

“Facing Up to Offending” Joint Inspection Report, September 2012

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What was the purpose?

- This inspection aimed to identify:
- different RJ approaches at various stages in the criminal justice system;
 - the views of those who have been involved in RJ (both the victims and perpetrators of crimes);
 - the views of the wider public; and
 - how far RJ represents value for money.

What did we do?

- Visited 6 police forces, YOTs and Probation Trusts
- Visited 3 Prisons/YOIs
- Examined Cases
- Interviewed staff, victims and offenders
- Commissioned a public survey on attitudes toward RJ
- Trained police officers completed online survey

Key Findings

- Good examples of RJ being used in a range of settings; but take-up varied across criminal justice agencies
- There are benefits to using RJ – and these are understood by victims, offenders, practitioners and (with some reservations) the public

Key Findings...continued

- There were inequalities in the service provided to victims and offenders
- More could be done to involve victims and communities in the process

52 Victims Spoken to



- 44 (85%) were happy or very happy with their experience.
- 39 (75%) said it had achieved reparation ‘completely’ or ‘a lot’
- 24 (44%) received a follow up enquiry after the event to give an up-date or check on compliance.

33 Offenders Spoken to

- 30 (91%) said that the process had been fair, including all 16 who had participated in an RJ conference
- 23 (70%) said that their experience had influenced their views on their offending. This figure was higher for conferences.
- 20 (61%) said that their experience had not been an easy option.

630 Police Officers surveyed

- 456 (72%) said they thought RJ was more effective at improving victim satisfaction than simple cautions.
- 336 (53%) said they thought RJ was more effective at reducing reoffending than simple cautions.

‘Branding’ alone prompts very little recognition & can imply quite different justice

Restorative Justice (Manchester, Norfolk)
Restorative Justice Resolution (Merseyside)
Community Resolution (Sussex, West Mids)
Restorative Resolution (N. Wales)

- Spontaneously, a limited sense of ‘maybe heard.’
 - Sometimes a sense of, ‘I feel I ought to know.’
- Very limited recall of a TV programme about RJ
 - nature of the idea correctly recalled.
- A few people can quickly surmise reference to victim or community based reparations by offenders
- Restorative Justice can suggest a campaign to get back to an old-fashioned style of justice = harder
- Community involvement easily thought of as an established practice, inc community service sentencing



Names used can lead to significant mis-understanding

'Giving people a few more rights, to deal with situations themselves'

More rights regarding how you deal with burglars in your own home

Could give people the confidence to take the law into their own hands

It's taking you back to the old clip round the ear



Responses reflect selfish priorities

- Conflict in people's minds between
 - support for a victim's right to reparation and closure,
 - a need to make transgressors suffer.

**Rational objective priority is victim well-being
Versus**

**More powerful selfish need to feel secure
knowing bad people are made to suffer**

- Want offenders branded not part of their own world
- No concern for the well-being of the offender
 - Assume reform through fear of punishment, not regret
 - Not seeing benefit of better state of mind = less reoffending
 - Inclined to judge (adult) offenders as rotten apples beyond redemption



Common ground is need to understand RJ as complementary, before considering positives

- Allows people to set aside need for retribution before reform
- Allows people to come to RJ as primarily for the benefit of the victim.

I think it definitely has to be combined with a fine or community service - it's a bit soft really

I agree because punish and explain is the way forward



So what needs to be done?

Recommendation

- In order to raise public awareness of the police use of RJ and informal resolution, forces should consider wider public awareness and engagement through use of the media. Where local policies are developed, the views of the public should be sought.