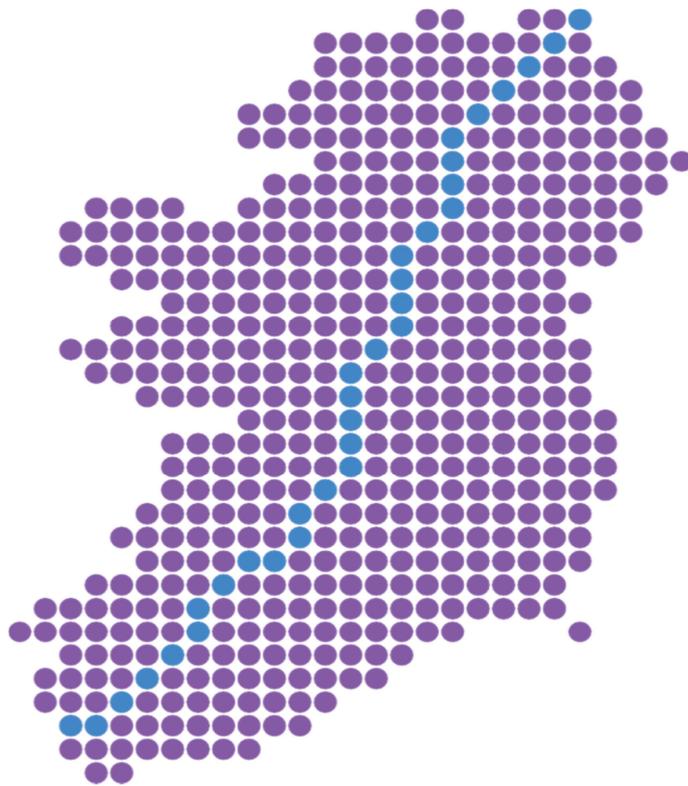


Restorative Connections: *“From Parlour to Parliament,”* 25th & 26th May 2016

Conference Report



How to cite this report

Any citation of this report should use the following reference:

Childhood Development Initiative (2016). Restorative Connections: From Parlour to Parliament. Dublin: Childhood Development Initiative

Published by:

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ISBN No: **978-0-9935899-3-5**

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Acronyms

ABC	Area-Based Childhood Programme
CDI	Childhood Development Initiative
CRJI	Community Restorative Justice Ireland
CYPSC	Children and Young People’s Services Committee
ECO	Enhanced Combination Order
IPPN	Irish Primary Principals’ Network
NEPS	National Educational Psychologist Service
RJFNI	Restorative Justice Forum Northern Ireland
RPI	Restorative Practices Ireland
SNS	Senior National School
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
YJS	Youth Justice Service

Introduction

A lot has happened over the last decade in relation to restorative approaches in Ireland. A variety of settings, organisations and sectors are now familiar with this work, which is used both as a preventative measure and to tackle high-end offences. There is a growing body of research demonstrating its impact and an evolving group of champions. This report, and the conference which preceded it, is just one of the tangible outcomes of the continuing growth in this field and is one of the outputs of collaboration between two aligned structures.

The Restorative Justice Forum Northern Ireland (RFJNI) began life as the Restorative Justice Working Group in 1994 following a restorative justice conference that year in Portballintrae organised by the Quaker Service. Ten years later, the group re-established itself as a Forum in recognition that restorative processes were no longer limited to the criminal justice sector, but were increasingly and successfully being used in education, social care, the family and wider community to address conflict, build understanding and strengthen relationships with young and old alike.

Today, the Forum is a group of well over 30 people representing 20 plus different agencies across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors as well as the judiciary. The aim of the Forum is to promote learning, mainly through events and research.

Back in 2012, the Forum set up a small sub-group to progress planning of an all-island event and the first joint meeting was held at Ballybot House, Newry in September of that year. We were delighted that there was huge appetite from our colleagues in Southern Ireland to work collaboratively and to consider an all-Ireland event. And so plans started for the first Restorative Connections conference which was held in Dundalk in November 2013.

It was a hugely successful event which we believe met its three key objectives, namely:

- (i) Introducing and promoting restorative practices with key decision makers across Ireland;
- (ii) Providing space for discussing, analysing and exploring restorative thinking, practice and developments; and
- (iii) Building long lasting relationships across Ireland to further develop restorative practice across all levels of society.

Simultaneously, Restorative Practices Ireland based in the Republic, which began life in 2011 as the Restorative Practices Strategic Forum, was gaining clarity and focus in its vision, whilst remaining connected into a multiplicity of networks, communities and organisations. Initially informally, RPI and the RJF (NI) began to connect and share experiences, with formal agreements increasingly underpinning the instinctive desire to collaborate and maximise the strength of a collective voice.

The 2013 conference was followed by two seminars in 2015, the first based on issues concerning victims, and the second on young people who repeatedly offend. Plans for this conference were driven through collaborations between RPI and the RJFNI, in recognition of the benefits of learning from each other, and in order to drive the shared commitment to provide opportunities for learning, reflecting, challenging and supporting. We hope this conference offers another landmark on our ongoing journey to bring restorative approaches to systems and services throughout the island of Ireland.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the various organisations who provided financial support for this conference. CDI contributed through funding under the Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme and acknowledges the role of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, The Atlantic Philanthropies, Pobal and the Centre for Effective Services. We are also grateful for financial support from the Restorative Justice Forum Northern Ireland.

