

Metropolitan Police Service restorative justice Rapid Evidence Assessment for Violence Against Women and Girls and youth violence

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Introduction

Background and aims to the Rapid Evidence Assessment

This Rapid Evidence Assessment was commissioned by the Metropolitan Police Service to examine the use of Restorative Justice and Restorative Practice in two areas of interest that are germane to contemporary policing: tackling Youth Violence, and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). The questions underpinning this rapid evidence assessment are:

- What learning can be gained from existing academic and professional research that explores the management and prevention of youth violence and VAWG (within the UK and internationally)?
- What existing approaches have been used to address the problems of youth violence and VAWG, and what is the available evidence that demonstrates their effectiveness?

The Project Team

The Core Team was responsible for the organisation, oversight, and collation of the data. It comprises:

- Dr Jonathan Hobson – Project lead, Associate Professor of Social Sciences, University of Gloucestershire
- Dr Anamika Twyman-Ghoshal, Senior Lecturer in Criminology, University of Gloucestershire
- Dr Daniel Ash, Senior Lecturer in Criminology, University of Gloucestershire
- Dr Rebecca Banwell-Moore, Research Fellow attached to the project

The REA data Team

The REA assistant team was responsible for the collation and initial assessment of the data. It comprises:

- Ben Fisk, PhD researcher, University of Gloucestershire
- Inger Brit Lowater, PhD researcher, University of Gloucestershire
- Jill Palmer, PhD researcher, University of Huddersfield

Definitions of key terms:

There are different, sometimes competing, definitions for Restorative Justice and Restorative Practice. The work of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Restorative Justice (APPG RJ) outlined the need for greater understanding of what constitutes Restorative Justice in both concept and application, moving the conversation ‘beyond a narrow definition of meetings between a victims and offenders’ (APPG RJ, 2021a, p7). Consequently, the APPG RJ (2021b, p.1) provide the following definitions for Restorative Justice and Practice:

Restorative Justice

Is the broad philosophy which argues that those most affected by harm and conflict should be involved in communicating the causes and/or consequences and empowered to make

decisions about how to respond to that harm and/or resolve conflict. This can take place in any setting i.e., criminal justice, education and health settings and even the workplace.

Restorative Practice

Includes activities used to create a culture to proactively prevent harm and create resilient communities. This can include, but is not limited to, restorative dialogue, restorative leadership techniques, direct and indirect restorative processes.

For the purposes of this evaluation, we will most commonly refer to ‘restorative justice’ unless the program is specifically identified in the underpinning research as pertaining to ‘restorative practice’, as defined above.

Context of the report:

This review explores a range of applications of restorative justice across Youth Violence and VAWG. These are not solely related to the ways that restorative justice is used within policing, as many programmes are provided by non-police commissioned services. Nevertheless, there is often synergy between examples in terms of the structure and principles of how restorative justice is deployed. Consequently, the results obtained from the interventions are relevant to this study and included in the findings, below, which reflect programmes from a wide range of contexts and locations across the world.

The review provides a set of principles and practical considerations that have emerged from the assessment of similar projects worldwide. As such, it should be of use to police practitioners and policymakers in making decisions about how to implement and develop restorative justice practices by providing

Methods and data

Overview

The evidence that this review draws upon is taken from a variety of sources. These include repositories for restorative justice reports and papers, academic databases of peer-reviewed publications, repositories for restorative justice reports and papers, and the work of practitioner and advocacy agencies. The review is not limited to studies that provide quantitative/statistical findings, research that uses only experimental approaches, or systematic reviews as in doing so would limit the breadth of work available for analysis. As such, the review draws upon a wide range of sources that collectively provide valuable context and nuanced discussions about the implementation and effectiveness of restorative justice approaches.

Notwithstanding the wider scope of inclusion, this review has followed a rigorous academic method for identifying, sifting, and analysing evidence. For this Rapid Evidence Assessment, we have selected evidence for review based on a strict criterion. This ensures the research is repeatable by other researchers, deploying the same methods. These criteria have allowed us to capture the most important evidence relating to restorative justice in the context of youth violence and VAWG, while balancing the limited time available to conduct the review. In doing so, we have also identified important pieces of evidence for the Metropolitan Police Service to make informed and appropriate decisions about how to implement restorative justice practices.

The REA is broken down into four (4) stages. Each of these stages is summarised below, further details on each stage are set out, below, and in the companion document to this review ‘Rapid Evidence Assessment Methodological Guide’.

- Searching stage
- Inclusion and exclusion stage
- Rapid Review Stage
- Analysis stage

Details of each of these stages are set out, below.

Searching stage:

The searching stage establishes the breadth of data in the area. This material is taken from a variety of sources, as detailed below.

Academic database search

The academic database search examines literature on the key themes across large academic library catalogues, which store academic material in various forms. Using more than one database allows for breadth of search, but also requires an exercise to remove duplicated results. The databases used in this search were:

- EBSCO
- Web of Science

The databases were searched using Boolean operators to create two lists of searched items, one list for youth violence and another for VAWG. Search terms were determined by the core REA team, and are provided in table 1, below.

Table 1: Academic database tiered search terms	
Tier	Search terms
1: overarching subject areas	restorative
2A: VAWG specific	“violence against women*girls” OR vawg OR “domestic abuse” OR “domestic violence” OR coercive OR “coercive control” OR “intimate partner” OR “intimate partner violence” OR IPV OR “spousal abuse” OR “honour based violence” OR “honour-based violence” OR “honor based violence” OR “honor-based violence” battered OR “famil* violence” OR “spousal abuse” OR “inter*partner violence” OR “gender-based violence” OR “gender based violence”
2B: Youth specific	(violen* OR “serious violen*” OR “violent crime” OR “violent offend*” OR assault OR “physical assault”) AND “young people” OR “young person” OR “youth offending” OR gang OR child OR youth OR juvenile OR “referral orders” OR “reparation orders” OR “youth offending team*” OR yot OR “youth offending service*” OR yos OR “youth offending panel*” OR “community reparation panel*” OR “family group conferenc*” OR “juvenile justice” OR “juvenile delinquen*” OR “scrutiny panel*”

Additional Material search

As well as the academic database search, material was compiled from:

Additional online sources – data from sources outside of the academic databases. In the context of trustworthy online sources, such as:

- commissioned research that hasn't been peer reviewed or published elsewhere (e.g., rapid evidence reviews);
- internal research;
- policy and process documents (e.g., policing or agency policy);
- academic publications should be cross referenced with the academic database sheet to ensure they have been identified during the journal database search process

Additional 'other' reliable sources - data from sources outside of the academic databases. In the context of trustworthy online sources, including:

- expert opinion;
- unpublished work access from elsewhere.

