; Bertelli and Viggiani, 2022). Importantly,
25 Kayali and Walters (2021) found a lack of practitioner diversity (e.g. practitioner ethnicity,
26 religion or gender) could also impact successful outcomes and Gavrielides (2014) warns of
27 practitioner bias as a barrier to success. The specialist training needs required for
28 practitioner delivery (Chapman et al, 2022; Bertelli and Viggiani, 2022) may result in lack of
29 buy-in within the wider workforce.
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37 The cost-effectiveness of restorative justice approaches has also been put forward as a
38 critique due to a perceived lack of value for money. A House of Commons (2016) report
39 highlights the significant costs of restorative justice. Although this is not a criticism of the
40 practice itself, it is relevant in an already over-stretched social care and wider safeguarding
41 system. It is not as straightforward as costing criminal justice processes against restorative
42 interventions, given that successful restorative justice might be difficult to measure in the
43 ongoing and unseen reduction of future harms (House of Commons Library, 2016; Parkinson
44 et al, 2018). Aligned with this, wider financial constraints can lead to a lack of preventative
45 services being available, resulting in incident-led responses being more common (Carr et al,
46 2019). Investment in community-based positive integration initiatives, that address
47 underlying social tensions, may be more beneficial in reducing the risk of hate crimes re-
48 occurring.
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60 Discussion

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3 There is a clear case for developing practice responses to discriminatory abuse and hate
4 crime in safeguarding adults. Those harmed often experience reduced self-esteem, social
5 isolation, and significant anxiety (Mason et al, 2022). The community orientation of
6 restorative justice suggests that it might be well-equipped to address these issues by
7 promoting recovery within local networks of support. Mason et al (2022) indicate a gap in
8 research and practice about effective safeguarding practice responses to discriminatory and
9 hate harms and call for the development of a broader practice vocabulary to address these
10 issues. We argue that restorative justice may provide a vehicle to address this in
11 safeguarding practice.
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18 Restorative justice practices are under-developed in safeguarding adults and their reach and
19 impact is unknown (Molloy et al, 2023). However, some practice anecdotes are emerging in
20 adult social care. Perreira and Quine (reproduced in DHSC, 2017) showcase their
21 development of restorative safeguarding in the London Borough of Greenwich. Their
22 approach focuses on relationships and is delivered through structured conversations about
23 impact and ways to repair harm, involving those affected, the person(s) who caused the
24 harm, and the wider community. Notably, in 2020, ten UK local authorities were engaged in
25 implementing family group conferencing for adults and, although it is not clear that any of
26 these related specifically to harms of discriminatory abuse or hate crime, several have been
27 used to address safeguarding concerns (Manthorpe and Rapaport, 2020). One of these
28 authorities, the London Borough of Camden, have produced practice examples illustrating
29 emphasising community connectedness and support (LB Camden, 2023). Manthorpe and
30 Rapaport (2020) conclude that although there is interest in developing such initiatives, given
31 the small number of authorities involved, there is a lack of momentum going forward –
32 though their review excluded broader restorative initiatives, focusing specifically on family
33 group conferencing.
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44 Restorative justice practice initiatives are well scaffolded by existing strengths-based policy
45 and practice (DHSC, 2017; DHSC, 2019; Gunner, 2018). Gunner (2018) maps the
46 restorative justice ethos to the principles of safeguarding outlined in the Care and Support
47 statutory guidance – particularly proportionality, empowerment, and prevention (DHSC,
48 2023). Proportionality is endorsed through diversionary action and operation in community
49 settings, while the central role for those impacted by harm supports the empowerment
50 principle. Prevention is also significant where restorative justice practices are delivered in
51 community settings to promote dialogue about the impacts of crime across diverse
52 communities (Gunner, 2018). Restorative justice practice also aligns with 'Making
53 Safeguarding Personal' policy, which emphasises empowering people who have been
54 harmed to become partners in addressing safeguarding issues (Lawson, 2018). This natural
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3 affinity between restorative justice techniques and personalised safeguarding polices
4 suggests good opportunities for their development, but several points require further
5 consideration, particularly relating to definitional clarity, preferences of those who experience
6 harm and responding to broader critiques of restorative justice. Whilst safeguarding
7 addresses the additional complexity of care and support needs, restorative practices are
8 amenable to work with disability hate crime with the caveat that the person should have the
9 mental capacity to understand and engage with restorative justice practices. Family
10 members, carers and other members of a person's network may additionally benefit from
11 such an approach that facilitates community reintegration and support.
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18 The definitional ambiguity regarding what restorative justice entails is significant and this
19 review has demonstrated significant variance across theory and practice applications of
20 restorative justice. Although DHSC (2017) showcase a selection of strengths-based
21 restorative practices for local authorities to consider, it is important to recognise these
22 approaches have different purposes, methods, and expected outcomes – one size may not
23 fit all. This is particularly relevant given the operational costs and training needs associated
24 with each method (Chapman et al, 2022; Manthorpe and Rapaport, 2020). As such, if local
25 authorities decide to elect a restorative practice approach, they are unlikely to adopt more
26 than one method - hence the question of choice is pertinent. For example, family group
27 conferencing and mediation both provide private forums for dispute resolution, but there are
28 also significant differences between them (SCIE, 2012). Mediation works by bringing
29 (usually) two individual parties together to support healing and ways forward by seeking to
30 change attitudes and behaviours. Meanwhile, family group conferencing is much more likely
31 to attend to communitarian concerns, because they mobilise an adult's extended social
32 network to help them find solutions to a specific issue (Manthorpe and Rapaport, 2020;
33 Parkinson et al, 2018). However, professionals are allowed to 'veto' family plans if they do
34 not respond to the concerns raised and may be less effective when there is a long-standing
35 dispute with social services (SCIE, 2012). Therefore, if local authorities opt to implement
36 restorative practice, this variance will need consideration.
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49 A further consideration for safeguarding services who work with individuals who have
50 experienced harm, is that a restorative justice approach may not be wanted. Services need
51 to be open to learn, listen, and engage with members of the public as active stakeholders in
52 developing effective services (Chakraborti et al, 2014). For some people with lived
53 experience of discrimination, this might be re-traumatising or re-expose them to the person
54 who caused them harm. Neither family group conferences nor mediation will be effective
55 without the buy-in of the person affected. Walters et al (2012) have suggested that
56 restorative justice processes be used for 'minor' forms of hate crime, such as name-calling,
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3 yet this may not offer a meaningful resolution for a person who experiences frequent
4 discriminatory verbal abuse from an array of sources across their community.