Whilst money is important, it's people who make things happen. The Conference Planning Group were reliable, committed, creative and organised and so we thank Yvonne Adair; Tim Coughlan; Barbara Walshe; Jacinta De Paor; Mary Henihan and Ursula Fernee. We are particularly grateful to Linda Mullally for her work, patience and attention to detail, and to Claire Casey for her flexibility and responsiveness and always making herself available.

Our key note speakers were wonderful: Tim Chapman, Jake Lynch, Koulla Yiasouma and Niall Muldoon all brought both personal perspectives and a professional critique to our discussions, and in true restorative style, challenged us to think differently.

To our many presenters and facilitators, too many to name here, our thanks for your generosity in sharing your experiences and insights and to our plenary panel (Nuala Mc Keever, Tim Mairs, Aoife Slacke, Tony Kiely and Margaret O'Quigley) many thanks for your courage, honesty and wisdom.

And finally, all of us involved in planning and delivering this conference want to thank every delegate who turned up; participated; shared; questioned; affirmed; reflected; laughed; learned and connected. We wanted to offer a space where open, meaningful dialogue was facilitated and utilised. With your help, we think we did that and we are deeply grateful that you used it so well.

Marian Quinn
Chair
Restorative Practices Ireland

Janette Mc Knight
Chair
Restorative Justice Forum N.I.

Wednesday 25th May

7-9pm, Crowne Plaza Hotel

Opening Speeches

Janette McKnight, Restorative Justice Forum N.I.

The conference began a welcome speech from Janette, who also set out the background and developments leading to this conference. She emphasised the importance of building on existing strengths, structures and experiences, and the collaboration between the two planning organisations which is growing in strength and purpose.



Marian Quinn, Restorative Practices Ireland

Marian gave an overview of the conference plans, content and objectives. She then invited all participants to join an ice breaker to enable movement of delegates, introductions to new people, and to set the tone for the conference.



Participants played “Animal Families”, and after all “families” found each other, each group was given a quiz and task sheet. The quiz included questions about RP, as well as some fun, general knowledge questions. Each group was also asked to sing a song with a holiday theme!

The opening activities were readily engaged in, with delegates demonstrating great determination to win! This part of the evening ended on a note of high energy levels, strong engagement and positive connections.



Keynote Speakers

Koulla Yiasouma, N.I. Commissioner for Children and Young People



Koulla outlined her position as Commissioner and the purpose of her office as being to safeguard and promote the rights of children and young people and to have regard for those relevant provisions of the UNCRC. She conveyed that this is done through:

- Participation of children and young people;
- Policy, research and evidence; and
- Legal, investigations and case work.

The key priorities for the Commissioner's office are:

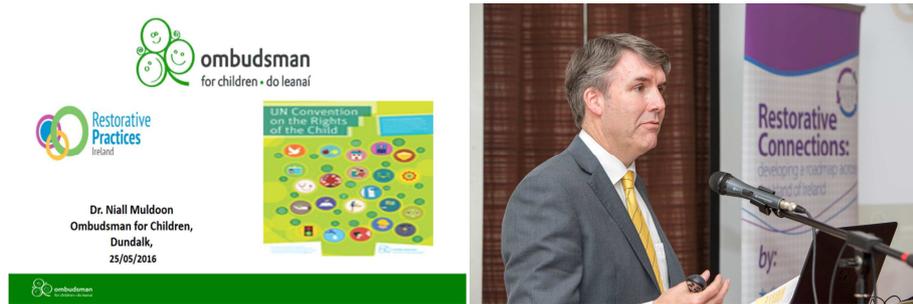
- Educational inequality;
- Child poverty; and
- Adolescent mental health and wellbeing.

She highlighted the concern for the continuing paramilitary 'justice' and finished her formal input with an oversight of the Commission's plan for inclusion of a Children and Young People's Action Plan and Strategy in the Programme for Government 2016 - 2021. Throughout her presentation, Koulla referred to her interest in restorative practices as it has developed over the past 16/17 years in N. Ireland. She conveyed her passion for young people and particularly those caught up in the Youth Justice system, emphasising that she is a "big fan" of RP, of peer mediation and the problem solving approach, and of Family Group Conferencing with children in care.

Koulla expressed some reservation with regards to RP within the Youth Justice (YJ) system, her opinion being that it works better with adults, who have a more developed and greater sense of the world around them. She went on to say that whilst the Criminal Justice Review understood the importance of having a separate YJ system, it did, to some extent, marginalise the Community Based Restorative Justice movement. She emphasised that the Diversionary RJ process should be done in the community, by the community – that it should be "light touch". Furthermore, she emphasised the importance of "timing" – i.e. that it is not in the best interests of the child to come before the person he /she has harmed, if the time is not right. Koulla went on to express her concern regarding the degree of neuro-disability amongst young people who come into conflict with the law, where empathy skills are the last thing to be developed.

Koulla concluded with her concern regarding the continued problems of mental ill-health, self-harm and suicide and emphasised the importance of RP/RJ being delivered at the diversionary stage, working in partnership with both the young person ("hearing what they have to say") and IN the community, WITH the community.

Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children R.o.I.



Niall began with a synopsis of his career to date, drawing attention to the importance of his experiences as a psychologist with the Granada Institute, which he described as “difficult, traumatic, hard work, assisting in open and honest conversations with offenders”, then with [CARI](#), working with children who experienced sexual abuse, work which was always challenging but “always about relationships”.

