

# ***MAKING IT RIGHT***



Department of  
**Justice**  
[www.justice-ni.gov.uk](http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk)

This is an 'Easy Read' version of a detailed consultation document produced by the Department of Justice seeking views on the development of an Adult Restorative Justice Strategy for Northern Ireland.

If you wish to read the full document, it can be downloaded from the Department's website, at:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/development-adult-restorative-justice-strategy-ni>

# What is it all about?

The Department of Justice is seeking views on a new way of working which we think would improve our justice system. We want to work in a different way to challenge adults who commit crime and help to deal with the harm it causes to victims.

This new way is called **Restorative Justice**.

We hope that this new approach will help victims to feel more involved in the process of how a crime against them is dealt with, and that it will create better results for all those involved, including the victim and the person who committed the crime.

We know the approach we want to use has already worked in lots of other places. It has helped resolve local community tension and conflict, and stopped people committing more crimes. In Northern Ireland it has also worked well with young people who have committed crime, so now we want to see if it works for adults too.

We have set out in this document how we think it might work.

To help shape our plan we have:

- asked experts
- read lots of helpful reports and research
- sought ideas from other work areas
- looked at similar work happening in other countries



Are you interested in helping us? If so, we want to hear from you.

You may have been affected by crime, been a victim of crime, or maybe moved away from a life of crime. You might have heard about restorative justice before, or you might be a concerned member of the public or an agency that provides help and support.

**Your views are important.**



# What would it look like?

When a crime has happened, we want to use trained experts to help all those involved move forward in a positive way.

Under a new restorative approach, the victim and the person who committed the crime are supported and their views are listened to. **The involvement of victims is very important in this approach and we want them to take an active role in the process.**

We will create safe ways for the victim and person who commits the crime to discuss what happened and why. To focus on the impact the crime has had on them and the harm it has caused. And to try and help people to understand each other's feelings.

## **This is not an easy option**

Some victims may want to meet the person who committed a crime against them and have their say, others may not.

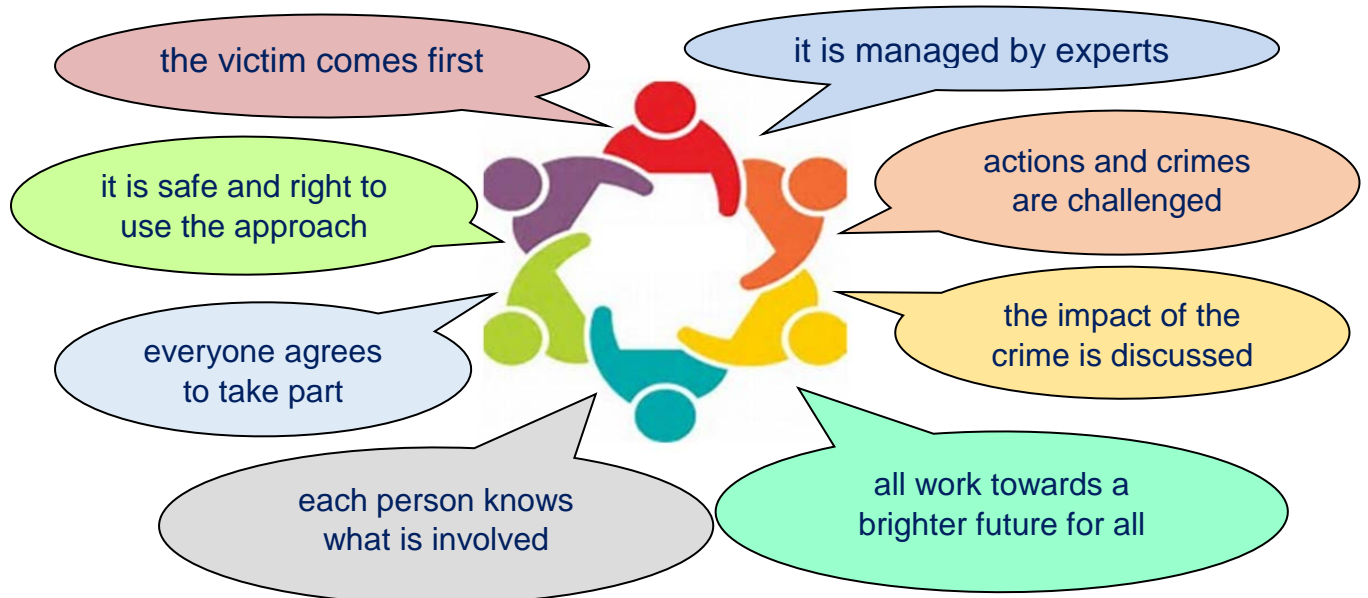
Some victims or offenders may take a long time to come to terms with what happened before they can talk about it.

