

From Restorative Justice to Restorative Culture

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Abstract. *In its original conception Restorative Justice was an innovative process adopted to address criminal behaviour in such a way as to reduce re-offending and, subsequently, to increase victim satisfaction. In the past 20 years the philosophy, values, principles, skills and applications of restorative justice have been applied in all manner of hitherto unforeseen ways. This paper reflects on the benefits to staff teams themselves of adopting a restorative culture in their own workplaces and the role of their senior managers and leaders in modelling this new way of thinking and behaving. Reference is made to developments in schools, the author's main area of experience and expertise, and a major source of international inspiration for the growth of other restorative milieus. The lessons learnt in implementing culture change in school settings is being applied more widely as an increasing number of public sector employees in particular learn about what restorative practice can do not only for their daily interactions with clients and service users but also in-house, for themselves as a team.*

Keywords : restorative justice, restorative practice, culture transformation

Introduction

Much has been written about the impact of Restorative Justice¹ interventions on those involved in situations where there has been a criminal offence, wrongdoing, harm or anti-social behaviour. The literature about Restorative Justice has, for the last 20 years, been of a pioneering nature – making the case for what was initially an innovative approach to offending behaviour ; debating what is and isn't 'restorative', discussing its limitations and its versatility. This paper differs in that the main focus of attention is not on criminal justice services, nor simply on responsive 'victim-offender' interventions. Instead it considers the contribution that restorative approaches can make in public sector services, in institutions, organizations and indeed in most public or private work places. More specifically it pays attention to the impact on staff in these environments and also on the leadership teams when a restorative culture is adopted, not just for client/service user interaction but internally and systemically – as 'the way we do things around here'.

The paper begins with some historical context to link where I believe the field is now to where it has come from. This paper identifies how Restorative Justice and its philosophy, practice and application, have developed in the last 20 years from its roots in the criminal

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justice system to its adaptation and application in a wide range of settings. It identifies the values, principles and practice of Restorative Justice that has been so inspiring for so many people and have led to these wider applications. It reflects on the challenges in how we now talk about 'Restorative Justice' when these wider applications often involve *pro-active* relationship and community building, and so are not 'restorative' in the truer sense of the word, and nor are they necessarily being applied in traditionally 'justice' settings.

The paper also describes the development in thinking amongst pioneer trainers and training providers identifying the need not only for high quality practice from restorative facilitators but the vital role played by the milieu or environment in which the practice is happening. These developments have been in large measure inspired by those of us working in schools and care settings. We have sought to identify how to support these environments in ensuring that the interventions we have trained them in, also have a longer term, lasting impact on those involved. In effect we have had to become not only trainers of skills, but also change agents, supporting communities in culture transformation, and having to learn much from other sectors in order to do this effectively. Our experiences have shown us that the day-to-day thinking and practice within an institution is key to this. Furthermore, most research and evaluation of pioneering initiatives have indicated the important role of the senior leaders, and this will be further explored.

There is a risk of diluting what Restorative Justice actually means and why it offers something very unique. In the UK therefore it has been helpful to have clear guidelines and quality standards to which everyone can adhere even when moving beyond Restorative Justice's original roots. A later section of the paper therefore affirms and recognises the importance of external validation at local government and government level to support the development and growth of restorative practice, and the value of nationally agreed and respected norms. For this section I also draw on my experience of working closely with the Restorative Justice Council (RJC)² for many years.³

The paper concludes with a reflection, in England and Wales at least, on the growth of interest in becoming a restorative institution (school, care home, prison etc.), a restorative town or city and even a restorative county or local authority. The work to support and sustain the enthusiasm for these culture transformations is in its infancy. What will be the key elements of success?

From process to practice

As a concept and as a process Restorative Justice was first developed and applied in the criminal justice field in the late 1990's and early 2000's, building on work that had already been done in the field of victim-offender mediation (Hopkins, 2004; Liebmann, 2007). Initial inspiration for practice in the UK came from New Zealand via Australia, but elsewhere practice has its origins in a variety of community practices (Boyes-Watson, Pranis, 2010; Pranis et al., 2003). In essence a restorative approach to offending behaviour is one in which the repair of relationships and of the harm caused takes precedence over assigning blame and applying a sanction. This mind-set shift *from* what is often a deep-seated attachment to punishment as a response to wrongdoing (Roberts, Hough, 2002), to a desire for healing and closure, following genuine connection and communication between all those involved, is at once simple and yet profound.

Initial definitions of Restorative Justice focused specifically on the process involving those affected by a crime or wrongdoing. One by Marshall was also adopted by the United Nations Crime Congress and is still widely used.