Niall presented a brief history of his Office, stressing the importance of the Ombudsman for Children's Presidential appointment, its independence of any minister or Government Department, and being accountable directly to the Oireachtas. Consulting children directly is his stated modus operandi with the objective of feeding these consultations directly into policy to prevent legislation based only on an adult perspective.

Approximately 1600 cases/complaints are addressed annually by his staff of 15. Cases are spread across children's experiences in education, family support, care and protection, health, justice, housing and planning. Education accounts for 47% of these. Embedding restorative thinking in responding to these cases is crucial and restorative processes need “to be lived and practised in policy, not left as paperwork”. “Restorative practices and children's rights go together” Niall said emphatically. He continued: “It behoves us as a society to create opportunities for restorative practices as much as possible”.

In youth justice, Niall believes that diversionary programmes should not be part of the “repression and retribution of criminal justice process”. He urges their adoption within a “light-touch, community-based approach, where the child feels safest”. He reminded us that a “child perpetrator's rights are not in competition with those of victims”. He also flinched at the terms “child perpetrator” and “victim” and believes that no criminal record should attach in cases where admission leads to full engagement in a restorative, rehabilitative process.

Regular workshops for young people are held in Niall's office. “Our children need to be listened to,” he says quite simply. He has successfully fed these expressed needs into the current Department of Education and Science anti-bullying policy and intends to continue these consultations during his tenure. At the core of his work is the belief that, as a social movement, restorative thinking continuously “provides opportunities which allow people to change”.

Thursday 26th May

9-5pm Dundalk I.T.

Keynote Speakers

Tim Chapman, Ulster University



Tim opened his presentation by stating the three key aims of the European Model on RJ with children and young people as:

1. Protecting rights;
2. Restoring Respect; and
3. Strengthening Relationships.

Tim explained that his job as research team leader was to look at practice during three study trips to Belgium, Northern Ireland and Finland. Whilst all countries were relatively small, they all had well developed restorative practices.

Tim explained that most English speaking people think that restorative justice comes from (1) New Zealand – based on Maori culture; (2) Australia (Terry O’Connell, “the cop from Wagga Wagga”); or (3) USA (e.g. Zehr, faith background/cross-cultural/therapeutic culture); and then later Britain and Ireland where it came from a more practical, pragmatic approach i.e. “does it reduce reoffending?”. All of these are English speaking countries, but what was going on in Europe?

Restorative Justice (RJ) is inspired by the way indigenous people have used it. The American version of Restorative Justice is about forgiveness/atonement/healing. However, the Maori would say “you’ve stolen some ideas and translated them into something very different that we do not recognise”. Tim pointed out that what is lacking in the western version of RJ is social theory, social cohesion and social inclusion. For example, how do we welcome in new people such as refugees whilst maintaining an inclusive/cohesive society? He suggests a new model needs to be developed to fit with society. European policy statements rarely enter into the British/Irish context of RJ. In Europe, social pedagogy is a huge consideration.

Tim asked why such a great idea continually faces resistance. In Northern Ireland, the Police Service and community restorative justice groups are working in partnership. Both are 100% committed to restorative justice yet both are frustrated that there seems to be no progress. Whilst the Lord Chief Justice, the Minister of Justice and the Chief Constable all believe in RJ, there is still resistance.

The European model asks this question and suggests that we need to talk about power. In the past we have been idealistic but we need to get real and discuss power dynamics. However, speaking of power is difficult as the strength of restorative justice is about the people in the room. Unlike court, there is no domination in restorative approaches. It provides a safe, respectful place where power and finance are left outside. To get such a space takes a lot of politics/strategy.

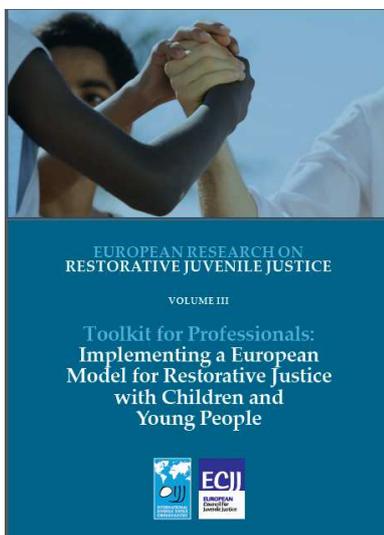
The research team looked at community based restorative justice, which has worked vibrantly in the community during times of conflict and is now viewed as peace-building. However, the state looked suspiciously at community restorative justice, and feeling threatened by it, introduced a great deal of regulation which in effect weakened it. State intervention isn't always useful, and can in fact undermine ground-up movements.

In terms of assessment of suitability who decides when young people are ready to participate in restorative approaches? Do we engage with that person to make that decision? Are we trying to be efficient rather than effective (budget bound)? The quality of youth justice is sliding due to these tensions.

RJ helps young people to learn and become empowered citizens. For example in community based restorative justice, where the restorative approach is adopted, it supports community cohesion at the same time as accepting/welcoming new people.

Tim's research team were in charge of identifying the features of European best practices and designing a toolkit for their effective implementation. The structure of the toolkit is:

- 1. Policy Guidelines:** This section analyses how legislation; policies on family support; policy on schools; training and overall coordination of the holistic policy framework can favour effective implementation of RJ, and how to measure effectiveness.
- 2. Guidelines for Schools:** This section outlines the functioning of restorative methods within schools, how the school administration, children and parents all can engage in these processes, and how they can be beneficial to learning goals.
- 3. Guidelines for the Criminal Justice System:** This section investigates which approach to the integration of RJ in the criminal justice system makes it accessible and efficient.
- 4. Guidelines for Practitioners:** This section addresses the specific role of the facilitator and it also addresses the specific process of different RJ measures, how and when people interact and with which objective.
- 5. Checklist for Action**



The toolkit is available for download from <http://www.ejic.org/eumodel>.