Table 2 shows the sources of these additional items:

Table 2: Searching stage additional material online and other results		
Theme	Youth Justice	VAWG
Number of additional items identified	10	27
Sources	Australian Institute of Criminology - restorative O'Connell, T. (Restorative programme designer, Australia) Restorative Justice council (UK) Restorative Thinking (UK) Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (USA) HM inspectorate of prisons Loughborough University Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (London, UK) - restorative	Australian Institute of Criminology Brathay Trust with contribution from the Cumbria Office of Police and Crime Commissioner California State University The University of Gloucestershire Center for victim research repository (USA) Arizona State University Center for Problem-Oriented Policing National Institute of Justice (USA) A report commissioned by HMP Cardiff Funded by The Home Office Crime Reduction Unit for Wales Leuven Institute of Criminology (LINC), University of Leuven (KU Leuven, Belgium). Why me? (UK)

		United States of America Department of Justice The Police Foundation (UK) European Commission Home Office (UK) Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) (UK) British Psychological Society Mayor's Office for Police and Crime (London, UK) College of Policing (UK)
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Inclusion and exclusion stage

Once the data collection is complete, the Team applies the defined inclusion/exclusion criteria to the material recorded on the data spreadsheet. The inclusion/exclusion criteria are devised by the Core REA team in discussion with the project commissioner(s). They provide a geographic, temporal, and conceptual framework for the material included in the final analysis.

Table 3: inclusion and exclusion criteria		
Area	Inclusion	Exclusion
Location: Geography and Language	Worldwide, English written	Non-English written
Outlet type: Nature of publication	Journal article (peer reviewed) PhD thesis From an approved website Approved by core REA team as 'other' category	Media source (journalism) Master's dissertation Undergraduate work Encyclopaedia entries Conference proceedings
Study type: Source of data	Empirical/primary research Academic analysis Policy analysis Policy reflection Programme Evaluation Applied research Exploratory research	Personal Blogs Opinion pieces Review of literature Descriptive, general assessments
Study design: Nature of data	Quantitative data Qualitative data Mixed methods	General reflection pieces
Relevance:	Implementation analysis Outcome analysis Efficacy analysis	General data on effectiveness of Restorative justice / practice Programmes outside of VAWG and YV

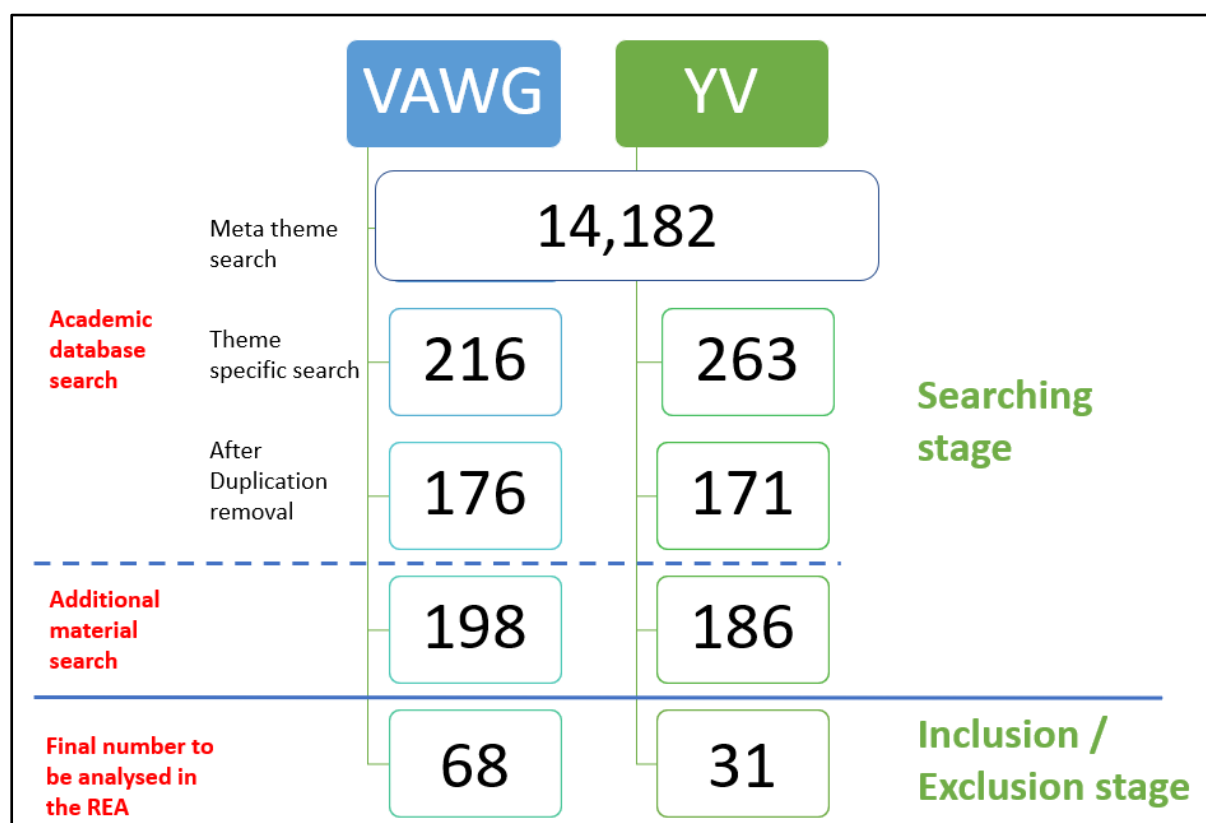
Topics and fields of interest	Police programmes Non-police programmes	
Date range:		
Publication date of material	1990 onwards	1989 and earlier (Circa. the Pollard commission)

As part of a process to make the REA repeatable and robust, the team conduct a bias reduction exercise on several results to ensure agreement on interpretation of the exclusion/inclusion criteria. This includes a dip sample for oversight of the process.

