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Hobson, Jonathan ORCID logoORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8081-6699> (2024) Restorative Justice in England and Wales: A summary of the work of the APPG for Restorative Justice. In: Presentation to Irish MoJ Prison and Probation RJ Group, 4th December 2024. (Unpublished)

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All Party Parliamentary Group on
Restorative Justice

All Party Parliamentary Party Group for Restorative Justice



Summary of key work

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The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Restorative Justice (APPG-RJ) was established in April 2021 to foster cross-party discussions about restorative justice and elevate its profile within the UK justice system and broader society. The group focuses on:

1. Examining the use of restorative justice principles across various sectors, especially within the justice system.
2. Raising the profile of restorative justice in Parliament.
3. Facilitating policy discussion and consultation on restorative justice issues.

Phase 1: Inquiry Report (2021-2022) – also click [here](#)

The first phase involved an inquiry that gathered material from diverse sources within the sector. This phase aimed to assess the current state of restorative justice in the UK, including its strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement. The inquiry led to nine key recommendations, which provided a strategic direction for advancing restorative justice in policy and practice. These recommendations served as the foundation for the subsequent work.

Phase 2: Briefing Papers (2022-2024) – also click [here](#)

Building on the findings from the inquiry, the second phase consisted of a series of four briefing papers, each focused on a specific theme. These papers combined the data collected during the phase 1 inquiry with additional insights from further interviews and consultations, resulting in a nuanced understanding of each theme. The themes explored in the briefing papers addressed various aspects of restorative justice, such as implementation challenges, policy considerations, and opportunities for expanding restorative justice principles beyond the justice system.

Key findings from the Inquiry Report

- 1. Access:** Access to RJ is inconsistent, with disparities in funding and services across different Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) areas. This inconsistency results in a "**postcode lottery**" for those wishing to access restorative justice. In addition, professionals (e.g., probation staff, police officers) often act as **gatekeepers**, making decisions about the suitability of restorative justice, which can prevent people from accessing these services. **Short-term contracts** hinder service delivery, and difficulties with negotiating information-sharing agreements negatively impact service efficiency.
- 2. Capacity:** Although some funding is available, it is often **inadequate to professionalise the sector** or maintain high standards. This leads to reliance on volunteers and difficulties in providing adequate training and support. There are **no mandatory qualifications** for restorative justice practitioners, which can compromise service quality, particularly in complex cases like domestic abuse.
- 3. Awareness:** There is **Low Awareness** and limited understanding of RJ among sector professionals and the wider public, which results in missed opportunities for its use. There is a **need for improved communication**, including more effective public and professional awareness campaigns, to raise the profile of restorative justice and clarify what it involves.



Phase 1 (2021-22): Inquiry Report

**1. Registration of
commissioned
services**

**2. Standardise the
sharing of information**

**3. Improving quality
through effective
monitoring and
evaluation**

**4. Publication of a
new Action Plan**

**5. Reviewing ring-
fenced funding for RJ
practices**

**6. Explore automatic
rights for victims
through the Victim's
Law**

7. End to blanket bans

**8. More and better
communications.**

**9. Government
Minister with specific
responsibility for RJ**

Phase 1 (2021-22): Inquiry Report



98% of offenders taking part in **restorative justice** stated that the process **directly increased their personal understanding of the impacts/harms caused by their offending**

Remedi:Restorative Services, 2021

“ Why me?’s **Valuing Victim report** (2020) found that over **half of victims reported improvements** across the four outcome measures: **being better able to cope with aspects of life; having improved health and wellbeing, having increased feelings of safety and feeling better informed and empowered** ”

Why me?, 2020

The **Government** commissioned **Shapland reports** (2002 & 2007) found that **restorative justice** has an

85% **satisfaction rate for victims**

UK Government, 2007

“ For every **£1 spent** on restorative justice, on average criminal justice agencies **saved £8** ”

University of Sheffield, 2007

Workstream 1: Raising Practitioner Standards within the criminal justice sector

Workstream 1, led by Jim Simon and Tony Walker, focused on raising standards for sensitive and complex cases in restorative justice. It highlighted the need for improved training and qualifications while cautioning against rigid definitions. Instead of categorising cases solely by crime type, participants recommended a flexible approach based on the evolving needs and relationships of those involved.