Jake Lynch, University of Sydney



Professor Jake Lynch, Director of the [Department of Peace and Conflict Studies \(DPACS\)](#) at the University of Sydney, Australia, joined the conference by Skype. Jake is an Executive Member of the Sydney Peace Foundation and Secretary General of the International Peace Research Association. He spoke about the development and influence of Peace Journalism.

Jake made the following points about Peace Journalism:

1. Journalism versus Peace Journalism;
2. Values and principles of peace journalism; and
3. Today's challenges for journalists, particularly when reporting on conflict.

Journalism is the activity of gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting news and information. Objectivity is generally seen as an important principle in quality journalism, as is the ability to produce a balanced nuanced report.

However the advent of rapid technologies, a 24 hour news hungry, competitive and demanding media environment, and unrealistic deadlines can pose challenges for objective, in-depth reporting of issues. A falling print readership and the rise of digital media tend to compress analysis often into a number of words, denying the complexity of perspectives especially in conflict areas.

Objectivity can be further compromised by media ownership monopolies, political and military agendas and corporate interests, all of whom want 'the media' to be on their side, to influence, project and protect their agenda. The presence of media in a conflict zone can be very influential and can be open to manipulation as parties try to demonise or sanctify 'their agenda'.

Peace Journalism is defined as taking place "when editors and reporters make choices - of what to report, and how to report it - that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict" (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005).

Originally conceived by eminent peace scholar, John Galtung, Peace Journalism investigates the complexity of conflict by looking at the backgrounds and contexts of conflicts; hears from all sides; explores hidden agendas and highlights ideas for peaceful co-existence. It is now a globally distributed reform movement of reporters, academics and activists from Africa to the Antipodes.

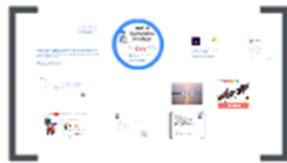
Peace Journalism consciously adopts an agenda for peace, this does not mean ignoring the different narratives and doing 'lazy journalism'; it provides a sound conflict analysis; it maps the pre-violence conflict; it identifies different perspectives, the structural and cultural causes of conflict which often lead to a deeper understanding of the cause, which can then open up unexpected paths towards dialogue and peace-making.

It tries to humanise all sides of those in conflict while at the same time is also prepared to interrogate and document deceit and suffering as well as peace initiatives from all parties. It also requires journalists to be aware of their own orientation in order not to lapse into simplifications where A is right and B is wrong. Is peace journalism restorative? Is it the job of journalism to be restorative? The basis for restorative practice is to hear the different voices, often competing voices in conflict, to ask the right questions of all parties enabling an insight into the complexity of issues potentially leading to a more holistic solution for all involved.

Workshops

Working in Schools: Connecting the Educational Dots

Michelle Stowe, Restorative Practices Practitioner, Trainer and Consultant and **Claire Matthews**, Restorative Practices Practitioner and Trainer, Advisor with the Professional Development Service for Teachers



Claire Matthews & Michelle Stowe

What were the key discussion points?

- Definition of R.P;
- Average relationship requires 3:1 (i.e. 3 positive interactions for every 1 negative):
 - Positives;
 - Proactive;
 - Building relationships;
 - Circle of influence – what can I do?
- What we focus on expands. Be aware of your thoughts;
- Motivation:
 - Take responsibility for your actions;
 - Emotional literacy;
 - Mind over matter: if you say it often enough, you start to believe it;
 - Compassion.
- Outcomes for schools:
 - Improving the emotional climate;
 - Better attendance.

What was identified in terms of practice related issues?

- Children's language difficulties, does the child really understand you?
- Restorative Practices offer a safe place to be honest, to be vulnerable and provides a language for expression;
- Don't leave relationships to chance!
- Cultivate the skills;
- The need to continually reflect on whether we are living our mission statement.

Were any policy issues identified or recommended?

- Shift in thinking and movement;
- NEPS – facilitating talks;
- RP is not in policy yet.
- Mechanics:
 - Smile;
 - Connect;

- Ask;
- Listen;
- Engage.

What challenges were discussed?

- Monitoring schools and how to maintain a sense of community.

Were any solutions identified?

- Involving parents from the start is vital;
- Small acts of goodness overwhelm the world;
- Practice modelling restorative approaches;
- RP gives us a framework to work with;
- Ripple effect of change – starting lots of conversations.

Was any action agreed? If so, who will lead it? Is there a timeline?

- Support it;
- Model it;
- Cultivate it.

Creating a Legacy: Community Journeys in Restorative Practice

Emma Wheatley, National College of Ireland and Harry Maguire, Community Restorative Justice Ireland



Harry Maguire & Emma Wheatley

What were the key discussion points?

- Identifying the setting for Restorative Practices;
- Pathways for connecting to the local community target group;
- Challenges and solutions experienced and benefits gained.

What was identified in terms of practice related issues?

- Identifying the stakeholders. Who is the victim? Offender? Community?
- Getting them involved, building interest;
- Gaining the support of statutory agencies;
- Extreme cases – those who are completely disengaged from society.