... a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future. (Marshall, 1998, 32)

This definition did not specify nor explain the process referred to, and around the world restorative processes differ. However, this initial attempt at a definition did link Restorative Justice to the notion of a victim-offender encounter. The choice or choices of practice often depended on the source of the inspiration for the approach in that part of the world. In New Zealand the main process used in the criminal justice field, integral to the youth justice process, is the family group conference (FGC), inspired by community practice amongst Maori peoples. In Australia a process called a restorative conference has been developed, taking inspiration from the New Zealand FGC model but distinct from it. This model relies on the facilitator following a scripted process (Moore, O'Connell, 1994). In the USA and Canada several models are used, including face-to-face victim-offender mediation and sentencing circles. The former has developed since the innovative work by two youth justice workers in Hamilton, Ontario in the 1970's and the latter was initially developed by Judge Barry Stewart inspired by First Nation community circle practices. Kay Pranis has continued to develop the Circle practice model in communities and in schools (Boyes-Watson, Pranis, 2014 ; Pranis et al., 2003). The Australian scripted model, used by Real Justice (O'Connell et al., 1999) has also influenced the work done by the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP). This organisation has global reach and so their model is being disseminated widely. In Europe there is much diversity, as different countries turn to existing models for inspiration and also to new emerging models. As well as most of the models mentioned above, the work of Dominic Barter using a blend of restorative circling with Nonviolent Communication (Rosenberg, 1999) is proving increasingly popular for example. This model has developed from Barter's work with people from the favelas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Initially the main driver for the adoption of Restorative Justice as a process, whichever process was chosen, had been the desire to re-think our response to crime and wrong-doing (Zehr, 1990). However, right from the outset there have been those who identified the value of the process not simply as a one-off response to an isolated incident, but as a mindset shift in thinking about incidents when someone is perceived as having caused harm to others. Pioneering Police Forces in the UK in the mid-90's, for example, not only began training their operational teams to use restorative conferencing with the general public, but also encouraged the use of restorative responses for addressing internal complaints and grievances. Thus already there was an acceptance that there was more to Restorative Justice than simply one process, and more potential beneficiaries than victims, offenders and their communities of support.

It became increasingly obvious to those working in schools and care homes that there was a need for consistency across the institution in the way staff addressed behavioural issues, whether minor or major (Hopkins, 2004 ; Hopkins, 2009). Using a restorative conference for a serious incident whilst still responding punitively to playground conflict or disruption caused confusion among staff and students. For young people to embrace the approach they needed to trust that staff would respond restoratively if they, the students, were honest about what they had done. The logic of the restorative response necessitated a wholesale review of the way staff thought about their role as carers and educators, the way they thought about 'wrongdoing' and the way they communicated with young people on a daily basis. For some schools this has also involved reviewing their approach to pedagogy. There began a movement away from a simple process, and more to a way of thinking differently and doing things differently, an overarching (or underpinning) consistent approach.

These developments in thinking did not simply occur in one country. During the early and mid 2000's, across the globe, in the UK (Hendry, 2009 ; Hopkins, 2004 ; Warren, 2004 ;

Warren, Williams, 2007), New Zealand (The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2004), Australia (Blood, 2005 ; Blood, Thorsborne, 2005 ; Thorsborne, Vinegrad, 2002 ; Thorsborne, Vinegrad, 2004), the USA (Riestenberg, 2000 ; Riestenberg, 2001 ; Stutzman Amstutz, Mullet, 2005) and Canada (Morrison, 2005a, 2005b) many people were thinking along similar lines. Personal experiences were backed up by research (Kane et al., 2007 ; Skinnis et al., 2009) which indicated that for restorative interventions to be effective in the long-term everyone in a school needed to subscribe to the principles and values underpinning the intervention and be using these principles day-to-day in their interactions. McCold (2002) refers to this as a restorative milieu and the term ‘whole-school restorative approach’ was often used by trainers and researchers, without their necessarily being a consensus on what this might mean. Working towards a ‘whole-school approach’ could mean all manner of things – an issue this paper will return to.

It was the pioneering work done in schools and children’s care homes (this latter in England and Wales primarily) that has driven the innovative culture transformation work that is now just beginning across other public sector services and indeed in the private sector as well. Thus over the last ten years or so the Restorative Justice field has developed far beyond its original roots and continues to develop. It is no longer simply advocated as a response to crime and anti-social behaviour. The Restorative Justice Council in the UK now has a different definition on its website under the title – What is Restorative Justice ?

Restorative justice enables victims to meet or communicate with their offender to explain the real impact of the crime. This is part of a wider field called restorative practice.

Restorative practice can be used anywhere to prevent conflict, build relationships and repair harm by enabling people to communicate effectively and positively. Restorative practice is increasingly being used in schools, children’s services, workplaces, hospitals, communities and the criminal justice system.

