



Supporting staff teams working with vulnerable people

'The restorative work with our clients is built on the firm foundations of the restorative culture we have built within our own team'

Introduction

Staff teams who work with vulnerable people do a worthwhile but very challenging job. Their ability to do their job effectively relies in large measure on how well they can support themselves and each other. In order to maintain their resilience, stamina, patience and good humour to keep going in even the most challenging of circumstances staff must pull together to address each other's practical and emotional needs as caring professionals. Unmet need can cause people to behave in inappropriate ways - turning to verbal, and even physical violence as times. This is as true for staff as it is for service users.

There are times when conflicts and challenges do arise - between staff, between staff and residents or service users, and between the service users themselves. At this point the day-to-day skills staff use simply to get along can then be utilised in a structured way to respond in a way that continues to model the essential values and principles on which their whole service is based. These values and principles are likely to include respect, empathy, tolerance, understanding, inclusion, collaboration, and empowerment .

'Restorative Justice' is often associated with the world of criminal justice and meetings involving 'offenders' and 'victims'. In fact the field is developing rapidly and restorative practitioners have found themselves offering face to face conflict resolution, mediation in cases of mutual recrimination, problem-solving circles as well as formal circle meetings involving 'victim-offender and community supporter . In school and childrens' home settings especially these reactive processes are now being underpinned with a swathe of proactive measures that also draw on key restorative values, principles and skills.

Increasingly people have been applying these ideas to other institutional settings where staff and service users spend significant time together ,and between whom strong trusting relationships are key.

This booklet captures for the first time how restorative values, principles, skills and processes—proactive and reactive, may enhance the work of staff working with vulnerable adults.

It is innovative work and feedback on this document is very welcome so we can make it even better.

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Building the foundations for a restorative approach in a team Circle Time and Circle Meetings

A key restorative idea is that everyone has their own unique perspective on any given situation and everyone has a need to feel heard. Another key restorative principle is that a problem, a challenge, a conflict or a harmful incident in a sense 'belongs' to those most closely involved - they are the ones most affected and most able to find realistic and acceptable ways forward by working together.

This principle needs to permeate day-to-day practice throughout a home or unit. The best way to do this is to ensure that mechanisms are in place for everyone to voice their thoughts, feelings and needs when an issue is discussed that affects them. A good rule of thumb, with regards staff and service users is:

'Nothing about us without us'

Many groups have found that meeting regularly sitting in an open circle, and agreeing to certain 'circle protocols', ensures that everyone gets their chance to contribute, as well as a chance to hear from everyone else. A variety of different types of circle meetings are applicable within services working with vulnerable people, with adults as well as young people. They can be used to develop social and emotional skills, enhance self esteem, encourage co-operation and improve communication skills. They can also build a sense of community and belonging.

Circle meetings help to embed the key restorative principles and language in any community and ensure that teaching, learning and indeed day to day living and decision-making are informed by these core values and principles.



Circles can be used to identify what everyone needs to give of their best and how they would like to interact with others so that these needs are addressed. This becomes a mutually agreed internal code of conduct and encourages people to reflect on the impact of their own behaviour on everyone else present. This helps to develop empathy and mutual respect and ensures that everyone is supportively held to account if they fail to honour the agreement.

By establishing this culture amongst the team, staff also learn, experientially, the skills of holding others to account as appropriate, and with compassion. They are modelling this approach themselves and so there is integrity and congruence between how staff are amongst themselves and how they are with service users.

Five key restorative themes (see overleaf) inform the circles so that people get a chance to express their own experiences or perspectives, air their thoughts and feelings, share their needs and discuss how to meet these needs together. Circles can be used to review incidents affecting everyone present and can also be future-focussed, encouraging people to take greater responsibility for what happens in the Home or Unit, for their own contribution and behaviour, or in the planning of key events and projects

In addition to Circle Meetings, Circle Time, with its more structured format involving game-like activities, can be used to develop social and emotional skills, develop self-esteem, encourage co-operation and improve communication skills. Like circle meetings, Circle Time builds a sense of community and belonging and is appropriate for use with adults as well as young people.

Circle Meetings and Circle Time are the bedrock of any restorative environment. They are the mechanism by which social and emotional skills are developed and encouraged amongst residents/service users and are modelled by the staff. They help to embed the key restorative themes and language in any community and ensure that teaching, learning and indeed day to day living and decision-making are informed by restorative values and principles.