Were any policy issues identified or recommended?

- Lessons learned – create a legacy with policy changes;
- Change the normalisation culture by training people in early intervention;
- Relentless outreach is the only way to connect;
- Communities need to define what they think constitutes a normal healthy community;

- Change needs to be brought from the ground up with the support of statutory agencies.

What challenges were discussed?

- The need to develop in local communities;
- The erosion of local institutions that formerly stretched community values.

Were any solutions identified?

- Reinforce good practice;
- Problem solving approaches:
 - Building relationships;
 - People centred;
 - Keep people “out of the system”;
 - Community stakeholders;
 - Partnership with statutory agencies;
- Create capacity – Include ordinary people in a justice based system. Find out who has been affected and involve them in how to deal with it.

Was any action agreed?

- Gain the support of statutory agencies but with the community group driving the process when needed;
- Link to services and / or schools to teach RP. It should go hand in hand with education, literacy, numeracy and school attendance;
- Access to the schools or families who are most in need.

Adult Restorative Interventions

Roisin Muldoon, Probation Board N.I., **Niall McEvoy**, Probation Officer and **Karen Maitland**, Restorative Practitioner, N.I. Alternatives.



Roisin Muldoon, Niall McEvoy & Karen Maitland

What were the key discussion points:

- Two pilot schemes were designed in Northern Ireland to offer offenders a restorative experience via enhanced combination orders;
- The ECO pilot scheme is an alternative to a short custodial sentence. Restorative opportunities can also be offered to the offender during a period of deferment and post release;
- Different restorative interventions are offered;
- Case examples of the Human Faces programme in Newry were shared (CRJI);
- The workshop heard examples of what RJ looked like through this pilot (eg. gardening / catering project).

What was identified in terms of practice related issues?

- Judiciary are very receptive to the approach, and gaining the confidence of Judges is key at the initial stage;
- The importance of sharing narratives and the impact of the offender meeting their victims face to face;
- Dispelling the myth that RJ is “soft” and “fluffy”;
- Importance of facilitating relevant reparation and how this can contribute to offenders learning and future possibilities.

What challenges were discussed?

- How can the PBNI better engage with victims so that they can register for the Victim Information Scheme and therefore have the potential involvement in an RJ process?
- The issue of voluntarism - court- ordered RJ versus community organisations’ preference for voluntary referrals;
- Funding for RJ and community organisations;
- Ensuring that the needs of offenders and victims are balanced.

Were any solutions identified?

- It is important that the full EU Victims Directive is implemented.

A Restorative Circle: Why would Victims be Interested?

Barbara Walshe and Catherine O'Connell, Facing Forward.



What were the key discussion points?

- Background of Restorative Justice;
- Status of Victims in Criminal Justice System i.e. Witness to Crime for State;
- Victim/Survivor at the centre of RJ processes;
- Victims Directive and its implications;
- Research on Victims views in particular Sexual Trauma and Abuse; Restorative and Transformative Possibilities? (Keenan/Facing Forward Report);
- Circle work and its origins;
- Focus on repairing the harm and the silenced voice being heard;
- Need for Voice and Choice for Victims;
- The use of restorative circles for victims/survivors – Positives and Concerns.

What was identified in terms of practice related issues?

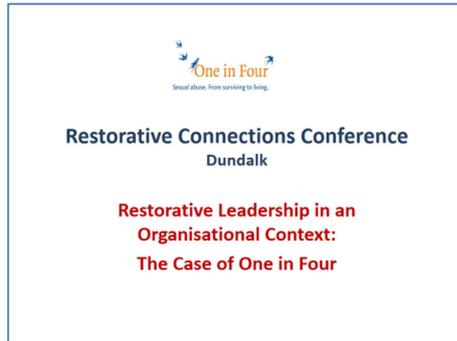
- Workshops based on particular type of circles to make it more focused;
- We need to focus more on Victim's needs;
- How to manage the need for safety, choice and empowerment of the victim how to manage these together. Not enough time to delve deeply into this area;
- Another seminar / full day or half day would be most welcome.

Were any policies identified or recommended?

- Victims/Survivors and organisations that support them need more information and opportunity to dialogue around restorative possibilities;
- Half Day / Full Day seminar on the value of restorative circles for victims, offenders and stakeholders of both groups to be delivered regularly.

Becoming a Restorative Organisation: The Case of One-in-Four

Maeve Lewis, One in Four



Maeve Lewis

What were the key discussion points?

- Information on One in Four;
- Organisational and interpersonal challenges;
- If you say your organisation is restorative, what does that look like / mean?

What was identified in terms of practice related issues?

- Difficulty availing of and /or accessing support services;
- Passive / aggressive behaviours / scapegoating;
- Self-care and reflection.

Were any policy issues identified or recommended?

- Review of agency policies and the introduction of an agency policy on RP is needed.

What challenges were discussed?

- Work place challenges as an employee. Culture of organisations;
- Work places – what we would like to keep and change;
- Sustainability of having R.P. as an embedded practice.

Were any solutions identified?

- Consultation with staff teams to look at current systems and practices and involving staff in the process of change;
- Reflection on RP at staff meetings and an annual review.