Restorative practice can involve both a proactive approach to preventing harm and conflict and activities that repair harm where conflicts have already arisen. (RJC, 2015)

The challenges of moving from definitions involving a process to those explaining practice

Research has now established the efficacy of Restorative Justice (sic) and this helps to explain the increasing support for it as a practice in many countries (Campbell et al., 2006 ; Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary et al., 2011 ; RJC, 2006 ; Shapland et al., 2008). However even in the criminal justice field there is still a long way to go before it becomes the norm across the world, despite its endorsement by the United Nations (UN, 2006). For this reason there are some people who are concerned about the widening of the term ‘restorative’ beyond the Justice domain and fear that this will lead to a dilution of its uniqueness and make it impossible to define it in a way that can bring about reform. Walgrave warns :

Paradoxically, one could even say that the most important threat to restorative justice is the enthusiasm with which it is being implemented. Enthusiasm leads to poorly thought-out implementation, an overestimation of possibilities, negligence of legal rights, and the blurring of the concepts and confusion with the aims and limits of restorative justice. (Walgrave, 2003, ix)

However the field is moving ahead despite such views, and bodies like the European Forum for Restorative Justice, initially founded to bring about criminal justice reform in Europe, may find that despite its initial founding vision it too can embrace the natural evolution of what many are calling a new social movement or even a new social science (Wachtel, 2013). Nevertheless the warning is apposite – the onus is on those ‘widening the net’ to be clear what they mean by ‘restorative practice’.

Widening the net of Restorative Justice to include day to day interactions both at home and at work is not a completely novel idea. Strang and Braithwaite (2001) asserted that it is only by widening the vision to encompass families, schools and the community that the true potential of restorative justice will be realised in the criminal justice field :

If the social movement for restorative justice is about more than just changing the practices of states, if it can have an impact on an entire culture, if it actually succeeds in changing families and schools towards more restorative practices, the effects on crime should be much more considerable. (Strang, Braithwaite, 2001, 6)

Sullivan and Tifft (2001) also had a vision of a just and non-violent society in which people use the principles and practices not only in their working lives but also at home and with friends. Furthermore they saw in restorative justice direct links to a vision of social justice ; in their view, unequal and divisive systems and structures which currently cause pain and suffering are just as harmful as offending and anti-social behaviour and as such have no place in a truly restorative society. Wachtel and McCold (2001) offered a model based on four basic approaches to relationships, initially called the Social Discipline Window, that could be applied in a variety of settings.

These ideas have not had as much traction as they might have had until recently – perhaps because of the tendency to focus on the responsive potential of restorative practice and the demand for training by people seeking more effective strategies to address conflicts and challenges. The message that essential changes might be needed across a whole institution, and in every individual within that institution, have been more difficult to put across – not least because of the time commitment for such a culture change and the associated investment of funding.

However, the debate about what constitutes restorative *practice* and what it means to be a restorative organisation or institution is now gaining traction, certainly in the UK. Linked to these wider issues is the question of what it means to *act restoratively* or to *be restorative*. All of these challenges face those working as trainers and, by extension, as consultants in culture change management, with individual institutions such as schools and, more excitingly, across the public services in whole towns, counties or local government jurisdictions. This has become the new frontier for pioneers in the field. These are exciting times.

Values, principles and core beliefs

Bearing in mind Walgrave's concern (2003) that restorative practitioners working beyond the justice system run the risk of diluting the meaning of 'restorative' and 'restorative practice', it is important that there is a shared understanding of what the terms mean. The term 'Restorative Justice', to define a process, is now more often being replaced by terms like 'Restorative Practice' or 'Approach', to define not only a whole range of interactions, proactive as well as responsive, but even a whole culture within a workplace or across a community. Howard Zehr, one of the founding fathers of Restorative Justice, reminds us of the vital need to always remain in touch with these core values as we move forward (Zehr, 2004). Following on from the values are the core principles informing practice and these too are fundamental. These values and principles of restorative justice define the philosophy and ethos which, in turn, inform the skills needed to behave in a 'restorative' way (Hopkins, 2004). Clarity in all of these areas will help guard against dilution and also will enable practitioners to explain what is unique and special about restorative practice and what it can bring to an organization, institution or workplace setting.