The five key restorative themes



Restorative Approaches are based on **5 key themes or ideas**, which underpin day to day interactions in any institution or organisation that have adopted this way of working:

Theme 1 – Appreciation and respect for everyone’s unique perspective Everyone has their own unique perspective on a situation or event and needs an opportunity to express this in order to feel respected, valued and listened to.

Theme 2 – Thoughts influence emotions, and emotions influence subsequent actions

What people think at any given moment influences how they feel at that moment, and these feelings inform how they behave. The thoughts and feelings are ‘beneath the surface’ and yet very important to understand.

Theme 3 - Empathy and consideration for others

Where there are conflicts, criminal behaviour, or disagreements, harm often results which can lead to negative emotions such as anger, hurt, fear, frustration and confusion and can damage relationships and connections between people. To live in harmony together people need empathy and consideration so they understand who is likely to be, or has been ,affected by their choice of action in any given situation and how.

Theme 4 – Identifying needs comes before identifying strategies to meet these needs

Whether someone has caused harm or been on the receiving end of harm they are likely to have similar needs. Until these needs are met the harm may not be repaired and relationships can remain damaged. Unmet needs can be the underlying cause for harmful behaviour in the first place and these need exploring as well to help people break the cycle of inappropriate behaviour. Identifying what people need precedes identifying strategies to meet these needs.

Theme 5 – Collective responsibility for the choices made and for their outcomes

It is the people affected by a situation or event who are best placed to identify what should happen so that everyone can move on, and so that the harm can be repaired. This ‘ownership’ of decision-making and problem-solving demonstrates respect and trust, develops pro-social skills and confidence and strengthens connections.

Day to day interactions with colleagues, residents and/or service users

Think before you react or speak

People who have developed an awareness of their own thoughts and feelings in response to a conflict or a behavioural incident are much more successful in responding to this incident. Maintaining an emotional objectivity where possible can make one more successful in dealing with a situation.

However this self-awareness helps with all inter-personal communication, and can help to make and maintain relationships as well as repair them. Before any interaction with another person, whether written or verbal, ask yourself a set of 'silent questions' before opening your mouth. The questions are based on the five key themes. This strategy soon becomes automatic - which is very important when our own feelings begin to run high.

This mental preparation should precede any interaction with a resident/service user - who will need your calm and empathic approach to help them struggle with their own negative thoughts and emotions.

	Theme	Language
1	Everyone has their own unique and equally valued perspective	What's happening from my own perspective? What am I seeing and hearing?
2	Our thoughts influence our emotions; our Emotions influence our behaviour	What's going through my mind ? What sense am I making of this? How is this interpretation affecting my own emotional response?
3	Empathy and consideration	Who am I affecting?
4	Needs and unmet needs	What do I need right now- is it appropriate to bring these needs into the equation right now?
5	Collective responsibility for the choices made and for their outcomes	Will I invite the others here to consider my needs as well? Can I support them to find ways forward without my interference, or do I need extra support myself?

Our belief systems affect what we tell ourselves and can interfere with this emotional objectivity. When someone says something with which we disagree, or that sounds critical, or if they behave angrily or aggressively it helps if we try and suspend judgement and instead ask ourselves:

I wonder what's going on for this person?

I wonder what he/she is thinking right now and what they might be feeling?

I wonder whether they have been affected by something that's happened earlier ?

I wonder what he/she need s in order to put things right and move on?

I wonder how I can support him/her ?

Think of an angry person like an angry hedgehog - all those prickles are protecting a soft underbelly of hurt, pain and unmet need. As professional adults we have a duty of care and a responsibility to ensure that our own prickles do not come up in response.



Every incident of conflict or challenge in the home or unit becomes a learning opportunity for everyone. Staff can model non-violent, non-authoritarian ways to react, modelling an alternative to the 'might is right, power is control' mindset that can sadly be the perception , if not the reality , in environments where there is an innate power imbalance between those more and those less in control of their circumstances.

How do staff address conflicts at reception or around the building?

- Do all staff have training in non-violent communication and conflict de-escalation?
- How do staff respond restoratively to inappropriate language or behaviour ?
- Who decides what is 'inappropriate' or 'acceptable' behaviour in the first place?

Restorative language

In the chart below you will find a series of questions that relate to each of the key restorative themes for use when something has happened that has caused upset.

All together they provide a framework for interaction which we call 'Restorative Enquiry'. This can be used in its entirety in the preparation you would do with individuals prior to a face-to-face meeting when conflicts have arisen. They are also embedded in these mediation meetings and provide a framework for the meeting itself.

However, as the following pages will illustrate you do not need to use all the questions at the same time. Different situations may require different questions. Different people may respond better to one than another. Use your judgement and your common sense.