Figure 1 shows the data achieved through the searching and inclusion / exclusion exercise. In total:

- 68 items were examined for VAWG category
- 31 items were examined for the Youth violence category

Figure 1: data included in the Rapid Evidence Assessment



Rapid Review Stage

The rapid review stage of the process analyses the final items included in the Rapid Evidence Assessment. This data then forms the basis for the final analysis stage. As part of this, the team downloads a copy for each item and identifies key issues against each of the review themes by reading the abstracts and conclusions for each article, and skim reading where else as necessary. The review themes are:

- a. Nature of the intervention?
 - i. who was it working with?
 - ii. what did it do?
 - iii. where was it happening?
- b. What was found to work well?
- c. What problems and potential solutions were identified?

Analysis Stage

The analysis stage takes the rapid review material and synthesises key messages for this Rapid Evidence Assessment. The analysis is organised under the two headings of youth violence and Violence Against Women and Girls, summarising these under the subheadings: benefits, challenges, delivery considerations.

Structure of summary findings

The summary section presents the findings from this Rapid Evidence Assessment on how restorative justice practice is used to support contemporary policing needs. The section is divided into the two main areas that this Rapid Evidence Assessment was focused on: tackling youth violence and violence against women and girls (VAWG). Each of these is subdivided into sections: benefits; challenges; and delivery considerations, where the data is presented as a series of key bullet points and references. The full reference list is in the reference list, towards the end of this document.

Restorative Justice and Youth Violence

The findings within the REA identified that restorative justice is an effective justice mechanism in responding to youth violence, including sexual violence and other serious physical violence. Most notable is the potential of restorative justice to reduce reoffending and reoffending offence severity, more so than through the application of ‘normal’ retributive youth justice sanctions. Moreover, one of the most significant findings of the REA is the importance of adopting a whole-system and community restorative justice approach. Embedding restorative justice into the organisational culture of youth justice yields the best outcomes for victims, young perpetrators and the community through improved relations, wellbeing and improved mental health.

Embedding restorative justice into the ethos of criminal justice and education institutions has been identified as instrumental in breaking the ‘school to prison pipeline’, improving victim satisfaction and wellbeing, and improving young perpetrators awareness of the impact of their behaviour on victims (and the wider community). The findings demonstrate that a further development of restorative justice in England and Wales is required whereby restorative justice “becomes the centrepiece of responses to all but the most serious offences committed by children and young people” (The Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour, 2007, p10). This is particularly important considering the 2018 *Referral Order Guidance* that reiterated “youth offender panels operate on restorative justice principles and that they should be conducted restoratively and in accord with the principles and ethos of restorative practice” (Ministry of Justice/Youth Justice Board, 2018, p19).

Benefits for Youth Violence

Benefits for youth offenders

- Young offenders who participated in restorative justice conferences felt more inclined to repay the victim/society for the harm caused and believed that they had the capability to do this compared to those going through a traditional court process. Individuals going through restorative justice conferences were much more likely to show feelings of repentance (Kim and Gerber, 2012).
- Restorative justice has the potential to facilitate the process of ‘re-sensitisation’ (Clark, 2012, p87). Young offenders, who commit acts of violence have often experienced repeated exposure to violence in their schools, communities, and homes. These experiences can result in becoming desensitised to violence and being unable to (fully) appreciate and understand the impact of their violent behaviour on others (Clark, 2012).
- Repairing the relationship between victim and offender requires reciprocal recognition of belonging to the same moral community. This is achieved by young people when they are offered an opportunity to reflect and acknowledge their own destructiveness in a manner that fosters guilt and concern for the hurt caused to others (Froggett, 2007).

Benefits for victims

- Restorative justice intervention programmes (including those responding to youth domestic abuse and hate crime) were found to create an increased sense of empowerment amongst participants, this included feeling that they can keep

themselves safe. In addition, participants reported improved feelings of self-worth; better communication skills; greater awareness of self and of situational contexts; and better recognition of personal strengths (Brethay Trust, 2017).

- Restorative justice empowers victims (including victims of sexual violence) and offers the opportunity to seek answers to questions that the traditional criminal justice system does not provide (Armstrong, 2021).

Benefits of restorative justice for dealing with serious crimes

- When practitioners think about restorative justice, they often think of the process being used for less serious crimes or anti-social behaviours involving young people. Restorative justice has, historically, since the introduction of Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) (Crime and Disorder Act 1998; Youth Justice and Evidence Act 1999) been incorporated as one of the main principles of youth justice – whereby all YOTs were intended to be based on restorative principles, with the community sentences also introduced intended to be restorative partly through inclusion of victim perspectives (Home Office, 1997d).
- Restorative justice should not be confined to being a tool by which to deal with minor youth anti-social behaviour and offending. In serious youth offences, including sexual violence, restorative justice has been found to be a highly effective response for victims and offenders alike. Conferencing is associated with lower recidivism compared to court sentences (including community sentences). Conferencing is associated with the lowest levels of recidivism (43 per cent) compared to service reoffending rates (56 per cent) (Daly, 2006).
- There were no significant differences for extra- or intra-familial cases compared to courts, although individuals going through a restorative justice process were more likely to admit responsibility without suffering long-term ostracism and victims were more likely to recount their experience of how the offence affected them (Daly, 2008).
- Implementing a ‘restorative justice victim empathy assault awareness course’ programme (within YOTs) provides a substantial reduction in re-offending (for similar offences) and enables participants to reflect on their use of violence and reconsider the use of violence (Wallis et al., 2013).