The underlying values and principles⁴ of restorative justice cited in the literature include, variously : openness, self-determination, collaboration, flexibility, equality, non-discrimination, non-violence, fairness, respect, empowerment, trust, honesty, voluntarism, healing, personal accountability, inclusiveness, empathy and accountability (Barton, 2003 ; Quill, Wynne, 1993 ; RJC, 2004 ; Wallis, 2014). These principles tend towards a ‘restorative mindset’ (Hopkins, 2011, 34) when facilitating the process :

- a recognition that every individual will have their own unique perspective or interpretation on any given situation or event and need the chance to be heard ;
- an appreciation of the importance of enabling people to express their thoughts, feelings and needs and listen to the thoughts, feelings and needs of others ;
- the focus on the impact or affect of what has happened (or may be going to happen, in situations where a restorative approach is used in advance of making a decision) ;
- the belief that it is those most affected by an issue who are the ones best placed to find a way forward, and that people respond best when involved in decision-making about issues that affect them ;
- the trust that by listening to each other, and taking the time to reflect on what they have understood is important to everyone there ; in this way people are able to make decisions that reflect their respect and empathy for each other.

The values, principles and skills already mentioned are not unique to restorative practice. What is unique perhaps is the *combination* of these values, principles, skills and practices – and it is this combination that has proved to be such an inspiration to practitioners in a wide variety of fields.

Implementing a restorative milieu into an institution, organisation or workplace

People want to know what it will look like, sound like and feel like to work in a restorative environment or culture. What will they do or say ? How will that influence the way they think, their beliefs and attitudes ? Indeed – what, if anything, do they need to change ? Over the last 15 years I have been seeking in my own practice ways to clarify these issues. I have studied the core values and principles and reflected on the practices that have developed from these. With input from others⁵ I identified 5 essential beliefs that seem common to all models of practice. These 5 core beliefs have provided a framework or ‘mindset’, of language and of practice that many people are finding exceptionally useful. I have begin to call it the 5 : 5 : 5 model – five core beliefs, five areas of language, five steps or stages in a range of restorative processes that can be used for all manner of interactions and interventions (Hopkins, 2009 ; Hopkins, 2011 ; Hopkins, 2012).

What people need is a clear, consistent, replicable, and teachable framework for their practice, enabling people to feel secure that they understand ‘the way we do things around here’ in their daily work. These core beliefs can be integrated into a wide range of restorative interventions and practices, as each in turn informs a step in any process that could be described as restorative.

It is not the only model or framework, but it is significant that there have been positive responses to the model from many very different quarters. One very experienced businesswoman, with many years in the construction industry, thanked me for articulating for the first time what had helped to make her so successful with people all her working life. Another, from a senior police officer was that this model encapsulated what modern-day policing should be all about.

The first Core Belief⁶ is that 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. In school classrooms for example, there would be...

...opportunities for individual expression of views, ideas and experiences and also opportunities for listening to the views, ideas and experiences of others are features of a restorative classroom. Young people learn that it is not only acceptable that people have differing views, but predictable and interesting that they will. They develop the quality of curiosity and wonder, fascinated to discover that even when people have shared an apparently identical experience they will all have made something different of it. Differences of opinion become opportunities for learning how to negotiate, make compromise, work towards consensus or even agree to differ. (Hopkins, 2011, 34)

In staffrooms and other workplaces staff will be developing the skill of non-judgemental active listening and creating mechanisms whereby everyone feels listened to – regular staff circles amongst senior leadership teams, departmental heads, and also circles both within and across staff hierarchies (and the hierarchies themselves may become flatter as there is a greater sense of consultation, collaboration and involvement in decision-making when it involves the entire work force team), buddying systems, staff counselling, peer-to-peer mentoring schemes. Gradually, an organization/institution or workplace can develop a culture of listening and acceptance, in which every employee matters and everyone's ideas are valued. Employees' need for recognition, acceptance and appreciation are met.

The second Core Belief is that 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. To engage authentically with other people we need to 'lower the waterline' and share our own thoughts and feelings and also be curious about theirs, whilst also respecting their right to privacy if they choose. Regular meetings in circles, as small teams or departments as well as in larger groups when appropriate, can create the trust and safety for people to 'lower their waterline' and share more authentically. Work teams can aspire to become more emotionally literate, recognising that although their thoughts and feelings are invisible to others they nevertheless help to explain what they do and say. Colleagues can aspire to make what is invisible visible by talking about, and listening out for, thoughts and feelings and recognizing them as important.

The third Core Belief holds that empathy and consideration for others is crucial to the health and wellbeing of us all. Everything we do is likely to have an impact on those around us. If we have respect for those around us we need to take this impact into account before we act. Critical questions to bear in mind include :

- How do my actions impact on others ?
- How will others be affected if I do such and such ?
- How were others affected when I did such and such ?

