Written evidence from Ms Deidre Leask

I submit as an individual. I work at Southwark Youth Offending Service, managing a small team of victim/restorative justice officers and volunteers, who facilitate Youth Offender Panels and support Community Reparation projects. I volunteer as a facilitator of Neighbourhood Justice Panels with Lambeth Mediation Service.

As an RJ manager, the RJC National Occupations Standards, Best Practice Guidance for Restorative Practice and Competency Framework, have been invaluable in terms of ensuring good, safe, accountable work with victims, offenders and restorative processes. Incorporated into our YOS National Standards ensures that we have a basis of good practice across YOS areas and a framework for learning and development in the restorative field.

We struggle to liaise seamlessly with NOMS and the new CRC – many of our offenders will move on to these services and it is essential that we are clear with victims which service will continue with restorative work and how this will happen. We need to establish clear and effective protocols with them. We have had a protocol with the Probation Victim Contact Service regarding serious sexual and violent offenders sentenced to 12 months or more in custody. PVCS have to make contact with these victims – we may already have made contact with them – we try to work together to avoid revictimising.

As a volunteer with Lambeth Mediation Service, I prepare for and facilitate Neighbourhood Justice Panels on a regular basis, working closely with police and housing authorities, as well as parties harming or harmed. LMS is a small, very local, community-based organisation delivering excellent work with minor anti-social behaviour and offending – possibly far more direct restorative work than many larger, well-funded agencies. It is constantly threatened with closure because of lack of funding and lack of staff-time and information to apply for funding. The essence of RJ is community and local provision – it would be a tragedy to lose the restorative contribution of agencies such as LMS.

25 November 2015