

# RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

## Putting the Victim First

September 2010

South Yorkshire Police has recently introduced an alternative way to deal with first-time offences, called restorative justice. Under the South Yorkshire Restorative Justice Programme (SYRJP), South Yorkshire Police in partnership with the Local Criminal Justice Board are introducing Restorative justice to policing. Restorative justice is a victim-centred approach. It gives victims of crime and antisocial behaviour the opportunity to meet the offender and ask why they committed the crime, and the chance to explain to the offender how the crime has effected them. The victim is able to influence how the offender should be punished to meet their needs and those of the community. Restorative justice is not a soft option. Offenders have to listen to how their crimes have affected the victim so they realise the consequences of their actions and have to face up to them. It is difficult for offenders to have to face their victims and account for their actions in front of them. This is one of the reasons Restorative justice is successful in stopping people from committing crimes again.

### Why is SYP taking this approach?

There are many benefits in taking this approach:

1. For those affected by crime, it puts the victim in the driving seat, empowering them to influence resolutions that put right the harm that has been caused and are meaningful to them.
2. For the offender, restorative justice can be an alternative to prosecution. For example, it may not always be appropriate to put first time offenders through the criminal justice system for minor offences. It can avoid the unnecessary criminalisation of our children and young people, thereby not spoiling their chances in life but making them realise the consequences of their actions.
3. Restorative justice is an impactful procedure and is successful in deterring people from re-offending.
4. Restorative justice enables officers to deal with local issues in a way that keeps them visible and at the heart of the communities, as opposed to being in the police station filling in forms and paperwork.

### When will it be implemented?

Restorative justice is being implemented now across South Yorkshire.

Since March 2010, more than 1600 front line staff, including Police Officers, Community Support Officers and Special Constables have been trained in restorative justice and are using it, where appropriate, to deal with local crime and first time offenders.

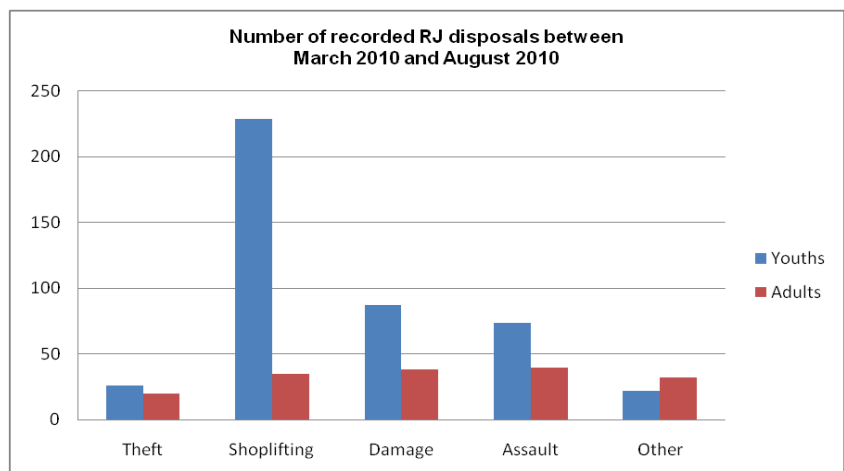
Over 425 cases have now been resolved using this method across the county and, early indications are that it is working with great success. The chart below shows a monthly breakdown of those disposals and by offence type.

### District Champions

Ch/Insp. Simon Verrall – Sheffield  
Detective Ch/Insp.  
Craig Robinson – Rotherham  
Ch/Insp. Neil Thomas – Doncaster  
Ch/Insp. Shaun Morley - Barnsley

### What's Next?

By the end of the year, South Yorkshire Police hopes to have officers trained in 'Restorative Conferencing', enabling them to look into matters with a more in depth approach and therefore resolve them with a satisfactory outcome to all, that will prevent further issues developing. More on this in the future.



The RJ Team are situated at  
Unit 1, Europa Court, Sheffield S9 1XE.