Some victims or offenders might prefer to write about how they feel, or record it.

Some victims or offenders may never want to go through this process.

We understand all this, and we will support everyone in the best way possible.

A number of issues are central to the approach working well:



**Do you agree with these issues?**

**Are there any you want to add?**

# How is this approach different?

We think this restorative way of working adds a lot to the 'usual' approach taken.

	<b>'Usual'</b>	<b>Restorative</b>
<b>Person commits a crime</b>	They have broken the law	They have caused harm
<b>Focus of Justice</b>	Finding out if they are guilty	Finding out what is needed to heal the harm caused
<b>Account for action</b>	Punished	Understand impact and repair harm caused
<b>Who is mainly involved</b>	The person who commits the crime and the state (government)	The victim and person who commits the crime work with others to resolve it
<b>Victim involvement</b>	Minimal	Central
<b>Outcomes</b>	Can be positive or negative Focus is on the law and the crime Little chance to show remorse or make amends	Person who commits crime has an opportunity to account for action, repair harm and work toward positive outcomes for all Chance to show remorse and make amends

If this new approach works we are hoping it will become the 'usual' approach.

**What do you think of this approach?**

# When will it be used?

Within the justice system, people are moved away from crime by:

- Tackling the issues/triggers that cause them to commit crime
- Experts and support services in the community working with them at an early stage
- Police-led work in the community
- More formal police work like warnings and cautions
- The court working with them at an early court stage
- Being sentenced and managed in the community
- Being sentenced and managed in custody

We think that the new approach can be used at any of these stages.

It might happen before courts gets involved.

It might happen alongside, or as part of, the justice process.



The approach may look slightly different depending on the stage, the person, or the crime. For example it might be a meeting, it might involve talking with or through experts. It might involve only the victim, the victim's family or the wider community.

**What do you think about using the approach at different stages?**



# What results do we want?

We think the new approach can have lots of really positive results. These might happen in the short term, however some might take a bit longer to get.

We think if it works well, it will help to:

- ✓ Reduce the harm caused to victims
- ✓ Deal with crime faster
- ✓ Get victims more involved in a positive way
- ✓ Improve public safety
- ✓ Help people face the harm caused by their actions
- ✓ Assist people to make things right
- ✓ Prevent future crime
- ✓ Mean less people in the justice system
- ✓ Be suited to meet each person's needs
- ✓ Seek to improve the lives of all involved
- ✓ Be shared and used more often
- ✓ Help us all work together better



**What do you think about these results?**

**Are any missing?**

# So now what?

**Thanks for reading this and taking part.**

Together we can shape how we tackle crime and the harm it causes.

**Is there anything else you want to say?**

Please email your answers to:

[RJ.Strategy@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:RJ.Strategy@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk)

or post to:      ROPU - Making it Right  
Department of Justice  
Room 308  
Dundonald House  
Stormont Estate  
BELFAST, BT4 3SU

**Closing date:** Friday 11 September 2020

## **What happens to my answers?**

When we have read and thought about all the answers we will produce a short report. We will put all the responses on our website. We will make sure you cannot be identified by what you have said.