This framework has proved invaluable for building trust and rapport. A calm respectful tone and slow, non-threatening, relaxed body language are crucial here.

The language below is not set in concrete and clearly many people would find the phrase suggested below hard to understand, and also a challenge to answer. This is why we offer the theme first—so that staff can feel confident in adapting the language they use whilst still staying true to the essence of the theme.

Some people may need visual prompts; the use of story-boards; puppets or other ways to express what is going on inside.

	Theme	Language
1	Everyone has their own unique and equally valued perspective	What's happened from your perspective?
2	Our thoughts influence our emotions; our emotions influence our behaviour	What was going through your mind and how were you feeling at the time ? And since?
3	Empathy and consideration	Who has been affected and how?
4	Needs and unmet needs	What do you need so that things can be put right and everyone can move on?
5	Collective responsibility for the choices made and for their outcomes	How can you (all) address these various needs (together)?

Responding to anti-social or unhelpful behaviours amongst the team or from residents/service users, in the workplace, in individual sessions or group work programmes

A) when you are less involved yourself ...

(Nevertheless always touch base with yourself first and begin with the silent questions on page 7)

‘Check your body language, your expression and your tone before you open your mouth and say:

‘I see you (describe the behaviour accurately and without judgement)

Then add - *‘I’m wondering what’s up?’* (Theme 1)

OR

‘I’m wondering what’s going through your head just now? How are you today?’ (Theme 2)

OR

‘I’m wondering what you need from me to help you get started?’ (Theme 4)

OR

‘I’m wondering what you could do to help yourself and get started on this task.’ (Theme 5)

A potentially more inflammatory response would be:

‘I’m wondering who you think is being affected by your behaviour’ (Theme 3)

Use at your peril, and certainly only after some of the responses above that show empathy and respect for the person themselves.

Then try -

‘What do you need to get back on track ?’ (Theme 4)

‘What might they others affected need from you?’ (Theme 4)

B) Affective ‘ conversations using ‘I’ messages when you yourself are involved.

There are times when a person is unwilling, unready or unable to respond to this respectful response. They may need some time out. Or you may need to engage in a restorative conversation sharing your own thoughts, feelings and needs, when a person breaks a previously made agreement, for example.

What follows is known as an ‘I’ message - it is an adaptation from various sources, incorporating the five key restorative themes of the Transforming Conflict model of restorative practice.

Theme 1 Sharing your own unique perspective

When I see (or when I hear)

Theme 2 Explaining your interpretation and your feelings

I tell myself and so I feel

Theme 3 Inviting empathy and consideration

This is how I am affected. Others here may be as well.

Theme 4 Explaining your own unmet needs

My need right now is for

Theme 5 Requesting their support in meeting your needs

Would you be willing to

As explained on the previous page—the words themselves are not fixed .It is the intention behind each step that matters, and everyone will find their own way to express these intentions. Some people find that simply rehearsing the steps in their head before they open their mouth helps them to communicate more effectively.

TOP TIPS FOR 'I' MESSAGES

When expressing your feelings keep them 'pure'. Try to avoid adjectives ending in – **ed** as people will often hear them as accusations. This is called 'guilt - tripping' and is not a restorative way to communicate.

E.g. I feel disappointed may be heard as - You have disappointed me.

I feel embarrassed may be heard as - You have embarrassed me

I feel let down may be heard as - You have let me down

When expressing your needs make sure you use 'needs; and not suggest or impose 'strategies'



Example of when an **I message** could be used:

Graffiti on waiting room walls

"When I see young people writing on the walls

I tell myself this is maybe not a safe or nice place for young people to be.

and so I feel anxious

I think about other people who may feel unsafe if there is graffiti all over the walls or not want to wait here

My need right now is for co-operation and reassurance

Would you be willing to stop and think about how we can make the waiting room a safe space for everyone to wait ?

Need or strategy – what's the difference?

Common, maybe even universal, human needs include:

<i>love</i>	<i>respect</i>	<i>tolerance</i>
<i>patience</i>	<i>understanding</i>	<i>empathy</i>
<i>kindness</i>	<i>honesty</i>	<i>connection</i>
<i>recognition</i>	<i>appreciation</i>	<i>consideration</i>
<i>affirmation</i>	<i>support</i>	<i>encouragement</i>
<i>clarity</i>	<i>cooperation</i>	<i>hope</i>
<i>positivity</i>		

When things have gone wrong between people these needs can become more acute.