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6 Notwithstanding this, there is merit in supporting conversations about the impacts of harm
7 within relationships that pre-exist the abuse or are close-knit, such as those within extended
8 families or in supported housing units or neighbourhoods (Walters and Hoyle, 2012).

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10 Despite this, where restorative justice has been used in addressing hate crime, participants
11 have described more meaningful participation, improved wellbeing and reduced anxiety
12 (Walters, 2020).
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16 In terms of broader critiques, we have addressed issues of training needs and associated
17 costs in the above discussion of restorative justice and it is important to acknowledge that
18 these problems are being asked of local authorities who already find their budgets
19 significantly stretched. There is some scepticism from commentators that strengths-based
20 (and therefore restorative justice) practices actually provide camouflage for such cuts, given
21 the ethos of diverting statutory involvement through involving communities and third sector
22 organisations. Essentially, these approaches are presented as both innovative new ways of
23 working and a return to the core values of social work, but they are implemented alongside
24 the demolition of community services, continued under-funding and deep de-
25 professionalisation, which continue to affect service delivery (Whittington, 2017; Lymbery
26 and Postle, 2015). These critiques are outside of the scope of this present paper but are
27 mentioned briefly because they signal a challenge. In this context, claims that communities
28 can offer an abundance of resource and support may ring hollow. There are allied concerns
29 that restorative practices are often led by statutory agencies without whole-system
30 consultation or engagement (Healy and Dray, 2022). This means the building blocks for the
31 required 'cultural shift' are not in place across the health and social care system, as argued
32 by Hoyle and Rosenblatt (2016) in reference to broader criminal justice and community
33 services. As a result, there is a risk that the community services that are so essential to the
34 implementation of restorative justice may disengage. Local authorities will need to consider
35 the community infrastructure and associated funding that support the desired contextual
36 benefits, such as reducing isolation and promoting inclusive communities that are
37 engendered through restorative justice as part of their strategic planning.
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54 **Conclusion**

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56 Restorative justice approaches have potential to progress safeguarding responses to
57 discriminatory abuse and hate crime beyond incident-focused reactions and towards
58 preventative, community action. These practices offer social work and safeguarding practice
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3 a catalyst for cultivating social justice, repairing harm and relationships. There is also
4 evidence that people who receive restorative interventions feel more satisfied that they have
5 been listened to. They also experience reduced anxiety and an enhanced sense of
6 wellbeing. We broadly agree that restorative justice can substantially support safeguarding
7 responses to hate crime and are aligned with a person-centred and strengths-based
8 safeguarding ethos. They have the potential to address the justice gap in hate crime
9 criminal justice prosecutions and provide more successful outcomes for those who have
10 been harmed. However, there are several considerations that local authorities will need to
11 review before adopting restorative justice practice as a safeguarding model. An immediate
12 goal for future research will be to better understand the extent and range of restorative
13 justice practices in use within existing safeguarding teams and networks nationally and to
14 evaluate these. This will help to establish how restorative justice methodology has begun to
15 emerge in safeguarding practice and how the learning from literature supports early progress
16 in this area.
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