Key recommendations for the APPG are:

1. To recommend that the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) works with the sector to review the syllabus for SCC training, including **specialist courses involving the use of RJ in cases of domestic and sexual abuse and violence.**
2. To recommend that the MoJ engage with the RJ sector, including with smaller organisations facing capacity issues, to **develop practice standards for facilitating complex and sensitive cases.** • To recommend that a sector wide consultation about the content of revised standards is undertaken.
3. To recommend that this **consultation includes other key sectors** impacted for example the domestic abuse and sexual violence sectors.

Workstream 2: Opening up universal access to Restorative Justice in the Criminal Justice Sector

Workstream 2 was led by Kate Hook and Tony Walker, and undertook an examination of the current delivery of both adult and youth RJ in the criminal justice sector (CJS).

Key recommendations for the APPG are:

- 1. Information Sharing:** The Ministry of Justice should establish a standardised information-sharing template for restorative justice across all adult and youth services to ensure consistency and facilitate cross-area collaboration.
- 2. Dedicated Funding:** A minimum of 10-15% of the Victim's Grant should be allocated for restorative justice services to ensure equal access nationwide. Five-year contracts are recommended for stability, with funding covering training, outreach, and volunteer support.
- 3. Universal Access:** Remove blanket bans on accessing restorative justice based on offence type or location, ensuring all victims can choose to participate. National policies should support consistent standards and fair access across all regions.

Workstream 3: Report on implementing restorative practices in education, health and social care

The report led by Jim Simon and Pete Wallis , reviewed restorative practices in education, health, and social care in England and Wales, finding that restorative approaches provide alternatives to punitive, disciplinary, and process-driven methods, respectively. Successful implementation requires strategic, evidence-based efforts and long-term leadership commitment, focusing on people-centred approaches across these sectors.

Key recommendations for the APPG are:

1. **Pilot Study:** Fund a pilot study in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland to evaluate the costs and benefits of restorative practices in education, health, and social care.
2. **System Review:** Invest in a review of relational aspects within education, health, and social care to develop a cohesive strategy for implementing restorative practices.
3. **Good Practice Guide:** Create an evidence-based guide for implementing restorative practices across the sectors, informed by existing literature and inquiry evidence.
4. **Evaluation Tools:** Develop instruments to measure the successful implementation and impact of restorative practices in these sectors.
5. **Education Reform:** Encourage a trauma-informed, restorative approach to behaviour management in schools, moving away from punitive methods.
6. **Health Advocacy:** Establish a UK National Advocacy Service with independent advocates trained in restorative practices to support patients, families, and staff after medical incidents.
7. **Social Care Research:** Invest in research on restorative practices in adult and children's services, focusing on cost savings and benefits for equity and inclusion.

Workstream 4: The commissioning, collection, and dissemination of evidence-based research in Restorative Justice and Restorative Practice & the benefits of a national reporting framework

Led by Dr Jonathan Hobson, With Lucy Jaffee and Ben Fisk, W4 explored methods for commissioning, collecting, and sharing evidence-based research on restorative justice. It highlighted the need for consistent evidence formats and better dissemination of research, aiming to unify practitioners, service designers, and academics in advancing restorative practices.

Key recommendations for the APPG are:

- 1. Regional Multi-Agency Groups:** Expand and support regional multi-stakeholder groups to facilitate the sharing and dissemination of restorative justice research, involving practitioners, service providers, commissioners, and academics.
- 2. National Reporting Framework:** Develop a National Reporting Framework with clear measures for recording and evaluating restorative practices, considering differences between youth and adult services. Implementing a digital system for data management would enhance this effort.
- 3. Evidence of Success:** Embed success markers in commissioning and reporting processes to improve visibility of effective restorative practices. Create a central repository for case studies, evaluations, and research to promote evidence-based work.