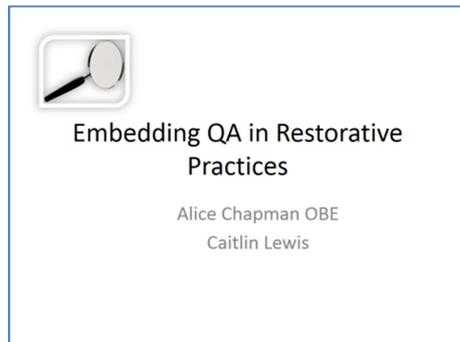
Was any action agreed? If so, who will lead it? Is there a timeline?

- Contact Maeve for further information;
- Agencies in the room can meet with like-minded colleagues to progress change.

Dialogue Spaces

Embedding and Quality Assuring Restorative Practices

Caitlin Lewis, Limerick CYPSC Restorative Practices Project and **Alice Chapman**, OBE



Alice Chapman & Caitlin Lewis

Unfortunately, there were no notes from this Dialogue Space.

Managing the Resistors

Yvonne Adair, Restorative Justice Forum, N.I. and **Leanne Keely**, Le Chéile Mentoring & Youth Justice Support Services



Yvonne Adair & Leanne Keely

What were the key discussion points?

- The group discussed issues relating to dealing with people who are resistant to, or don't believe in, the value of RP;
- Institutional resistance to using RP;
- Lack of knowledge around RP;
- Getting the courts to be more proactive and use RP.

What was identified in terms of practice related issues?

- The need to explain what RP is and the benefits of it;
- Find supportive people to talk to;
- Have safe spaces to discuss issues.

Were any policy issues identified or recommended?

- Get courts and people in power to buy into RP and highlight the cost effectiveness of using it.

What challenges were discussed?

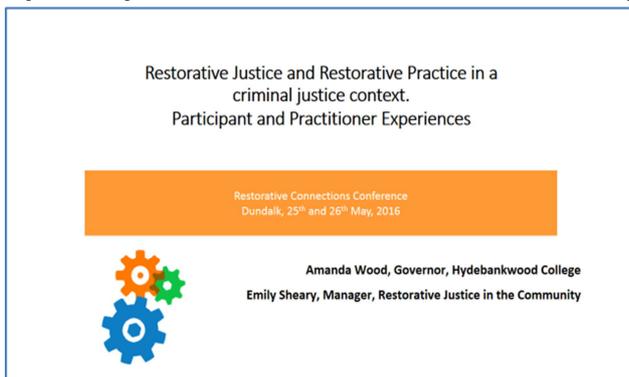
- Getting everyone in the organisation to buy in to RP;
- Dealing with people who don't believe in RP;
- Having a safe space to discuss issues around using RP and getting people to use it.

Were any solutions identified?

- More opportunities for peers working in RP/RJ to use problem solving circles to get ideas on how to deal with challenges they have implementing RP;
- To have more conference space which uses circles for discussion;
- Interactive circle with the speakers to discuss issues.

Restorative Justice and Restorative Practice in a Criminal Justice Context

Emily Sheary, Restorative Justice in the Community and Amanda Wood, Hydebank Wood College



Emily Sheary & Amanda Wood

What were the key discussion points?

- Where do we start?
- What works in supporting people who have offended?

What was identified in terms of practice related issues?

- Culture, particularly introducing RP/RJI to a male dominated culture;
- Need to develop the whole person and build self-esteem, not just "do time".

Were any policy issues identified or recommended?

- Need to co-ordinate policy around experiences and approaches between institutions to maintain good work when people move from youth to adult services or prison.

What challenges were discussed?

- Overcome cultural resistance;
- Continuity of experience when people in custody move from "youth to adult" where facilities can often move from an education based one to a more punitive regime;
- Challenges caused by organisational change.

Making Restorative Approaches “Business as Usual”

Claire Casey, Childhood Development Initiative and Christine Hunter, Probation Board N.I.



Claire Casey & Christine Hunter

What were the key discussion points?

- Victim impact work, RP being seen as part of the Criminal Justice System;
- In the Criminal Justice System the “protection of victims” robs a victim’s power;
- Recording commitment – have written action plans and a delivery group;
- Consider all of the work – what is already restorative?
- CDI has been implementing a Restorative Practices Programme since 2010. Lessons learned were shared and discussed.

What was identified in terms of practice related issues?

- Continuum of restorative approaches;
- Conduct a reflective practice circle with colleagues to investigate what practices they are already employing in their work;
- Figure out what is already restorative in your organisation;
- RP is an evidence based approach.

Were any policy issues identified or recommended?

- Schools voice – implementing RP as part of behaviour strategies;
- Human resources, policies and practices in-house need constant renewal;
- Sustainability.

What challenges were discussed?

- Detractors who are colleagues, who revert back to traditional approaches despite their assumed support for the work of RP;
- The assumption that if you are a “Restorative Organisation” you must have problems;
- Implementation science and sustainability.

Were any solutions identified?

- Creating teams through RP.

Was any action agreed? If so, who will lead it? Is there a timeline?

- RJ Forum to seek meeting with Justice Minister in Northern Ireland;
- Workshops should be organised for principals and deputy principals through the IPPN;

- In secondary school the wellbeing curriculum is a strategic opportunity for RP, in terms of providing training and awareness in RP;
- Engage with Richard Bruton, Minister for Education by making a submission on the education strategy.

Restorative Practices: Guilt and Shame

Martina Jordan, Consensus N.I. Restorative Solutions and **Andy Bray**, Le Chéile Mentoring & Youth Justice Support Services



Andy Bray & Martina Jordan

What were the key discussion points?