Benefits of restorative justice for harmful sexual behaviours of young offenders

- Youth sex offenders, who have committed serious offences, including against other children, remain vulnerable due to their age and all responses need to take this into consideration (Blackley and Bartels, 2018).
- Rapid advances in technology have led to a significant growth in Harmful Sexual Behaviours (HSB) perpetrated by children or young persons (CYP), which requires more innovative responses. There is considerable evidence to suggest that the criminal justice system is not the right response for CYP who engage in HSB. Instead approaching harmful sexual behaviours as a child protection issue requires a therapeutic response. Restorative justice practice incorporates therapeutic principles (Scottish Government, 2020; McGibbin and Humphreys, 2021).
- One method that has been effectively used in a restorative approach as part of an intervention of an HSB programme for young offenders is a multi-agency perspective, where restorative justice practitioners, child psychologists, social workers, and youth justice officers work collaboratively to improve the life chances and outcomes for victims, children or young persons who engage in HSB, and their families (Armstrong, 2021).

- Unlike the traditional criminal justice system, restorative justice empowers victims of sexual violence and provides them with the opportunity to ask questions (Armstrong, 2021).

Benefits of restorative practices within schools

- Implementing Restorative Justice in schools has the potential to “substantially reduce student offending, increase perceptions of safety, enhance learning, promote positive school climate, and destroy the school-to-prison pipeline that is exacerbating inequality and disadvantage for certain students” (Payne and Welch, 2018, p237).
- Restorative practice facilitates the promotion of peer leadership, accountability, ownership, agency and civic engagement. Building positive intrapersonal relationships between young people, police, staff teachers, administrators and community members through open communication and training all stakeholders (including young people) in conflict resolution and restorative practice has been demonstrated to be key to addressing violence, reducing the number of violent incidents, the use of disciplinary and exclusion measures, and improving perceptions of safety (Mateer et al., 2001; Movsisyan, 2014).
- Participation in a 'whole' school restorative justice program has been evidenced to increased self-esteem and reduction in school conflict (Smokowski et al., 2018).

Challenges for Youth Violence

Professional scepticism and resistance

- A major concern in restorative justice work is scepticism and resistance from other professionals including victim advocacy groups. The collaboration and support of criminal justice professionals and victim advocacy services is essential to the implementation of restorative justice programmes and to the growth in the number programmes available (Armstrong, 2021).
- Disengagement with the restorative justice process can occur when there is insufficient support for the programme (for instance, a lack of Victim Support case workers in the early stages of the process) (Brethay Trust, 2017).

Implementation and capacity

- There is the need to work on improving the implementation of peer mediation in the school system, through innovative and comprehensive promotion of peer mediation (Peuraca and Vejmelka, 2015).
- While restorative practices have the promise to “improve schools’ communications and transcend punitive disciplinary forms, serious attention must be paid to the critical capacities of staff to use restorative practices in ways that do not rationalise ‘violence’ and ‘hot emotions’ as products of ‘pathological’ individuals. We must remain wary of overly simplistic solutions to complex structural problems, lest our solutions do more harm than good. We caution against the uncritical use of strategies such as restorative practices” (Schulz et al, 2021, p1241).

Inclusion of participants

- In research published by the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection (2012) a challenge identified was that too few victims were engaging directly with youth offender panels. “There was also a tendency for the YOTs contact with victims to be seen more as a set of administrative process than a fundamental part of the order” (Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, 2012, p10).

- A particular consideration for the use of restorative justice with children is to ensure that spaces and practices are safe and child inclusive, ensuring that these processes move beyond formal participation of young victims. This will ensure that children’s voices are heard, their harm acknowledged, their needs addressed, and their questions answered (Gal, 2021).

Training

- There is the need to work on improving the implementation of peer mediation in the school system, in particular through: innovative and comprehensive promotion of peer mediation, quality education of children and adults in the field of peer mediation, evidence based practice, multidisciplinary and cross-sectional cooperation of institutions, civil society organisations and local communities and networking with international organisations in the field of peer mediation, and well planned and systematic collection of data, data analysis and availability of results (Peuraca and Vejmelka, 2015).
- Facilitating restorative justice cases, especially in a voluntary capacity, requires trained and highly skilled individuals (Mann, 2016).
- Facilitating residents' ability to intervene in neighbourhood problems, and thereby also preventing violence, requires providing opportunities for participation and training in restorative justice /practice (Ohmer et al., 2010).
- It is important to teach children how to build a peaceful school environment. This in turn has the potential to provide them with the knowledge for building a future peaceful society (Kelly, 2017).

Addressing structural socio-economic underlying factors

- Restorative practices have the promise to improve the school environment, both in overcoming tendencies for punitive policies and for overall communications, there is a tendency to see the ‘problem’ of violence as an individual issue and therefore provide only individual solutions. The concept of violence stemming from structural, societal constructs is often not considered as part of the process. “It could be argued that young people are thus disciplined via restorative practices to adhere to a paradigm in which structural problems, such as racism or poverty, are rescaled to the individual” (Schulz et al., 2021, p1240).
- Therefore, to “enhance the agency of young people and increase schools’ capacities to transform and challenge myriad forms of violence requires providing youth with opportunities to examine and collectively rethink the power relations in which they are enmeshed. This points toward the need for deeper discussion and exploration of whole-school pedagogical alternatives that value the cultural assets, wisdom and physical capacities of all students, potentially negating the need for special streams or for contracting private providers to impart overly simplistic solutions to complex structural issues” (Schulz et al., 2021, p1240).

Delivery Considerations for Youth Violence

Partnership, collaboration, and a whole system approach

- There are cumulative benefits in using a packaged programme delivery, such as in the North Carolina Youth Violence Prevention Center (NC-YVPC) which implemented 3 evidence-based programs to decrease youth violence in a rural North Carolina community. A universal school-based program called ‘Positive Action’ was implemented in middle schools for 3 years. A parenting skill course, called Parenting

Wisely, was run online to improve parenting skills. And finally, a community-based restorative justice programme, Teen Court, was provided to youth. This packaged programme delivery highlights the utility of implementing a multifaceted approach to reduce and prevent youth violence. In addition, the programme showed the benefits and importance of fostering a strong partnership between academic institutions and the community (Smokowski et al., 2018).