At one level we are not necessarily directly responsible for others' emotional reactions and responses to our behaviour. Individuals interpret what they see and hear differently, and this interpretation or story inevitably impacts on the feelings that arise, as the previous belief makes clear. Nevertheless there is a degree to which our actions and words do inevitably impact on others' wellbeing and as social beings our own health and wellbeing depends in large measure on the health and wellbeing of those around us. We enjoy doing what we can to promote the happiness of others and from a pure efficiency angle, people work much better if their emotional needs are being met, as the next core belief will endorse. If our actions – words or deeds – have caused harm or upset then, if we are to maintain our relationship with those around us, we need to be willing to listen to how what we have done has affected others and, if appropriate, seek to put things right. Offices, teams, workplaces can strive to be caring and considerate towards each other, knowing that what is said or done has an effect on everyone else. There can be a collective will to become more mindful of one another.

The fourth Core Belief is that our unmet needs drive our behaviour. If our physical and emotional needs are met we are able to function at our best – and if they are not we are

under-resourced and less able to cope – especially in challenging situations. Potentially harmful behaviours such as violent language or actions are likely to be expressions of unmet needs. I am deeply grateful to the inspiration from Marshall Rosenberg (1999) founder of the Nonviolent Communication Movement for this aspect of our framework.

Any piece of work I begin with a staff team, in any workplace, I start by inviting people to identify the needs they have to be able to give of their best at work, using a collection of laminated cards to help initially. The vocabulary of needs can be challenging at first as people often associate the word need with the verb ‘need to’ (as in – I should, I ought, I must) or as a command – others need to ... ; she/he needs to ... Gradually however it is possible to develop an awareness of, and a vocabulary for our universal human needs – things like respect, appreciation, recognition, belonging, understanding and so on. Whether someone has caused harm or has 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. Furthermore, without the unmet needs being addressed and more constructive ways found to meet them in the future, behaviour change is unlikely.

The fifth and final Core Belief on which we have based our restorative practice model is that the opportunity to engage in empathic collaborative problem-solving affirms and empowers people. People respond best when they are involved in making decisions that affect them, and make constructive decisions when they are in touch with their own and others’ thoughts, feelings and needs. In the workplace, people respond much better, and feel more motivated and enthused in their work if they feel involved and committed to a shared vision, collectively arrived at. The working atmosphere in a team can dramatically change when people believe that it is up to everyone to make their team, their service, their company, their school etc. the best it can be. There can be a very positive transformation when staff agrees to plan together, make decisions together, solve problems together, and help each other out if things go wrong. Within this collective agreement there is a high degree of shared responsibility, commitment, accountability and expectation. A restorative working environment is not only a nice place to work, it is a place where the job gets done to the best of everyone’s ability and everyone is striving for high quality performance for the benefit of those whom the staff serves.

The 5 Core Beliefs help explain how a Restorative Culture could be achieved and we also use them as the basis for our five-step model of restorative interaction. These five steps would be familiar to most restorative practitioners in whatever domain they practice :

1. Following initial introductions and explanations people share their experiences of what has happened.
2. Everyone shares what was going through their mind and how these thoughts impacted on their emotional responses.
3. Everyone then reflects on the impact of what has happened, who has been affected and how.
4. People reflect on what needs had been unmet or ignored at the time of the incident and what they need to move on.
5. Using these needs as the basis for discussion everyone collaborates to find mutually acceptable ways forward.⁷

This structure can be helpful in face-to-face discussions, interpersonal conflict resolution, and mediation between two people and also in group-problem-solving and formal encounters between those harmed and those responsible for the harm. The 5-step structure can also be used pro-actively for planning. However, we emphasize that each one of the core beliefs and areas of language have significance and worth in themselves, as a way to lead one’s life and interact with others.

From external use for service users/community, to internal staff procedures/practices

A clear framework based on the five core beliefs described above has helped staff teams to understand how their own internal staff culture can be enhanced as well as their day-to-day interactions with those whom they serve. These core beliefs, as well as certain practices such as regular meetings in circles for team building and problem-solving, enable staff in any working environment to understand how they can benefit as a team from the restorative philosophy. This can come as a surprise to staff who may have attended an initial training course thinking they were going to learn some new tools to use in their job. Teaching staff may attend wanting to improve their behaviour management skills. Care staff may attend to enhance their skill in dealing with very challenging behaviour and find alternative responses to calling in the police which can have long-term detrimental impact on a looked-after young person. Youth justice staff may be seeking the skills to simply be able to facilitate a restorative conference between a young offender and those whom they have adversely affected by an anti-social or criminal act.

Of course this skill development is also important. However, trainers increasingly encourage participants to make use of their skills and the processes they learn for both internal staff support, as well as externally. Nonviolent Communication is often integrated by many restorative trainers and practitioners into their restorative work as they discover the overlaps with this approach. The ability to engage in a mutually respectful dialogue, in which both sides are mindful of the others' and their own thoughts, feelings and needs, can enhance working relationships. A staff culture of positivity and empowerment can impact on effectiveness and productivity. A willingness to listen to all sides when things go wrong, rather than assign blame, can transform team dynamics. Staff skilled in mediation can be invaluable when teams or individuals within the team experience a conflict.