Strategies include phrases like:

I need you to

I need people to

I need John to

John needs to

and they are often covert ways of saying what people **should, ought to** or **must** do

Transforming Conflict's model of restorative engagement is based on the idea that it is more helpful to identify what everyone needs are **for** first, and then discuss together the strategies that will address these needs.

The work of Marshall Rosenberg and his model of Non-Violent Communication (NVC) has greatly inspired this model. We thank him.

When things go wrong - a Restorative Response to conflicts and disciplinary issues and grievances

It is so common in environments where people spend time together for misunderstandings and conflicts to arise, which leave two or more people feeling angry, hurt, resentful, anxious or even afraid.

When in conflict people need

- a chance to tell their side of the story - their experience
- to express their feelings,
- to understand better how the situation happened
- to understand how it can be avoided another time,
- to feel understood by the others involved
- an acknowledgement of the harm caused, if not an apology
- to find a way to move on and feel better about themselves.

If conflicts are dealt with in a way that get these needs met then those involved can repair the damage done to their connections with the others involved or even build connections where there were none previously. They feel fairly treated and respected, since they have been trusted to find solutions for themselves and put things right in their own way. Because they have been listened to, people in conflict are more ready to listen to others' perspectives and emotional responses, and so empathy is developed. This can change the choices made in future situations, as mutual respect and consideration develops.

Judgemental or punitive responses, on the other hand

- cause resentment rather than reflection,
- are rarely considered fair;
- do not repair relationships between those in conflict and indeed can make them worse;
- leave those blamed feeling bad about themselves leading to further alienation
- can often leave those who are expected to act punitively feeling uncomfortable and frustrated – and wishing there were an alternative.
- Even non-punitive responses can be unhelpful if they are imposed, albeit in a well-meaning way. The key to a successful outcome is if it is arrived at by those people actually involved in the conflict.

Restorative Conversations

When you deal with harmful behaviour or conflict is your response already informed by the five key restorative themes -

Do you invite everyone involved to give you their perspective? yes/no

Do you express sincere curiosity about their thoughts, feelings and needs during the incident and since? yes/no

Do you ask them to think who else may have been affected or involved? yes/no

Do you invite them to think about what their own needs are for closure and repair? yes/no

Do you encourage them to identify strategies for meeting their own needs and the needs of others affected in order to put things right and to avoid similar situations happening again? yes/no

Do you listen actively, and demonstrate impartiality, by refraining from:

using your body or tone to threaten or show disapproval? yes/no

giving your own opinion about what has happened? * yes/no

taking sides? yes/no

assuming you know what has happened? yes/no

telling people what to do? yes/no

offering unasked- for advice? yes/no

insisting people apologise and make up? yes/no

* if you have been personally affected then of course you will want to share your own perspective in turn.

Restorative meetings

Restorative meetings may be convened for all sorts of reasons. They work best when all attendees have opted to be there and have been in some way affected by what has happened. Everyone will have had a private restorative meeting beforehand with the person who will facilitate the whole meeting. These one-to-one meetings can help the facilitator develop trust and rapport with each person, assess whether there are any risks to a face-to-face meetings, and address any concerns or fears that individuals have about meeting. This careful preparation is generally enough to ensure that everyone is willing to attend.

Our model of restorative meeting does not differentiate between mediation -when people are in conflict , possibly both blaming the other for what has gone wrong between them - and conferencing - when one or more people have caused harm to others by their actions. We have found it unnecessary to develop two separate processes although certain questions may need adapting to suit the circumstances.

In our experience it can be unhelpful to make assumptions about who may be responsible for the harm at the outset - so often in youth settings the more one finds out the less clear-cut a situation can become. We have found that any framework for a meeting needs to be robust and flexible enough to adapt to a changing situation as more of the story emerges.

When conflict happens it is so often the case that the more one finds out the less clear-cut a situation can become. In our experience it can be unhelpful to make assumptions about who may be responsible for the harm at the outset.

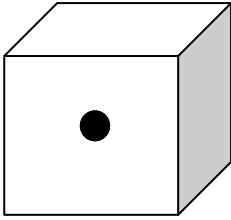
In cases where there is a clear cut case of harmed and harmer we would still suggest keeping an open mind as to the background to the offence and not to make assumptions about how the event unfolded and using the restorative enquiry to go through the events that led up to and including the event.

The only difference with larger meetings is that people who were not present at the incident cannot answer the question 'what happened?' from first-hand experience, so instead they are asked

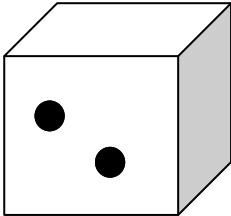
'How did you first hear about what has happened?'