- In another example, the Croatian Experience of Peer Mediation in Schools showed that multidisciplinary and cross-sectional cooperation of institutions, civil society organisations and local communities, and networking with international organisations in the field of peer mediation were most effective (Peuraca and Vejmelka, 2015).
- It is critical to adequately fund such innovative, comprehensive, and interdisciplinary programs across several years (at least 3–5 years) to allow for the theoretical model to take root. There is a need to use an inter-disciplinary and innovative approach in establishing programmes (Harden et al., 2015).
- There is a need for multi-agency approach that goes beyond recreational needs to focus on emotional health and wellbeing. Youth workers, in partnership with local community-led programs and peacebuilding processes, have the potential to play an important role in both the engagement of and consultation with the community in addressing conflict and violence (Harland, 2011).
- For partnerships and collaborations to work well requires an efficient referral system as well as robust exit routes. In addition, there is need for awareness and effective signposting to other forms of support, services, and resources (Brathay Trust, 2017).
- Developing a restorative justice or restorative practice programme, particularly one that is comprehensive and involves multiple agencies, needs to be done carefully and using a phased model (Harden et al., 2015; Lane et al., 2007).

Restorative justice / restorative practice training and awareness

- Training and awareness of restorative justice / practice needs to take place across the entire institution and across sectors and disciplines. This is particularly important for schools. Even if an individual in the organisation is not tasked directly with restorative justice / practice work, the entire organisation needs to understand the value of the work. It was important for people in leadership to be trained even if their primary responsibility was not restorative justice / practice - this supports argument for whole institution process (Mateer et al., 2010).
- For effective restorative justice implementation in schools, intrapersonal relationships among students, teachers, administrators, and councillors are essential (Movsisyan, 2014).

Addressing structural socio-economic underlying factors

- To support school capacities to transform and challenge violence whilst also providing opportunities for the agency of young people requires that space is provided for young people to come together to examine and rethink power structures that form their personal context. This will tackle tendencies to individualise the problem of violence (Schulz et al., 2021).
- Programmes should not be overly simplistic solutions to complex structural problems. Individualised programmes would potentially negate the need for special streams or for contracting private providers to impart overly simplistic solutions to complex structural issues (Schulz et al., 2021).

Whole policing restorative approach

- In a US study, it was shown that when restorative justice is combined with strong “individualised client-specific services, evidence-based practices, restorative justice practices, cross-agency data sharing, re-entry services, and parent support”, it reduced the number of youth offenders on probation attached to gang terms and conditions (Combatting Youth Violence in American Cities, 2016, p69).
- In place of law enforcement approaches, officers worked with school staff on prevention and intervention initiatives. Officers would work with families when issues were identified and were trained to engage community and public assets to support crisis situations. Interventions include “mediations and home visits to address the most serious violence offense suspensions and chronic truancy offenders’ (Combatting Youth Violence in American Cities, 2016, p71). ‘School’ police officers, as part of a collaborative multidisciplinary team, were able to sign-post and refer the ‘at need’ young people to the correct services (Combatting Youth Violence in American Cities, 2016).
- Reducing truancy and school suspensions was achieved by creating a Youth Violence Prevention. Staffed with school emphasis officers who focused on trust building trust in communities of colour, implementing restorative practices in schools, and building relationships with community-based networks. These school emphasis officers were in a location with high levels of youth violence, truancy and suspensions. Youth who needed services were dealt with by a collaborative multidisciplinary team that ensured referrals were made and right services were received (Combatting Youth Violence in American Cities, 2016).
- Restorative justice intervention programmes can contribute to victims making changes to staying safe, particularly those that include domestic abuse education, supportive workers, and access to other services and relevant support (Brathay Trust, 2017).

Incorporating restorative practices within schools using a whole-school pedagogical approach

- Restorative justice practices implemented as “systematized and institutionalized restorative praxis” can substantially reduce youth violence and offending (Utheim, 2012, p292).
- A whole - school pedagogical approach that incorporates students, staff, community, and community police officers (school youth engagement officers) has been demonstrated to have a positive effect on discipline issues and actions including suspension and exclusion rates, incidents of violence, negative behaviour, bullying, mental health issues and wellbeing, smoking, alcohol and drug use, police contact, and reduced recidivism (Bonnell et al., 2018; Mann, 2016; Kelly, 2017).

Incorporating community restorative justice based interventions with youth violence

- Using a training programme to teach residents how to intervene in neighbourhood problems with particular focus on violence that utilised restorative justice and peace-making criminology concepts equipping people with skills to approach a situation with peaceful and non-threatening strategies. The programme was shown to give community members confidence to tackle conflicts more directly (Ohmer et al., 2010).
- A large-scale integrated programme run by a university–community partnerships combined a school-based initiative, online parenting skills education, and a community-based restorative justice alternative to traditional juvenile justice. This

integrated programme reduced non-school based offences by 47 per cent. Complaints over a lack of discipline and other forms of delinquency were reduced by 31 per cent and an 81 per cent reduction in the use of corporal punishment. In addition, school-based offenses, short-term suspensions, and assaults all decreased. The study showed that implementing an integrated set of evidence-based programmes run by a university-community partnership showed has an overall positive affect on youth violence at a community level (Smokowski et al., 2018).

- The online parenting skills education provided participants with more confidence and reduced conflict with their children (Smokowski et al, 2018).
- Participants of the restorative justice alternative for youth offenders reported improved mental and behavioural health. In addition, it was shown that there was a decrease in some indicators of violence at county-level (Smokowski et al, 2018).

Additional programme considerations

- Restorative justice / practice needs to ensure child-inclusiveness. Therefore, processes must be individually tailored to each child, according to the child's wishes, capabilities, and interests, without violating the rights, needs and interests of the perpetrators (Gal, 2021).
- Many young men do not take part in organised youth activities and believed that as they grew older youth centres were less attractive to them with some impressions of them being that they were "rubbish" or "boring." Some suggested more talk based and sport related activities and facilities should be offered in their communities. Others thought that schools should provide more after-school activities that were not part of a formal curriculum. These young men not only were asking for "safe" activities and opportunities that were organized by adults but also afforded them enough freedom to enjoy themselves. The majority expressed interest in learning skills to deal with violence and conflict (Harland, 2011).