- Experience of shame;
- Understanding definitions of shame;
- Uses of shame in intervention;
- Clarifying the impact of offending behaviour or wrong doing.

What was identified in terms of practice related issues?

- Responsible use of shame in interventions;
- Importance of preparation before facilitating a Restorative Conference;
- Use of shame to encourage perpetrators to accept wrongfulness of certain actions;
- Understanding gender and shame;
- Managing shame.

What challenges were discussed?

- Use of shame with people who have limited capacity to understand what shame is, or in accepting the consequences of their behaviour;
- Having a common understanding of what shame is.

Were any solutions identified?

- Importance of preparation for victims and perpetrators prior to conferencing;
- Bringing people to the point of accepting responsibility for their behaviour;
- Focus on the harm caused.

Panel Discussion



Margaret O'Quigley, Tim Mairs & Aoife Slacke



Aoife Slacke, Tony Kiely & Nuala McKeever

Nuala Mc Keever facilitated a panel discussion four delegates, each with a unique perspective, to share their experiences with restorative approaches. The members of the Panel were **Margaret O'Quigley**, Support after Homicide and Facing Forward, **Aoife Slacke**, Vice Principal, St. Ultan's Primary School, **Tony Kiely**, Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) Ireland and **Tim Mairs**, Police Service Northern Ireland.

Nuala began by asking the panel how they initially got involved in RP.

Tony: I'm an ex-offender, spent 15 years in prison but I made a decision that I don't want to spend the rest of my life in prison. My chaplain introduced me to AVP. I've been using AVP in my life for 18 years now.

When you're behind the wall you forget why you're there. It's only when you come out you realise the damage you've done. My mother couldn't say to me what she needed to say while I was in there.

Aoife: We are in an area of high disadvantage in a unique setting where we blend care and education. We think about Maslow's hierarchy of needs and restorative practice fits really well into that. We look at children's social and emotional development. Children need to learn and be exposed to feelings and how they manifest in their bodies. The daily check-in is a huge success and children love the feelings check-in.

Everyone gets to speak in the circle, and everyone feels heard. We have 20 "restorative buddies" who sort out any problems in the playground. Their training helps them to know what they can sort themselves and what they need help with.

The children are agents of change, and we are there to assist them in growing and developing the skills they can use throughout life.

Margaret: What brought me to Facing Forward was working with families affected by homicide and seeing what RP could do for people. I believe RP can help people with their hurt.

Tim: What does policing in the community mean now when we are dealing with diverse, dynamic communities, with budgets reducing and needing to demonstrate how we're spending our money? Restorative justice gives us a way to manage all these different demands.

Nuala asked the panel to consider issues relating to power, as these had recurred during the morning presentations.

Margaret: Victims of homicide have lost their sense of identity and they are disempowered and we try to help them build that back up. You start with the basics. They're not able to function and so we hold the hope for them until they can hold it themselves, we allow them to be where they need to be.

People are left with things they can't answer, and they can't heal. Sometimes they just want to see the face of the person who killed their loved one; or ask why? ; or know what their loved one did in their last moments. They have nothing to hold onto so anything that helps them to let go, to accommodate, is vital.

Aoife: A lot of our parents are young and will have had negative experiences of school. We use first name terms and that takes away some of that power. Some parents want or expect a punishment if their child does wrong because that's how things have been managed, in the past but they are beginning to see how powerful it is to hear how children feel, the impact on each other, and recognise that we are all the same, without blame. By listening to them, children are going to grow into better people.

Tim: It's a big challenge to avoid looking for nails to hammer. We need to allow communities to define the problems, and develop place-based services. We need to ask people how we can help them to get there. We can inform them of what we do and see how we can help them on their journey.

Aoife: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children talks about rights and we talk to children about their responsibilities too, so that we see the relationships between these.

Tony: In the prison systems the staff are the only ones with power. Even now, police, probation officers, prison officers, they are all people with power to me. I have to tell myself to take power, not to hand it over to people. The media can put out stories about me. Stories that affect my family, children, the victim, so that can really stop me from moving on, being allowed to have a life.

If I can't live a normal life because of what I did, what have I to live for? Why let me out? I'd be better off in prison, because at least there, I knew what I was doing. There were boundaries and everyone understood what was expected.

Tim: We talk about ownership and power as if it's one or the other as if it's very black and white but of course it's not. I'd like to see communities which traditionally haven't welcomed the police, finding a way to really work with us, to see that we all have a role in improving safety. With increased trust, comes an increased openness to working together. We're looking to grow and cultivate trust and RP is ideal to helping that.

Margaret: For things to change for victims the whole justice system needs to change because they're lost in it. The Victim Directive isn't happening yet. The victim's voice needs to be heard.

Aoife: The only things we measure is literacy and numeracy scores, we need to look at children's social and emotional literacy too.

Tim: There isn't enough working together - services need to work together; and be less concerned about sharing information, or who is in charge.

Aoife: That's part of people letting go of power.