Their experience is that of hearing about and responding to what has happened and these people need to be given a chance to talk about this personal experience, and how they have personally been affected.

We use dice to explain the many different ways a restorative approach can be used:

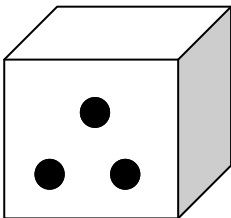


A single dot stands for you ,and what is going on inside your head! Your beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and needs influence all you do and say. Cultivate a 'restorative' mindset!



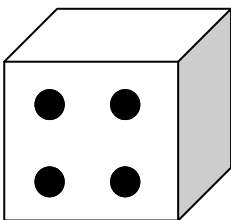
Two dots = two people

There are several ways in which a restorative approach can be useful when you are engaging with one other person:
Restorative Enquiry; restorative chats and conversation; interviews

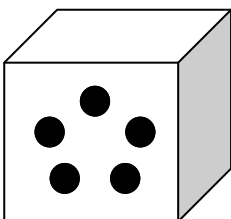


Three dots = one facilitator and two people

Mediation/mini-conferencing informal and spontaneous, or formal and preceded by restorative enquiry with each individual privately
Useful for supporting those in conflict around the building

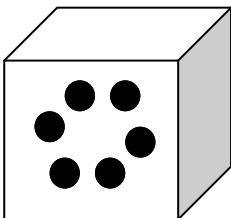


The dots on these next 3 dice are indicative of larger numbers and are symbolic **Four dots = one facilitator and a small group**
Small group problem solving - resident groups; service users' groups; staff disputes



Five dots = one/two facilitators plus key players and supporters (possibly parents/carers)

Restorative conference - possibly involving parents/carers/ supporters of key players and also members of staff



Six dots = facilitator/circle keeper and group, any age or size

Circles - circle time; staff meetings; parent circles community problem-solving circles

BOOKS this is just to get you started:

General introduction

Liebmann, M. (2007) *Restorative Justice - How it Works* London; Jessica Kingsley Publishers
Wallis, P & Tudor B. (2007) *The Pocket Guide to Restorative Justice* London; Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Youth Justice

Keen S, Lott T. & Wallis P (2010) *Why Me?: A Programme for Children and Young People Who Have Experienced Victimization* London; Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Wallis P (2010) *Are You Okay?- A Practical Guide to Helping Young Victims of Crime* London; Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Wallis P, Aldington, C. & Liebmann, M. (2009) *What Have I Done? - A Victim Empathy Programme for Young People* London; Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Wallis, P & Tudor, B (2007) *The Pocket Guide to Restorative Justice*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Schools

Hopkins, B. (2004) *Just Schools, a whole school approach to restorative justice*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Hopkins, B. (2011) *The Restorative Classroom* London: Optimus Publishing Ltd.

Warren, C. (2008) *Restoring the Balance* Lewisham: LAMP

Warren, C. & Williams, S. (2008) *Restoring the Balance 2* Lewisham: LAMP

Residential Care

Hopkins, B. (2009) *Just Care; Restorative justice approaches to working with children in public care*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Hayden, C. & Gough D. (2010) *Implementing restorative justice in children's residential care* Bristol: The Policy Press

Prisons

Newell, T. & Edgar, K. (2006) *Restorative Justice in Prisons: A Guide to Making It Happen* Winchester Waterside Press

Schwartz, S. & Boodell, D. (2009) *Dreams from the Monster Factory: A Tale of Prison, Redemption and One Woman's Fight to Restore Justice to All*. Scribner Book Company.

General books about conflict resolution

Rosenberg, M. B. (2005) *Non-Violent Communication, A Language of Life*. Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer Press.

Stewart, S. (1998) *Conflict Resolution, A foundation guide*. Winchester: Waterside Press.

Stone, D. Patton, B. & Heen, S. (1999) *Difficult Conversations, How to discuss what matters most*. Now York: Michael Joseph, Viking Penguin

Useful websites

Restorative Justice Council

www.restorativejustice.org.uk

Transforming Conflict National Centre for Restorative Approaches in Youth Settings

www.transformingconflict.org

“Far from being a ‘soft option’ the restorative approach is predicated on an expectation that when people get things wrong they put them right. However how things are put right is agreed by all involved, rather than solutions or amends being imposed by others. It is also not an easy option for those intervening, as it requires an honest look at the context in which things have gone wrong, and a willingness to consider what may have contributed to things going wrong”.

Belinda Hopkins



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