Regular use of the Circle Process can help staff through challenging times or when decisions need to be made. In a Circle Process all voices are heard in turn around the Circle, with ground rules agreed to ensure people have their say without interruption or challenge, and this can develop better links between staff members, ensure everyone feels valued and included. This kind of Circle can be used on a regular basis simply to build a sense of belonging, with staff teams using simple 'check-ins' and 'check-outs' each day so that people know how best to support one another. Within such a culture, high expectations can also be nourished as everyone feels more ready to take responsibility and be accountable for their actions, knowing that when mistakes are made they will be addressed in a restorative manner and viewed as valuable learning experiences.

The importance of regular Circle meetings is agreed upon almost universally by advocates of whole-institution restorative approaches – for example, all the pioneers in school work already cited would agree on this. It is the basis on which all other restorative practice can flourish, and in fact may well make the more responsive processes less necessary. If these staff teams or classes or service user circles are used to establish in part group norms through the identification of what everyone needs to give of their best, and if the circle participants can subsequently reach a consensus about how best to address these needs, then people will feel happier, safer and more fulfilled, and less likely to get into conflicts or act in negative ways towards others.

Applying restorative principles and practice across the public sector

In recent years, training in a range of restorative approaches has been offered in the UK, not only to justice professionals and in schools, but also to residential social workers in children's homes, to foster careers and those who support them, to local authority behaviour support staff (including educational psychologists, school welfare officers, school attendance officers and those supporting young people with special needs), to those who work with more needy and vulnerable families, to community support staff working as mediators in communities, to youth workers and to staff working in sheltered accommodation for vulnerable people. In all of these examples it is clear that the original formulation of a restorative process as a 'victim-offender' encounter is not a valid one, but the essential values, skills and principles of a restorative approach still apply. Staffs vary in the aspect which they find most innovative. 'Lightbulb' moments vary, from group to group and from person to person. For some it is the move away from being judgmental or punitive when their clients behave in negative or disruptive ways. For others it is the notion that they no longer need to feel responsible for solving their clients' problems. Facilitating meetings in a way that those most affected are trusted and empowered to find ways forward for themselves offers a way forward that previously had not been thought possible.

However, one of the most powerful learning points for those new to restorative practice is the gradual realisation that the biggest change in the practice will come about through individual personal development and embodying the changes not only in their professional lives but also at a personal level, with parents, family and friends. This is the point at which people realise that restorative practice is not just something one *does*, but it is a way of *being* in the world.

From 'being on-board' to 'knowing how to drive the bus' – the importance for leaders of being the change they want to see

Experiences with staff teams where this 'in-house' use of restorative values, skills and practice have been largely positive in my own experience and that of my own team. Many people who attend training courses are struggling at work because of staff issues and the lack of collegiality. They welcome a chance to reflect on their own needs to be able to give of their best. However, many foresee an obstacle to the adoption of this staff care model – and this obstacle is the resistance they anticipate from their middle and senior managers, who have in the past been conspicuously missing from training courses. Those who have attended attest to the vital importance to their leaders having the same training.

In school research, the evidence suggests that unless the Head teacher is 'on board' with the new approach the initiative will fail (Kane et al., 2007). This has also been my personal experience. However, it is timely to reflect on what the term 'on board' actually means. For some schools this has meant the acquiescence of the Head, who has delegated the initiative to a senior member of the team. In fact, the responsibility to drive the initiative forward has been at times laid at the door of a middle manager or perhaps someone even lower down the pecking order. Often this has come about due to a misunderstanding of what Restorative Practice is about – the association with the justice concept and the belief that what is at stake is a fresh look at behaviour management.

In this 'Restorative Justice as a new tool' model (sic), a few individuals are trained in restorative facilitation – whether between 2 people or a larger group involving the family/

careers of young people and possibly members of staff. These people are called upon following an incident but most of the time the rest of the staff manage their own classrooms as they have always done, with more or less use of authority and sanctions, depending on their personal style and character. In such a model, the culture of the school is barely affected by the training. Life goes on as usual – the values and principles implicit in the restorative meetings that those trained are using may only be limited to the meetings themselves. Indeed even those trained may only subscribe to the restorative values and principles when actually facilitating a meeting or conference.

Some schools do much better than this – offering training to as many middle managers and senior leaders as possible – and gradually bringing a fresh approach to incidents, with the necessary changes in policy, procedure and even timetabling to enable people to make time for the conversations and meetings that need to be held to help people resolve difficulties. Taking it a stage further, some schools are embracing the idea that the real impact of a restorative approach is when the values, skills and principles are taught and modeled by staff in classrooms, and become part of the way they teach. Adopting a restorative mindset would encourage teachers to respond to any behaviours that have negative ripple effects to ask themselves what may be the underlying experience of the young person and what may be the unmet needs driving their behaviour. Modeling an empathic response provides other young people with an ideal model of how to respond when another behaves in ways they feel unhappy about – ideal education for the future workplace and for their lives in relationship with others and as parents.