Feedback and Recommendations

A large amount of useful suggestions ranging over various topics were made for future events, as follows:

- The use of Skype was very good and should be considered for future events;
- RP as a mechanism to support integration into the community after prison and building a restorative community;
- Pros and cons of RJ in sexual abuse cases? Domestic violence cases?
- It would be great to have children speaking about RP in their daily lives;
- A seminar on education within the RP context;
- Involve a victim / offender who has been in an RP process;
- Could something be organised for “non-initiates”?
- Maybe give delegates the chance to present on their projects, to get it out of everyone’s systems!
- A “speed-dating” at the beginning so people can learn about each other’s work;
- Meetings in other parts of the country, west, south etc;
- Connections between youth and justice could be made;
- The next conference should be longer- two days and should include longer workshops i.e. two hours;
- It should include a session on emotional literacy / restorative language and emotional intelligence in general;
- It should involve a victim / offender or other people (including children) who have experienced restorative processes;
- Follow-on event focusing on issues related to power;
- A standalone seminar on RP in education (this came from several participants);
- Further exploration on managing guilt and shame;
- For joint events with a focus on RJ, the differences between the judicial system in N.I. and the R.O.I should be explained at the start of the event;
- More input from experts;
- More opportunities for discussion and interaction in both the big group and small group sessions;
- More time to network.

In addition the following recommendations were made for follow up actions:

- RJ Forum (NI) should meet the N.I. Minister for Justice to discuss experiences and benefits of RJ;
- Try to engage schools that are not using RP as a lot of us are already converted!!
- Get together some of the major players in Irish society who could influence the introduction of RP / RJ (into schools, in the justice system, health services etc.);
- Workshops for Principals and Deputy Principals through the IPPN;
- In secondary school the wellbeing curriculum is a strategic opportunity for RP, in terms of providing training and awareness in RP;
- Promote ratification of legislation regarding the EU Directive on victims’ rights;
- Building social capital and resilient communities.

Other suggestions for the future which were repeated twice or more also summarised here:

- A list of participants should be included in conference packs;
- Lunch choices should include salads.

Overall, the feedback from the evaluation sheets is extremely positive about the organisation, content and usefulness of the Conference. Key themes arising from the evaluations of the Conference include the following:

- The value of space to network, share and consider practice and how this can reenergise and motivate us;
- Benefits of meeting others working in this area, with a similar ethos or objectives;
- The relaxed atmosphere contributed to engagement and enjoyment;
- Opportunity to reengage with colleagues is very positive;
- The venue and logistical aspects of the conference were all very good;
- Discussions were challenging and left participants with new ideas, perspectives and possibilities.

Specific feedback on the conference can be summarised as follows:

- 91% of people reported that the Conference fully or mostly met their expectations, and 61% of these had their expectations fully met;
- Three quarters of the participants who completed evaluation forms felt that the duration of the Conference was ideal, while 26% (one quarter) felt it was too short;
- 99% of people reported that the choice of speakers was excellent or good.

In addition, the following feedback was provided:

- Really interesting, fantastic workshops and dialogue spaces;
- Well delivered, relaxed environment, so much content, room for further exploration, which can be pursued personally;
- Made me more informed and also made some connections;
- Was great to network and feel connected to like-minded people;
- Opportunity to listen to others and share experiences;
- I enjoyed hearing the experiences of other colleagues in various settings.
- Conversations in Workshops excellent – very enthusiastic people;
- Energy and buzz was excellent – speakers, skype and workshops were excellent;
- Excellent food for thought coupled with practical advice and strategies;
- It moved the RJ / RP Conversation on from Justice only;
- Found the conference hugely informative;
- Great atmosphere;
- Practitioners and academics - good mix;
- Great choice of keynote speakers;
- Could have listened to them all day;
- The addition of a Sydney speaker via internet was innovative and very interesting;

- I am re-energised;
- Great to have reinforced the power of conversation;
- Evening event great craic.

Inevitably, there were some areas of dissatisfaction, which primarily related to opportunities for engagement. Comments include:

- The facilitators not giving enough time/space for interaction and discussion by the participants;
- Facilitators promoting their own project/work at the expense of participant interaction and discussion; and
- Over-reliance by the facilitators on PowerPoint.

In addition, some delegates referenced the fact that there were varying levels of knowledge and experience amongst participants, but that this wasn't always acknowledged in the conference context. An introductory or explanatory session about core restorative principles would have been helpful for some.

The feedback indicates that many delegates left the conference with the motivation and commitment to progress specific actions either personally or professionally. These included commitment to follow up on or re-establish connections and included the following:

- Introduction of restorative approaches into work practices;
- Undertake training or upskilling, either personally or for colleagues;
- Develop restorative policies for the workplace;
- Engage management and getting buy-in to restorative approaches.

Importantly many comments related to a refreshed or newly found aspiration: *"Staying positive"*, *"never giving up"*, and *"having more faith"* were all noted.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the conference was effective in offering a welcoming, open space for dialogue, sharing and learning, and meeting others committed to restorative approaches. This is evidenced in the evaluation feedback and by the number of participants suggesting similar events in the future. Of particular note is the north-south attendance, and the value in exchanging these quite different experiences. The informality and good humour at the conference was also highlighted as having been an important aspect of enabling the conducive atmosphere. Finally, the venue itself offered a high quality setting, and accessible technology which added to the smooth running of the event.



Conference Organising Committee Members:

Marian Quinn, Mary Heenihan, Barbara Walshe, Linda Mullally, Janette McKnight, & Tim Coughlan

The RPI and RJFNI are hugely encouraged by the levels of engagement, the breadth of participation and the energy regarding the integration of restorative approaches. We are committed to continuing to work collaboratively, support developments and drive awareness and utilisation of this effective way of working. We will consider the recommendations and agree appropriate mechanisms for follow up and next steps. We look forward to meeting you on the next phase of this journey.