



HOW DO I START THE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROCESS?

In County Durham and Darlington Restorative Justice is delivered by the Victim Care and Advice Service (VCAS).

VCAS are a free and confidential service. That is funded by the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner.

To find out how VCAS can help please contact a member of the team by phone or email.

Freephone: 0800 138 2020
Email: victimcare@durham-pcc.gov.uk

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

We promise that all information you provide to us - verbally or in writing - will be kept confidential within the Victim Care and Advice Service. This information will not be shared externally unless you expressly instruct us to do so or unless we are required to under law.

We will take our time to establish the best way to communicate with you; for example, which email address, phone number or other contact method you want us to use. We will take any other steps that you need us to take to protect your privacy.



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RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

IN COUNTY DURHAM & DARLINGTON

Restorative Justice is about bringing victims and their offenders together to talk about what happened and explain how the crime has affected them. Taking part can be a very positive experience for everyone involved.

WHAT IS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE?

Some people may find the idea of meeting or being in contact with the person who committed a crime against them a strange thing to do. But many victims of crime have chosen to communicate with the criminal through a process called Restorative Justice providing many positive outcomes.

Restorative Justice gives victims a chance to explain to offenders the real impact of their crime, to get answers to their questions, and, sometimes, an apology. It gives victims a voice and the chance to play a part in preventing others from becoming a victim of crime. It can be part of repairing the damage and can help the victim to move on.

Restorative Justice also provides a way for offenders to face up to their actions, understand the impact it has had on others and, where possible, make amends. In this way, RJ can help stop offenders from re-offending.



HOW IT WORKS

Restorative Justice is voluntary for both the victim and offender and only takes place if a trained Restorative Justice facilitator decides that it would be safe and suitable.

Restorative Justice can be approached in different ways. Sometimes it is appropriate for a victim and offender to meet face-to-face, other times they can communicate by passing messages back and forth through a trained facilitator.

The key thing is that it helps both the victim and the offender.

Before a Restorative approach can take place:

- the offender must accept responsibility for the crime
- both the victim and the offender must be willing to participate
- a Restorative Justice facilitator must decide it is safe for both the victim and offender to be involved in the process.

The facilitator will prepare both the victim and offender ahead of the meeting and during the meeting will guide the participants in a conversation about the crime and its impact. The facilitator makes sure that both the victim and the offender get a chance to speak and that everyone is comfortable throughout the meeting.

Restorative approaches can be used for any offence and can take place at any stage of the justice process.

IF I AM A VICTIM - HOW WILL IT HELP ME?

Restorative Justice gives you a voice - it can give you the answers you have been looking for. You might want to know why the crime happened to you, and you may want an assurance that you will not be harmed again by the same person. You can talk about how the crime has affected you and your family, allowing the offender to truly understand the impact of their crime.

IF I AM AN OFFENDER - HOW WILL IT HELP ME?

Restorative Justice can help you to move on from crime and re-build your life. It gives you an opportunity to understand how your actions have affected other people so that you don't re-offend in the future. Restorative Justice will only work if you have accepted responsibility for your actions. You should be ready to explore ways to make amends for the harm you have caused. Meeting your victim can be an emotional experience but we can help you to prepare for it.