They are: Superintendent Steph Widdowson, Paulette Forbes Williams, Chief Inspector Gary Boughen, PC Mark Winrow, Victoria Hunt and can be contacted on (0114) 2202020

## Successful cases of restorative justice across South Yorkshire

### BARNSELEY

Restorative justice was used in Barnsley after a youngster became involved in inappropriate behaviour when a game got out of hand. Police stepped in when a 14-year-old girl admitted assaulting and trying to pull down the swimming shorts of a 12-year-old boy at a local swimming pool.

The boy was upset and did not want to talk to the girl face-to-face about her actions. Instead, police arranged for the girl to answer written questions from the boy, such as, 'Why did you do it?' and 'How would you feel if someone did it to you?'

She told him: "It was a game that got out of hand. I didn't really think about what I was doing. I was listening to my friends telling me to do it. I am really sorry for what I did to you."

Before the scheme was introduced, the girl may have ended up in court with a conviction for assault. Now she can learn from her mistakes and not let it affect her future.

PCSO Neil Makinson, said: "Restorative justice is an excellent way for young people in particular to be held accountable for their actions by those they have offended against. "It allows the victim to have their say in how the wrong doer is dealt with, whilst also allowing the offender the opportunity to see the error of their ways before offending behaviour becomes a pattern in their lives."

### ROTHERHAM

A young Brinsworth resident paid his dues through restorative justice after an incident at school with a fellow pupil.

The 16-year-old male from Brinsworth Comprehensive School punched another Year 11 male injuring his nose. PC Jeannine Waller investigated; the offender hadn't been in trouble before, had a good school record.

The two teenagers, with parental permission, met with the officer and the deputy head of the school.

The victim wanted to know why he was punched, wanted an apology and punishment for the attacker. The offender said his actions had been fuelled by a misunderstanding, he apologised and the victim was happy.

The 16-year-old offender was a promising boxer and had entered a competition. As reparation he did not take part in the competition and or go to the gym for a month and was excluded from school for 6 weeks.

Wayne Barsby from the school said: "We're really enthusiastic about restorative justice and it works really well in school. There have been no further incidents and both lads now get on with each other."

### SHEFFIELD

A 17-year-old male benefited from restorative justice after an impulsive reaction landed him in trouble. The teenager damaged a window at Crystal Peaks Shopping Centre.

PC Dan Garside said: "The lad had not been in trouble before and was truly remorseful. He punched the window after seeing his ex-girlfriend with a new lad. The teenager had an apprenticeship and was anxious this could jeopardise his career." The case was referred to the Sheffield Community Justice Panel, who agreed the 17-year-old should complete cleaning duties and contribute to the cost of replacement glass. The teenager said: "I wasn't thinking straight when I smashed the glass and knew I'd made a big mistake. So I was okay with my punishment as I was relieved that I hadn't messed up my job."

Lee Greenwood from Crystal Peaks Shopping Centre said: "It was good to be involved in deciding what should happen to the teenager. We were satisfied he regretted his actions. The lad remains a regular customer with his friends."

South Yorkshire Police officers use restorative justice as an alternative to putting first-time offenders through the criminal justice system. Before the scheme was introduced, the teenager may have ended up in court with a conviction for criminal damage, which could have affected his future.

### DONCASTER

Restorative justice was used after a 15-year-old girl was caught shoplifting in Doncaster town centre.

The girl, from Stainforth visited Boots, took just over £80 of cosmetics and attempted to leave but security staff stopped her. PC Malcolm Quinn agreed with the shop staff that Restorative Justice was appropriate for the first-time offender. A meeting was held at the store with the officer, security staff and the teenager (with parental consent). It was decided the girl had to write an apology.

PC Quinn said: "The girl was very upset, embarrassed and sorry for her actions. Her parents were completely on-board and grateful their daughter would not be criminalised." "The teenager had started college, was keen to do well and appreciated the chance to redeem herself."

Marilyn Rason from Boots said: "We received the written apology from the girl and were pleased she had the opportunity to learn from her mistake."

The girl has not been in trouble since and is continuing her studies.