Restorative Justice and Violence Against Women and Girls

Historically, the use of restorative justice for cases of violence against women or girls has been a contentious area for the police. This has resulted in the police avoiding the use of restorative justice in lieu of harsh punishments and punitive actions against offenders whilst seeking to maximise protection of victims by, amongst other things, isolating them from the perpetrator.

However, this way of thinking presupposes that the use of punitive policing approaches, criminal sanctions, and protecting victims cannot be used in conjunction or parallel with other criminal justice processes. Restorative justice work does not require a meeting between victim and perpetrator and, with the right risk management safeguards in place, restorative processes can be a useful tool to support victims of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) and reduce reoffending whilst allowing other forms of justice to run alongside.

This section explores the current research relating to the use of restorative justice for VAWG including the benefits of using restorative justice for VAWG cases, the challenges, and delivery considerations.

Benefits for VAWG

Empowerment for victims

- One of the most prominent and interesting findings identified within research was that when restorative justice is used with domestic abuse cases, there are usually high levels of victim satisfaction with the processes and outcomes. This was identified to be a result of the values underpinning the restorative justice process which are seen, by victims, to be similar to their values, thereby more likely to address their needs (Ranjan, 2020; Davis, 2009; Sackett, Kerrigan and Mankowski, 2021a; 2021b; Decker et al 2020).
- The emphasis on empowerment of victims in restorative justice was a key element of its success (Ehret, 2020).
- An Australian study indicated that victims expressed a need for a system of justice that allows them to feel empowered and where the offender admits responsibility. Findings suggest that restorative justice provides a more viable way for victims to have an input (Jeffries et al., 2021).
- Restorative justice improves on criminal justice approaches because it gives women a voice in the process (Cheon and Regehr, 2006). The restorative process empowers victims by allowing for active participation and engagement in legal processes whilst challenging the notion that victims are powerless (Hopkins and Koss, 2005; Presser and Gaarder, 2000).
- In a case study conducted in Canada it was shown that the use of restorative justice enabled victims to separate their sense of self from the offender (i.e., they were no longer 'carrying them' in their mind) resulting in improved self-esteem (Warhaft et al., 1999).

- Restorative justice was particularly suitable for domestic violence victims who lacked support structures outside their own families, for instance, immigrant women (Goel, 2004).
- Restorative justice has the potential of encouraging the reporting of further offences because of the flexibility of interventions available (Presser and Gaarder, 2000).
- Mediation is shown to be more effective in allowing participants to understand the dynamics of their relationships than traditional court processes (Daly, 2006).
- Intimate partner violence panels (including surrogate panels) allowed social interaction that was not permitted in traditional criminal justice processes (Sackett, Kerrigan and Mankowski, 2021b).
- Using restorative justice in couples counselling for cases of intimate partner violence amongst same sex couples had an empowering effect on victims (Bermea and VanBergen, 2021).
- The use of surrogate panels allowed interactional dialogue, which enabled 'power imbalance' between victim and offender to be 'inverted' and for victims to reframe their own experience (Sackett and Kerrigan, 2020).
- Victim impact panels in domestic violence cases allowed survivors the opportunity to tell their story which was perceived by participants as being empowering (Fulkerson, 2001).
- An important to focus on restorative justice is on accountability rather than forgiveness (Bermea and VanBergen, 2021).
- For some participants, their interest in using restorative justice processes stemmed from the perception that traditional justice was ineffective in stopping/preventing intimate partner violence. It was found that restorative justice could be more effective than traditional justice approaches, particularly in instances where there was a continuing relationship between the perpetrator and victim (Belknap and McDonald, 2010).
- Research has shown that restorative justice allows for complex and sometimes conflicting needs of domestic violence cases, where a more responsible party takes the ownership for the violence in the relationship whilst validating the more complex causes of conflict (Kim, 2012).

Benefits for offender behaviour

- A study conducted in the United States examined a mandatory domestic violence therapy called 'Shame Transformation' that was ordered by the courts and deployed among offenders on a mandatory basis. It was determined that the treatment programme promoted increases in self-esteem and empathic concern. Emotional release of shame allowed for self-expression and restoration of dignity enabling offenders to engage in the restorative justice processes more fully (Loeffler et al., 2010).
- Restorative justice led to offenders taking full responsibility for their violent acts (Kim, 2012).
- The use of restorative justice disrupts the social and familial supports for the offender's abuse and enables change to occur in the offender's conduct (Cheon and Regehr, 2006).
- Restorative justice changes offender behaviour, as survivors can make requests of the perpetrator to "undertake certain responsibilities or commitments that are reparative in nature. The Restorative Justice process can assist either party in accessing services and support networks that they otherwise may not have been able to" (Why me?, 2021, p10).

- Restorative justice has a positive effect on victims whenever an offender admits responsibility (Jeffries et al., 2021).
- Restorative justice improved offender self-esteem by allowing them to reduce the shame experienced as part of being an offender, which then opened the door for them to engage fully with the process to improve restorative justice outcomes (Loeffler et al., 2010).
- Offenders of sexual assaults were seen to show a willingness to learn from their offending and to 'grow' by engaging in reparation (which was agreed between both parties); results not seen by using CJ processes (Bletzer and Koss, 2013).
- Offender behaviour is modified by the restorative justice process, in part, through education and psychological support (Wasileski, 2017).
- Surrogate impact panels (as part of batterer intervention programs) are shown to have a significant impact on offenders. Offenders who attended the program reached new understandings of intimate partner violence, including long term intimate partner violence effects, domestic violence victim experience and the impact of their behaviour on their victim(s). Offenders were able to express emotional impact and an intent to change. It was noted that healing appeared to occur alongside a new sense of responsibility/accountability for their offending. Importantly, offenders felt that the content being delivered in these situations was perceived as serious or more real as compared to other situations where similar messages had been communicated. Engagement in panels improved offender awareness of the impact of their offending on victims (including children), accompanied by an intent to change (Sackett and Mankowski, 2021a).
- Restorative justice allowed for increased offender accountability because, by engaging in the process, offenders had to admit responsibility (without which offenders could justify reoffending). Moreover, whenever there was an admission of guilt, there was a reduction in victim blaming (Belknap and McDonald, 2010).
- The effect of surrogate impact panels on offenders was that they could reach new understandings of intimate partner violence and express emotional impact and intent to change (Pennell et al., 2021).
- In a study evaluating the effect of victim impact panels on offenders showed that the process had created an awareness of the impact of their violence on victims. It was noted that most participants had never previously considered the impact of their offending on the victim, suggesting an important change in their view of the situation (Zosky, 2018).
- Comparing a Batterer Intervention Programme (BIP) with a restorative 'circles' programme showed that the restorative justice programme achieved a larger reduction in reoffending (Mills et al., 2013).
- Surrogate panels increased offender awareness of the impact of intimate partner violence on both victims and children (Sackett Kerrigan, 2020).

