

Restorative Justice

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Information for people  
who have been  
harmed through crime



Department of  
**Justice**

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An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

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Männystríe o tha Laa

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[www.justice-ni.gov.uk](http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk)

If you had the chance to meet or communicate with the person who harmed you, what questions would you like to ask?

What would you like to tell them about the impact the crime had on your life?

What would you need them to do to repair the harm and help you begin to move forward?

This opportunity is available to you through a process called Restorative Justice.

“ “ Why me?

“ “ Do they understand the hurt they caused to me and my family?

“ “ Was this planned?

“ “ What did they hope to achieve?



## What is Restorative Justice?

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Restorative justice aims to address and repair the harm and trauma caused by crime. Used widely in our criminal justice system, it gives you the opportunity to meet or communicate with the person who harmed you in a way that is safe and confidential.

It gives you a voice - the chance to ask questions, share the impact of what happened, and identify ways in which amends can be made. It might also help you begin to recover from what happened.

Restorative justice may also help the person who caused harm. In this process they can hear about the impact of their behaviour, answer important questions, and identify what they intend to do to make things right and avoid further offending. This can help prevent others being harmed by crime.

Restorative justice can be offered as an alternative to court for individuals who have no previous offending, or may be used as part of a Court Order if a Judge considers it appropriate and the person who has caused harm consents.

““ What are they going to do to repair the harm caused?

““ Will they do this to me again?



“ Are they sorry?”

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I wanted to hear the authenticity in their voice. I wanted to hear that they were truly remorseful.

## How does it work?

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The restorative justice process is led by a trained and experienced practitioner, accredited by the Department of Justice. The person who harmed you has given their consent to participate and has been assessed as being suitable for this process. This means that they have taken responsibility for their offending and are safe to meet or communicate with.

The practitioner will have an initial meeting with you to listen to your experience of the crime - what happened and how it impacted on you.

They will explain how restorative justice might be of benefit, answer any questions or concerns that you may have, and explain what will happen every step of the way. You will have as much time as you need to consider if you wish to participate, or not.

If you choose to become involved, the practitioner will meet you to discuss which process might work best for you, and begin preparation. The pace of preparation will be led by you.



## A Restorative Justice Process

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A restorative justice process can take place in two different ways. You and the person who caused you harm may meet face-to-face (in person or virtually) or indirectly.

### Face-to-face meeting

Many people who have been harmed through crime prefer a face-to-face meeting for various reasons. It gives you a chance to hold the person who harmed you to account, ask questions in real time, hear their thoughts and feelings about what they did and identify what you need from them to repair the harm and begin to move forward.

You can bring support to this meeting, which could be a family member, a friend or a professional you are involved with. They will also have contact with the practitioner beforehand to prepare for their role in the meeting.

“ After the meeting, I felt like a big weight had lifted off me. It eased the pain. ... I had lots of anger, lots of bitterness, lots of unanswered questions, and by doing this, it has made me a different person. It has made my closure of things a lot smoother.



### **Indirect communication**

Should you prefer not to meet face-to-face, the practitioner can facilitate indirect communication.

This might be done through:

- Shuttle mediation (where you are in separate rooms);
- Someone you choose taking part on your behalf; and
- Correspondence through letters or a statement provided by video link/recording.

**Both approaches must have your full, and informed, consent. You have the right to withdraw from this process at any time. It is important to note that the same rights are afforded to the person who caused you harm.**



It was something that I needed to do for me. I needed the questions answered.



## What happens next?

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You will receive a letter from a Restorative Justice practitioner offering an appointment to meet with you. Should you prefer not to meet, or wish to change appointment details, please contact the practitioner on the number they have provided.

“ The end result is in many ways freedom. The ability to loosen some of the burdens associated with being a victim.