To return to the acceptance that the Head or Principle must be ‘on board’ for all these practices to develop, there is another factor that has at times been ignored. This is the model of behaviour given by the Head himself or herself and the way that the staff team are encouraged to be with one another. It is not enough for a senior manager or leader to be ‘on board’ – they need to know how to drive the bus themselves (to extend the ‘on board’ analogy). A genuinely restorative leader would not be the only driver of course – and here the analogy breaks down somewhat. The model they provide is one of a democratic, empathic listener, willing to listen to the team, able to support colleagues in conflict, ready to mediate between colleagues and parents/careers if need be, and modeling the use of Circle processes big and small with external agencies, visitors and the School Board.

This argument has been framed in terms of a school experience, but the argument holds good for any institution, organisation or workplace which on the one hand is seeking to offer restorative responses to its service users/clients/customers, whilst also seeking to create a positive and effective staff culture. This ‘lightbulb’ moment is an important first step for leaders to experience, and realise that if they want to truly embrace a restorative culture in their workplaces then the change needs to start with themselves. I have recently facilitated leadership seminars for head-teachers, senior police officers, the executive team of a local authority (local government) responsible for housing, environment, education, finance, staff development and elected members of the local government cabinet. In every case the personal learning was immense and yet the ‘content’ of what we covered in each seminar was relatively limited – no PowerPoint slides, no lectures, very few handouts. Instead we all sat in a circle, developing safety and trust so that people could reflect on what they each needed to be able to give of their best, reflect on whether these needs were currently being met and how, as a team, they could work in ways that ensured these needs would be met – so that they could then lead their own teams effectively, modelling restorative thinking and skills. These days involved developing trust and safety in the room and some groups were more ready for this than others. Where there has been interpersonal conflict there may need to be some mediation and healing before future-focused discussions can be had.

A case study – Monmouth Comprehensive School, South Wales

An on-going experience I can provide of a school, its staff and the senior leadership team embracing an institution-wide restorative approach is one secondary school in Monmouth, South Wales. I have personally had the privilege of being the trainer and consultant working with this school alongside the Deputy Head for the last 5 years. Last year, the school became the first secondary school to be awarded the RJC's Quality Mark in recognition of its restorative culture and effective practice.⁸

- The impact of the approach can be noted in part from recent statistics after the academic year 2013-2014, collected by the school :
- Exclusions are down by 93%, with only 13 days lost last year due to exclusion.
- Detentions and merit awards are no longer used as extrinsic behaviour control mechanisms and instead young people are encouraged to develop internal self-regulation.
- Beyond the school gates, referrals to the Youth Offending Service are down 78% and anti-social behaviour attributable to young people in the town is down by 48%.
- In the academic year 2013-2014 the school had its best ever results at both advanced (A) level (national exams taken at age of 17/18) and general certificate of school education (GCSE) level (exams taken at age of 16). The school attributes these results in part to the restorative culture which ensures that the needs of staff and students are attended, and thus has enabled everyone to give of their best. They also point to the deepening of engagement with the subject matter through restorative pedagogy. In the academic year 2014-2015, 99% of students attained A* – C grades at GCSE, an exceptional achievement and yet further improvement on last year.
- Staff absenteeism with a stress-related tag is down by over 60%, which represents a saving of over £60,000 – a testimony to how beneficial the approach can be for staff health and wellbeing.
- Attendance is at its highest ever level – over 94% and rising.

For the purposes of this paper the most significant statistic is the one showing the reduction in absenteeism due to stress amongst staff. Put simply, a restorative environment is good for staff health and well-being. With more skills to address challenges, staff are feeling more confident and more able to do their job of teaching. The use of regular staff circles ensures they feel supported and heard by their colleagues. The modelling of restorative skills (including empathic listening) by the senior leadership team helps staff to feel valued and cared for. The Head Teacher's door is never closed, for example. If he is in, then anyone is welcome to pop in for a chat.

External validation, quality standards, accreditation and quality marks

As Restorative Practices evolve, it is vital that there are regulatory bodies supporting best practices and ensuring that there is a consistency and an agreement about what constitutes restorative thinking, its values, principles and applications. This can ensure that wherever restorative practice is developed people can be confident that those offering training and consultancy are regulated, but also that what is being called 'restorative' bears some relation to what is generally accepted as best practice.