Benefits of including the community

- There is a general need for using a restorative approach for family violence cases and that the inclusion of community is beneficial in influencing positive behaviour and healing of the whole family (Riel et al., 2016).
- Restorative justice allows for community involvement to reduce domestic violence (Hampton et al., 2008).
- The inclusion of community in restorative justice allows it to be both a form of formal and informal social control (where it can mobilise social, emotional and spiritual resources (Presser and Gaarder, 2000).

- Restorative justice that includes community involvement provides a sense of justice for the community in holding the offender to account (Andruczyk, 2015).
- Vindhya and Lingam (2019) argue that using restorative justice that involves the community has a positive impact on victim engagement.
- Warhaft et al. (1999) indicate that restorative justice can provide community transformation.

Benefits for cultural sensitivity and dealing with institutional racism

- Indigenous domestic violence victims saw the criminal justice system as oppressive and favoured restorative justice over traditional criminal justice approaches (Nancarrow, 2006).
- Unlike traditional criminal justice approaches, restorative justice processes considered culturally specific considerations such as spiritual aspects of healing within it (Riel et al., 2016).
- A community conferencing model allows for the development of culturally appropriate responses through restorative justice (Hopkins and Koss, 2005).
- Traditional interventions can be critiqued for being ineffective in meeting the needs of Black women who are subjected to domestic violence. Hampton et al (2008) argued that restorative justice empowers Black women and the Black community whilst holding the offender accountable. This was particularly important considering the intersection of race, class, and gender oppression.
- Due to historic racism in the criminal justice system, radicalised women felt more empowered when restorative justice was included in the justice process (Daly and Stubbs, 2006).

Restorative justice as a complementary approach to court processes.

- Courts need to see restorative justice as a resource, support, and “integrated alternative” to mainstream processes (Dickson-Gilmore, 2014).
- Including restorative justice in the traditional criminal justice system helped dispel the soft justice myth (Miller and Lovanni, 2013).
- In a comparison between a Batterer Intervention Programs (BIP)-only intervention and a BIP plus restorative justice program, the hybrid model of BIP was found to be more effective than standard BIP treatment model in reducing re-offending. In cases where crimes were committed following treatment, the crimes were less severe (Mills et al., 2019).
- The inclusion of a public prosecutor in bringing all stakeholders together and ensuring that the offender complied with any outcome agreement was key within a system whereby offenders must attend mandatory treatment programmes (Ranjan, 2020).
- Examining the experiences of prosecutors referring domestic violence cases to restorative justice found that they all believed that mediation represented “a good provision” and was “a good reformatory-diversionary measure” (Wasileski, 2017).
- The use of restorative justice with victims of stalking in Spain, as an alternative to criminal proceedings, provided a satisfactory experience for victims (Villacampa and Salat, 2019).
- An experimental trial of using peace circles (restorative justice processes) for domestic violence cases was shown to be effective (Mills, Barocas and Ariel, 2013).
- Unlike traditional justice, it was found that informal justice alternatives, such as restorative justice, were more effective in meeting the needs of victims, offenders and the community (Daly and Stubbs, 2006).

- Using restorative justice conferencing provides victims a greater sense of achieving justice as compared to traditional criminal court processes (Daly and Curtis-Fawley, 2006).
- A key feature of restorative justice is that it focused on changing offender behaviours through referrals to services (Daly 2010). Restorative justice for domestic violence cases was particularly effective when combined with therapeutic interventions (Stubbs, 2007).
- Developing a trauma informed care approach in cases of intimate partner violence lessened the isolation of both victim and offender (Andruczyk, 2015).

Challenges for VAWG

Managing safety

- Victim advocacy groups and stakeholders such as criminal justice actors or health professionals can perceive restorative justice as a challenge/threat due to concerns about the re-victimisation of victims and the due process rights of offenders (Keenan et al., 2016).
- “In the development of initiatives, there is often a conflict between safety and choice – prioritising safety can be disempowering, while prioritising choice can be dangerous” (Liebmann and Wooton, 2008, p36).
- An inadequate understanding of batterer typologies can risk an inappropriate use of restorative justice. Before restorative justice is used, it must be determined which offenders might benefit from a restorative approach and those who are unlikely to benefit, or who pose too great a safety risk (Van Wormer, 2009).
- It is important to be cautious in the use of restorative justice which is focused on mobilising emotions which can lead to further coercion/manipulation (Stubbs, 2007). If restorative justice is not effectively managed it could be used to coerce a victim into not seeking alternative support and return to a violent partner (Bermea and Vanbergen, 2021).
- A skilled coercive controller has been seen as not suitable for restorative justice (Sitarz et al., 2018).
- There have been some concerns that restorative justice only dealt with symptoms of domestic abuse rather than tackling causes (Vindhya and Lingam, 2019).
- It is important that restorative justice services and practitioners are registered (Hobson and Monckton-Smith, 2021).

