



Newsletter

A Welcome from Restorative Dorset

OCTOBER 2020

Restorative Dorset is the **pan-Dorset** restorative justice (RJ) service commissioned by Dorset's Police and Crime Commissioner. We are a small team consisting of two co-ordinators and a group of trained, vetted and trusted volunteers. We have the advantage of being an independent service whilst benefiting from close relationships with key partner agencies.

We deliver a free restorative justice service, supporting victims and offenders who have been impacted by crime. We also work with individuals involved in ongoing anti-social behaviour and neighbour conflict, in order to find and agree better ways of doing things in the future.

Referrals into our service are received from individuals, victims and offenders, and through agencies including probation, prisons, police, anti-social behaviour officers, Victim Support and housing associations.

Over the last year –

We have dealt with well over 100 cases involving a range of crimes such as murders, assaults, sexual abuse, domestic abuse, threats of violence, burglaries, thefts, criminal damage, robberies, shoplifting, traffic collisions resulting in death and serious injury. We also take mediation referrals where there has been conflict affecting residents' day to day lives and anti-social behaviour. Our caseload has resulted in a variety of restorative outcomes i.e. conferences (face to face meetings), shuttle (indirect communication), video conferencing and letters; including letters of apology. Participants have also been supported by signposting/referring to appropriate agencies.

Sometimes referrals are closed before a restorative outcome can be reached. Usually because one or more participants disengage during the process or deemed 'not suitable'. Often, they have the option to return to the process (restorative justice is not time bound) if circumstances change. The **voluntary** nature of the process is a guiding RJ principle as it means that those participants who find they are not willing or able to take part are not pressurised into continuing which leads to more meaningful outcomes when they do.

Cases can be dealt with relatively quickly or need a lot more time. A few of our current 'live' cases have been impacted/delayed by the covid-19 restrictions.

'Serious and complex' cases can easily take 6+ months from initial discussion with all parties, liaising with people supporting and/or working with them, holding meetings, to following up on outcomes and seeking the views/feedback from participants.

Bournemouth University (BU) - Second year students in the Faculty of Media & Communication have recently been working with Restorative Dorset; please have a look at some of their work on our webpage – <https://www.bpcouncil.gov.uk/restoratedorset>

COVID-19 - How has our service been impacted? As a service that is focussed on using direct communication to help repair harm caused by criminal and anti-social behaviour, we have had to adapt to be able to provide an ongoing service. We are proud to be able to say that we have stayed 'open for business' throughout lockdown.

Referrals from Dorset Police – We receive regular referrals from Dorset Police, from both post-conviction cases where offenders have been convicted by a Court and out of Court disposals where offenders have received a Community Resolution or a Conditional Caution. If offenders do not comply with the conditions set by the Police, the case may still go to Court. During lockdown we have worked closely with the police to identify ways that we can adapt our processes and continue to work safely and effectively, delivering a victim focussed service, which also supports offenders.

Prison and Probation Referrals - Prisons and probation services have also changed their working practices – impacting upon our regular visits to them. We have continued to progress RJ interventions through indirect communication and/or deliver preparatory work in readiness for future face to face meetings and have been using video conferencing.

Neighbour and other ongoing conflict – We continue to receive referrals for mediation. We work with participants over the phone to achieve agreements and/or 'holding agreements' pending face to face meetings. Restorative Dorset provides agencies with another option when dealing with ongoing and early stage problems. Our independence, principles of voluntarism and future focus mean that a referral can be an opportunity for a 'new start' by participants.

Where Next?

Restorative Dorset is continuing to adapt to continue to meet the needs of clients in a safe and enabling environment, whilst adhering to current Covid-19 guidelines.

We are working on how to maintain and deliver a range of restorative justice interventions combining both traditional methods and by incorporating new ways of working such as video conferencing. Bringing participants together into facilitated communication (directly, through an intermediary or by letter) is an effective way of achieving a positive outcome after harmful events. We continue to deliver a victim-centred service and wherever possible, facilitate what victims require, ensuring that any process remains safe and suitable for all participants throughout.

Restorative Dorset is here to provide an independent service for victims, offenders, neighbours/communities in conflict and our partner agencies across Dorset.

For more information about our service including how to make a referral, please contact:-

Restoratedorset@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

or

phone the **Restorative Dorset Coordinators** directly

07786 733261 and 07791 924005

