Summary

Leeds Restorative Hub is a partnership comprising a range of local agencies involved in research & delivery of restorative interventions. The Hub currently provides a forum through which the agencies can promote Restorative working, nurture relationships, exchange information and seek opportunities for complimenting individual agencies work and joint working.

Leeds Hub membership comprises the following organisations:

- HMP Leeds (Restorative Justice Project)
- Leeds Children’s Services
- Leeds Youth Offending Service RJ Team
- Leeds University School of Law
- Yorkshire Mediation (independent Voluntary organisation)
- National Probation Service (Victim Services Unit)
- West Yorkshire Police (Community Safety Partnership)
- Victim Support

Clearly, some of the delivery of Hub members is concerned with restorative services involving children & families & a brief summary of these is provided below.

Two Hub organisations (Leeds YOS & HMP Leeds) are proud to have been awarded the Restorative Justice Council’s RSQM (Restorative Service Quality mark) in 2013 & 2014 respectively.

The remaining information concerns Restorative work at HMP Leeds & restorative work recently commissioned by the West Yorkshire Police & Crime Commissioner which involves a number of Hub member organisations.

1. Leeds YOS

Leeds YOS has delivered a range of restorative interventions since the formation of a dedicated RJ team in 2003 and has been at the forefront of the development of restorative justice, it has actively sought opportunities for developing best practice through partnership and collaborative working on regional, national and international areas.

2. Leeds Children’s Services

Children’s Services in Leeds has developed an explicit policy of encouraging and enabling services to be delivered in a restorative manner and the general approach is illustrated by the policy statement below.
“Restorative practices are an important part of the way in which we support families to become better equipped to solve their difficulties and address challenges. Using restorative approaches is a key element of Leeds’ ambition to become a child friendly city. These approaches provide staff with a range of language, behaviours and tools that strengthen their relationships with children, young people and families, empowering them to share responsibility by using a solution-focused approach, which supports positive change. Leeds has launched a comprehensive training programme for all staff in children’s services and there are a number of opportunities available for more advanced training.”


**Referrals**

In the most recent reporting period, referrals have dipped slightly with 40 referrals forthcoming. This is in line with a similar reporting period in 2013-14 and 2014-15, and it has been suggested that referrals slow over Christmas and the New Year from offenders, victims and professional agencies for various reasons.

An interesting feature of this reporting period is that the majority of referrals are “repeat” referrals. Offenders who have completed RJ for their most recent offence are now requesting to try RJ for historic offences. This is an excellent demonstration of the regard that RJ is held in by offenders, and further dismisses the assumption that offenders do not care or remember details about their offences or their victims.

In terms of source, there has been an increase in referrals coming from victims of crime who are interested in seeking Restorative Justice. These referrals usually come from Victim Services, and a Victim Liaison Officer contacts the office.

**Partnership Work in HMP Leeds**

A Service Level Agreement has been set up with Yorkshire Mediation, and Leeds-based CRC cases (i.e. those without a violent or sexual element) are co-facilitated with trained facilitators from there. This has led to shorter waiting times for victims and offenders.

As the reputation of HMP Leeds Restorative Justice department grows, there have been numerous requests by other HMP establishments in setting up RJ departments. These range geographically from Liverpool to Sussex, and are mainly in similarly categorised prisons. There is currently discussion of establishing restorative practice as part of the adjudication process within the prison.

The Co-ordinator has been involved in Bradford Hub’s Improvement Panel, where RJ organisations review cases and consider improvements which would give a better outcome and experience to all concerned parties.

We are currently hosting research by Bart Claes of the University of Sheffield.
Victim/offender feedback

Psychometrics continues to show that the majority of offenders who undertake Restorative Justice show a marked increase in victim empathy. Interestingly, in all other cases empathy levels remain the same. There have not been any instances of victim empathy decreasing.