General implementation challenges

- There is a general reluctance within the criminal justice system to use restorative justice interventions (Payne, 2017). Some criminal justice professionals are hesitant to employ restorative justice as a response to sexual violence/domestic violence due to a perception that there is a lack of a sufficient evidence base (Keenan et al., 2016).
- Cases are not referred to conference due to no admission of guilt, offence seriousness, history of offending, age of offender (where the young person was older), and dynamics of offence (victim outside of immediate family) (Daly, 2006).
- Tackling deep seated violent behaviour needs ‘facilitators to have a sophisticated understanding of [...] victim-offender [...] relationship dynamics [...] and an understanding of the impact of the trauma on both the victim and offender’ (Cheon and Regher, 2006, p388).

- Professionals can adopt a 'protective' paternalistic approach, where professionals' desire to protect victims and prevent traumatisation limits the application of restorative justice in sexual violence (Keenan et al., 2016).
- There were concerns that restorative justice may support the false narrative that intimate partner violence is a private matter and therefore prevent the harmed party from accessing support services (Bermea and Vanbergen, 2021).
- Difficulties can occur if there is an over emphasis on apology and forgiveness rather than accountability. Particularly in domestic violence cases, where an emphasis on apology and forgiveness may not be appropriate (Nancarrow, 2006).
- Use of language is important. In one study, it was identified that the term 'restorative justice' was being used to describe cases where street-level negotiated dispute management was being used, rather than a carefully managed process (Westmarland, Johnson and McGlynn, 2018).
- Practitioners report that ambiguities in procedures and lack of infrastructure hinders effective delivery of restorative justice (Ranjan, 2020).
- Restorative justice needs to be tailored, provide individualised programmes (HMICFRS, 2021).

Overt state control and mandatory processes

- When restorative justice processes are mandated, or overseen by courts, there is significant concern around coercion and 'correctional colonialism' particularly with minoritized identities. This was the case when working with Aboriginal communities in Australia where there were longstanding histories between Aboriginal communities and criminal justice agencies (Dickson-Gilmore, 2014).
- Overt state control and determination of the content of restorative justice processes could reduce the effectiveness of the process (Kim, 2012).
- This study argued that the requirement for offenders to attend an impact panel by probation staff was not best practice, because restorative justice is most effective when engagement is voluntary (Sackett and Mankowski, 2021b).
- There is concern around involuntary participation in the use of restorative justice treatment, particularly when the process is court mandated (Mills and Barocas, 2018).
- In one case, for an offender to be eligible to participate in restorative justice, they were required to engage in a batterer intervention programs (BIP). Offenders could only participate in restorative justice intervention after completing a minimum of 26 weeks on BIP (Sackett, Kerrigan and Mankowski, 2021).

Delivery Considerations for VAWG

Professional awareness/training

- A restorative justice facilitator must understand the full range of dynamics possible between domestic abuse offenders and victims to avoid inadvertent victim blaming or causing danger for victims (Cheon and Regehr, 2006).
- Facilitators should be specially trained to deliver restorative justice for domestic abuse cases so that victims are protected (Miller and Iovanni, 2013).
- Clear guidelines and training are needed to assist criminal justice professionals/prosecutors who have limited knowledge and skills of intimate partner violence, gender violence, restorative violence or mediation (Ranjan, 2020; Wasileski, 2017).

- Training is required for prosecutors whose opinions are shaped by their legal training which may not fit with a restorative justice approach (Ranjan, 2020).
- Increasing the knowledge of judges who sentence offenders to batterer intervention programmes and restorative justice interventions lead to better outcomes (Payne, 2017).
- Restorative processes in violence against women and girls 'requires a thorough risk-assessment, and close joint-working with professionals in the domestic and sexual abuse sector' (Why Me? 2021, p3).
- When using translation services in restorative justice, care must be taken to make complex discussion understandable (O'Nolan et al., 2018).

Procedural considerations

- Clear procedures on how to operationalise the mediation process within the criminal justice system are required (Wasileski, 2017).
- It is important to follow of pre and post conference best practices. Pre-conference best practice includes preparation, risk assessment, determining victims needs and expectations and working in partnership with support services. Post-conference best practice includes referrals to support services, monitoring of outcome agreements, support to ensure offender behavioural change(s) (Jeffries et al., 2021)
- The implementation of pre-sentencing and diversionary restorative justice proceedings can be offered early in the criminal justice process for cases deemed suitable (Miller and Lovanni, 2013).
- A more comprehensive and coordinated restorative justice response is required for intimate partner violence cases (Ranjan, 2020).
- Community support is vital for effective restorative justice interventions (Dickson-Gilmore, 2014).
- The availability and access to trauma informed restorative approaches is essential to enable offenders to seek help to address offending (Andruczyk, 2015).
- Victims should be afforded more choices in how they want to engage in a restorative justice process (shuttle, letter, etc.) (Jeffries et al., 2021).
- A more flexible approach to risk assessment should be used, as an ongoing process, during restorative justice work (Cheon and Regher, 2006).
- Couples' therapists may act as gatekeepers to restorative justice, allowing them to address any safety concerns (Bermea and Van Beregen, 2021).
- It is essential that any process supports victims' desires, including maintaining their relationships (Presser and Gaarder, 2000).

The timing of restorative justice

- The timing of VAWG related restorative justice interventions appears to have some impact on outcomes. A use of restorative justice, post-conviction, showed the benefit of the time lapse between conviction and post-conviction due to the offender having time to develop victim empathy and accepting responsibility. Furthermore, victims felt ready for the process (Miller and Lovanni, 2013).
- A south Indian state-supported restorative justice response to gender-based violence, called Social Action Committees, provided immediate relief for women, which the criminal justice system had been ineffective in providing (Vindhya and Lingam, 2019).

Collecting data

- Cases need to be tracked as part of a successful restorative justice process (Mills and Barocas, 2018).
- Data should be collected and used to understand the success of any restorative justice implementation, rather than relying on anecdotal evidence (Miller and Iovanni, 2013).
- There is need for longitudinal follow-up studies to determine long term impacts and collateral outcomes such as remorse or behavioural change after restorative justice interventions (Sackett Kerrigan and Mankowski, 2021a).

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