

Restorative approaches can make a difference in the relationship between local government bodies and the communities they serve

Part of the push behind the localism agenda is the need to re-negotiate the relationship between local governance bodies and the communities they serve. One example of this is the use of restorative approaches that are most often linked to the justice sector. Here [Carey Cake](#) and [Kirsten Cooper](#) outline the work that a Norfolk partnership has been doing on bringing restorative approaches to the full range of governance interactions in that area.



Restorative approaches is the umbrella term for a number of different practices that focus on relationships enabling people to build, maintain and repair relationships when harm has been caused. Within the justice sector there are a number of practices specifically used that aim to repair the harm between victim and offender, known as restorative justice.



Restorative approaches were first used in Norfolk by the Youth Offending Team following the Crime and Disorder Act (1998). A group of Norfolk County Council Children's Services staff were trained in 2004 and their commitment to the restorative ethos prompted senior management involvement to support further development. Norfolk Constabulary introduced Restorative Justice in 2007 and by 2010 a multi-agency partnership had formed with the aim of establishing Norfolk as a restorative County by 2015. This partnership takes in all of the major governance bodies in the area including Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Constabulary and Police Authority, all 7 District Councils, local Probation and Magistrates, and the Norfolk Association of Local Councils.

Restorative Justice and Norfolk Youth Offending Team

The role of a Norfolk Youth Offending Team Restorative Justice Officer is to contact all victims of youth crime, where appropriate, and offer a restorative justice (RJ) service which helps to repair some of the harm that has been caused to the victim by the young person.

In order for anything to be restorative, parties have to want to take part; we cannot 'make' someone say sorry; so this is a voluntary service for all parties concerned. This happens via a number of routes: a face-to-face restorative justice conference can take place between the parties, a 'voice-heard' mediation or a letter of explanation/apology. Some acts of reparation (unpaid work) can be provided directly to the victim, doing something for them at their property, or indirectly to benefit the local community; there are a number of projects developed and used by our Reparation Teams. Lastly, progress reports to the victim advising them of information in relation to the young person can be arranged, whilst they are subject to a statutory court order or intervention with Norfolk Youth Offending Team (taking into account the requirements of Data Protection Act 1998).

Reparation Workers with Norfolk Youth Offending Team supervise young people on a one-to-one, or small group basis on a variety of RJ projects. The type of work can be community payback – for the benefit of the community – such as gardening or painting; or it can be victim-directed, where the young person works for a particular venue or cause. Direct reparation for the benefit of the victim, involves repairing the actual harm the young person caused, such as putting right criminal damage. This type of work usually has the most powerful impact on all concerned, encouraging the young person to face the real consequences of their behaviour and helping towards positive closure for the victim.

Restorative Justice and Norfolk Constabulary

Norfolk Constabulary has trained 605 Police Officers and PCSOs to use restorative justice, as well as 65 staff from partner agencies who are able to provide support to police and communities. Every Safer Neighbourhood Team in Norfolk has a restorative capability to deal with crime and ASB.

The main offences that restorative justice is used for in Norfolk are theft (including Shoplifting), criminal damage, common assault and anti-social behaviour. Up to 30 per cent of all use is for non-crime/problem

solving in partnership with communities and other agencies. Whilst these are the most commonly used areas, restorative justice can be used as a means of repairing harm caused by any level of crime, whether pre or post sentence.

We are already seeing positive results of these processes. Since November 2007 over 9,000 people have been through the RJ process. Of those:

- 89% of participants were satisfied with the outcome
- 87% of participants feel RJ is effective in dealing with crime and ASB
- 93% of participants would recommend RJ
- 93% of participants are satisfied with their treatment
- 83% of participants are confident in the police and partners ability to deal with crime and ASB having been exposed to RJ

Obviously a face to face session with all participants can, on the face of it, be more costly to administer. However, a quick on-street RJ intervention costs just a bit more than a penalty notice. And if the RJ conference can resolve issues that might have deteriorated leading to a possible combined total of £245 to work from reprimand to court case.

Intervention	Re-offending rate	Cost
On-street RJ	Children and Young People	£18.75
RJ conference	– 10.4%	£100
	Adults – 14%	
Penalty notice	18%	£14
Reprimand	23%	£43
Final warning	16%	£82
Conditional caution	16%	£64
Court	56%	£56

Restorative Justice and Norfolk County Council Children’s Services

An innovative project to embed restorative approaches in children’s residential homes was developed, through which Children’s Services and Norfolk Constabulary have signed a Service Level Agreement (SLA) to agree how incidents of harm that occur at the residential homes will be dealt with.

The project aims to provide all Looked After Children (LAC) with the opportunity to access restorative approaches. It is hoped that this will reduce the number of incidents in residential homes and also to reduce the number of LAC entering and re-entering the Youth Justice System. We aim to establish a multi-agency policy on how incidents in residential homes should be dealt with.

So far, the numbers of staff who were trained to use restorative approaches as part of this project are:

	Briefing	1 day	3 day
Residential Homes	10 Children’s Services staff	82	17
	6 Police		

The SLA between Children’s Services and Norfolk Constabulary agreed that the training would be provided for Children’s Services for staff free of charge, although if the training was not used and there continued to be calls made to the Police without restorative approaches being used or without a clear reason as to why they were not used, Children’s Services would be required to refund training costs.

Monthly evaluations have been agreed with the managers of the residential homes in order to provide both quantitative and qualitative evidence about the impact of the use of restorative approaches in residential homes. This feedback from the Residential Unit Manager’s will include the number of reported incidents, number of RJ conferences held and the amount of Police call-outs. This will be backed up with information on how restorative approaches have been implemented within the unit and feedback from staff or residents on

how they have found the restorative approaches.

March 2011 was the first month that evaluations were received. Since then there has been a huge reduction in the number of Police call-outs and staff have been employing restorative approaches as an alternative measure to address incidents and repair harm when necessary.

“Since using a Restorative way of working the amount of incidents within the Home have dropped significantly, this applies to Sanctions and episodes of Bullying as well” Garfield House

“There was an official Restorative Conference held for Easthills resident x on 23rd March. This was due to an assault on a staff member that took place in April. The court had decided that this course of action was appropriate and x was given a conditional discharge on the understanding that he would engage with the Conference. An Easthills Senior Practitioner and Norfolk Police PCSO co-facilitated the conference” Easthills.

Restorative Justice and Norfolk Probation Service

Norfolk Probation Service has been a member of the Restorative Approaches Strategic Board for over a year and has recently been awarded funding from the Regional Office in order to explore the use of restorative justice with offenders post-sentence. The project is in the conception stages although it is likely that the Integrated Offender Management team will be the first team to be trained. Norfolk County Council and Youth Offending Team are providing guidance and support for the development of this pilot.

Having seen and evidenced positive results following the use of restorative approaches across a number of arenas, Norfolk will continue to push forward it's development and implementation to achieve our ambition to be a restorative County by 2015. To achieve this our strategic aims are to provide every child and young person in Norfolk the opportunity to access restorative approaches by April 2015 as a means of resolving conflict and repairing harm. Also to embed restorative practices within organisations and businesses and develop restorative communities across Norfolk more generally.