Follow up work with victims and offenders 3 months after conference indicated that all parties still refer to the experience as positive. This is particularly true of face-to-face conferences where the victim has asked to be kept up to date with the progress of the offender up until the point of release. In discussion, victims stated that they felt safer and more empowered that the offender was reporting back to them in some way, and stated that they felt a lot more convinced by the authenticity of the apology they had received. Offenders stated that they felt a greater responsibility for their rehabilitation because they had “something to prove”. Interestingly, their comments dovetail with the comments of the victims, with a common theme being “if I continue to offend, my apology means nothing.”
Ongoing research shows that 100% of victims and offenders who participated in RJ in some form at HMP Leeds have said that they were satisfied with the process and would recommend it to others.

**Case Study:** (names have been changed)

Claire’s son, Daniel, was killed when he was driving with his friend, Steve. Claire requested to meet Steve via her Victim Liaison Officer (VLO), and the VLO contacted the RJ department in HMP Leeds.

Claire had had a particularly negative experience during Steve’s trial, and she reported poor communication with police, courts, and her first VLO. This had led to confusion in her understanding of what had happened to Daniel, and she was keen to meet Steve face to face and find out from him, first hand, what had happened. She also wanted to know about Daniel’s last day, and any last words he may have had.

When approached, Steve was keen to meet with Claire and answer any questions that she had. He was finding prison difficult as he was also grieving for his friend, felt guilty about his death, and knew from court that Claire had been very distressed. He stated that he wanted to do what he could to help.

Claire was nervous about being in a prison, and facilitators took care to allow her to choose how she wanted the conference to go. Claire made choices about everything in the lead up to the conference – from where she wanted to sit, to when she wanted Steve to come into the room, to when she wanted facilitators to intervene. The conference was particularly emotional, and facilitators encouraged both parties to take regular breaks to regroup. Claire asked many questions, and Steve carefully, sensitively and thoroughly answered everything he could. Claire accepted Steve’s apologies, recognising that Daniel’s death had been an accident but sad that it could have been avoided.

In the following weeks, facilitators checked up on both parties. The change in both has been remarkable. Steve speaks positively about the experience, and remains glad that he took part. He is keen to prove to Claire that he can be a better person. Claire looks physically much better, and reports that she is sleeping better, and has more energy. She reports that she feels her questions have been answered and she feels that she can “move forward now [she] knows what happened”.

HMP Leeds have said that they were satisfied with the process and would recommend it to others.

**Money Spent:**

To date, we have spent £8115 (£2705x3) in the last reporting period, which makes £24,345 in total so far. £35,655 remains from the £60,000 funds.

**Future Plans:**

It would appear that there has been a miscommunication by the PCC and Governor who secured the funding. HMP Leeds has been under the impression that the £60,000 funding has been for 2 years work, but the PCC states the funding is for 1 year. As such, in all likelihood, the HMP Leeds RJ department will close on 31st March 2016 as no further funding has been secured.

The plan with the remaining time is to link partnership agencies with the Offender Management Unit so that Restorative Justice can continue, albeit in a less efficient fashion. This will be reported on more thoroughly in the concluding report.
4. Development of Neighbourhood Panels and of other work with adult ‘offenders’ & their victims

West Yorkshire Police & the Leeds Community Safety Partnership have recently obtained some short term funding from the West Yorkshire Police & Crime Commissioner for the development of Neighbourhood Panels and restorative services for adult offenders not covered by statutory NPS work. This is enabling the further development of a sustainable project through the appointment of a dedicated Development Officer who will be able to co-ordinate and deliver direct services and further promote restorative ways of working within (adult CJS services) the Leeds metropolitan district. The post will be hosted within Yorkshire Mediation and supported by a multi-agency project group (drawn from Hub partners).

Conclusion

MOJ support and funding from the PCC has without doubt enabled some development and furtherance of Restorative ways of working and interventions in the areas of anti-social behaviour and those areas of the adult criminal justice system not covered by the statutory work of NPS victim services. It remains the view of most restorative ‘practitioners’ that current work and services (both adult & child) would be greatly enhanced should funding on a more sustainable basis be made available rather than year on year funding.

29 January 2016