

News from Thames Valley Probation



Press Release

Issued: June 30, 2008. Embargoed until 00.01 Tuesday, July 1, 2008

Restorative Justice cuts crime and saves money

An innovative local project led by Thames Valley Probation has helped stop offenders committing further crimes, has vastly reduced victims' fears and stress levels and has saved taxpayers' money.

Restorative Justice, where offenders meet the victims of their crimes in a 'conference' setting, has this week been nationally recognised as a resounding success.

In Thames Valley, 78% of victims who took part said they'd recommend it to others and 72% said the conference had provided them with a sense of closure. In addition, the conferences led to a 55% reduction in reconvictions for violent offenders on community sentences and a 33% reduction in similar offences for ex-prisoners.

The local project, now run by the Thames Valley Restorative Justice Service, was singled out for particular praise in Professor Joanna Shapland's fourth and final report on the evaluation of three Restorative Justice schemes run in different parts of the country over three years. Two were run by police forces (Northumbria and Metropolitan) and the third was run by a consortium led by Thames Valley Probation.

The results will be announced today (Tuesday) at an international conference at the Cambridge University Institute of Criminology, hosted by Professor Lawrence Sherman and Dr. Heather Strang, the co-directors of the national programme of Restorative Justice experiments that included Thames Valley. Chief Probation Officer Gerry Marshall will discuss the work at the conference and the reasons for Thames Valley obtaining the best results in the programme.

The report finding showed an impressive pattern of crime reduction. Many offenders said that meeting their victim in a controlled conference had been a tipping point, making them realise the harm their offences had caused and motivating them to stop re-offending.

Professor Shapland, Director of the University of Sheffield's Centre for Criminological research, and her colleagues estimated that the projects were estimated to have prevented £9 in the cost of crime for every £1 spent on police, probation and prison staff delivering Restorative Justice conferences.

Thames Valley Chief Probation Officer Gerry Marshall said: 'I'm delighted with the results and the positive message this sends to the public. I'm also pleased that the pilot work has continued and in Thames Valley,

unlike many other parts of the country, Restorative Justice is offered by the probation service to the courts as a 'specified activity', which means it can legally be imposed as part of a community sentence.'

ENDS

Notes for Journalists:

Professor Joanna Shapland of Sheffield the University of Sheffield will report these findings on Tuesday, July 1 at the Cambridge Conference on Evidence-Based Policing, funded by the UK's National Policing Improvement Agency. Professor Shapland led the team whose report is just published on the Ministry of Justice website at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/restorative-justice.htm>.

The Sheffield report included the seven experiments designed and directed by the Wolfson Professor of Criminology at Cambridge, Lawrence Sherman, and his co-director Heather Strang, who directs the Centre for Restorative Justice at the Australian National University. Their experiments were conducted in collaboration with the Metropolitan Police, Northumbria Police, **Thames Valley Probation** and HM Prison Service, comprising the Justice Research Consortium under the chairmanship of Sir Charles Pollard, former Chief Constable of Thames Valley.

The Cambridge University experiments were funded by the Home Office, supplemented by grants from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and the Jerry Lee Foundation.

- Three earlier reports on these experiments from the University of Sheffield team may be found on the Ministry of Justice or Home Office websites as well. These reports address the implementation of the experiments, as well as victim and offender views of restorative justice. See:
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/docs/Restorative-Justice.pdf> (views of victims and offenders)
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/r274.pdf> (what happened in conferences and the numbers of cases involved)
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/rdsolr3204.pdf> (setting up the schemes)
- Sherman and Strang are also the authors of a 2007 report on Restorative Justice for the Smith Institute, and co-direct the International Campbell Collaboration systematic review of the effects of restorative justice on repeat offending and victims.

For further local information, or case studies, contact Fiona Tarrant, Communications Manager, Thames Valley Probation 01869 255300 fiona.tarrant@thames-valley.probation.gsi.gov.uk

See www.justice.gov.uk for Prof Shapland's full report. See our website: www.thamesvalleyprobation.gov.uk for further details on our work.

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