A major factor in the growth of restorative practice in the UK, both in the criminal justice sector and in the wider public sector, including in schools and care settings has, in my view, been the tireless work by the Restorative Justice Council in providing this national bench-mark of best practice, developing initially Principles of Best Practice (RJC, 2004), and then, in

consultation with a wide group of professionals over several years, Best Practice Guidelines (RJC, 2011). The Guidelines then enabled a professional body tasked with developing nationally accepted accreditation – Skills for Justice – to develop modules of practice based on precise performance indicators to support restorative facilitators in ensuring they were practicing to the highest standards. These are called the National Occupational Standards (NOS) and they are applicable in sectors other than the criminal justice domain for which they were originally developed (This said there is still work to be done to make them accessible and relevant for those not tasked with facilitating formal restorative meetings regularly).

With Ministry of Justice funding, the RJC is now developing a draft of accreditation and awards to further encourage the development of high quality practice. Restorative services – including schools, care homes, prisons and secure units – can gain the Restorative Service Quality Mark by ensuring they meet requirements across a range of criteria. The emphasis is on establishing a restorative culture across the staff team, including the leadership team, as well as ensuring that practice with clients/service users is professional.

Recently, a new Quality Mark is being trialed for those providing training to ensure that again high quality materials as well as knowledgeable, experienced and competent people are offering training in restorative principles and skills. The requirement to adhere to already developed standards – the Principles, the Best Practice Guidelines and the NOS ensures a high and consistent standard. As it has already been said this means that there still needs to be accommodation made for people that only interact on a one-to-one basis with clients or perhaps only over the phone. Restorative skills have much to offer to these people who are often in the frontline of conflict and challenge, but current training and accreditation does not necessarily recognise these skills. Nevertheless, the example of the RJC’s work on quality standards and accreditation puts it at the forefront of such developments in the world.

Conclusions

This paper has charted the journey from the use of Restorative Justice as a process in the criminal justice system to the development of a Restorative Culture in a wide variety of settings, through the application of Restorative Practice. It has identified the importance of ensuring that fundamental values and principles are adhered to as Restorative Practice is offered to an increasingly wide range of environments. This is pioneering work, and there is still a dearth of research in this field, especially on the benefits to staff themselves of a restorative culture in-house.

However, the types of transformation possible are not without precedent. The values, principles and core beliefs are not unique to Restorative Practice and so there will be evidence that supports our case. As has been said, what makes the offer of a Restorative Culture in an environment so compelling is its unique *combination* of values, principles, skills and processes. This unique package operationalises better known concepts such as ‘health and wellbeing at work’; ‘dignity in the workplace’; anti-bullying; distributed leadership; happiness quotients and ‘flow’ (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990)

Our challenge as practitioners, writers and trainers, in the effort to widen the scope and reach of Restorative Justice to embrace Approaches and Practices, is to ensure we do not dilute its powerful message, we do not lose its unique gifts to transform the way we respond when things go wrong between us, we do not undermine its capacity to transform justice systems across the planet.

I personally believe ‘Restorative Justice’ (sic) is not at risk. Its practitioners and proponents have excellent evidence, experience and passion to continue to make their own case. The

ball is now in the court of those of us embracing Restorative Approaches and Practice in our own working and personal lives to make our case, to gather our evidence and use our passion to offer a more fulfilling ways of being, and of working with people in all walks of life across the globe.

Notes

1. The term 'Restorative Justice' is used in various ways – as a concept, a philosophy, an approach, a process and as a set of practices. In this paper I will use the term 'Restorative Justice' when referring to the concept or philosophy, Restorative Practice when referring to the practical application of this philosophy in an environment and Restorative Approaches when referring not only to the practice but to the underpinning values, principles and mindset that informs the practice.
2. The RJC is the UK's umbrella organisation for the development of quality standards and practice in restorative approaches.
3. Over many years I have been on the Board of Trustees and served at one time or another as a member of the working parties that have developed the Best Practice Guidelines and advised on the National Occupational Standards; as a committee member concerned with Standards and Accreditation and most recently as a member of the new Expert Advisory Group appointed to maintain the high quality restorative practice that the RJC is committed to supporting.
4. There is an interesting debate to be had about the difference between a value and a principle, which this paper is too short to allow for.
5. Notably Caroline Newton and Luke Roberts whom I would like to acknowledge and thank for early interactions of the model.
6. The ideas about core beliefs here are adapted in part from earlier work found in my book *The Restorative Classroom* (2011).
7. These are the steps we train people to use when they facilitate a restorative meeting of any size as recommended in The Restorative Justice Council's Best Practice Guidelines (RJC, 2011).
8. The data has been shared by the Monmouth Deputy Head Teacher in a private correspondence, but the main details can also be found on the website www.transformingconflict.org.

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