

Restorative and relational practice is a way of being that equips us for building relationships, strengthening communities, resolving conflict and repairing harm. It is less what we do and more who we become. Restorative practice is applicable in every setting where there are people - the living room, the board room, the team room, the classroom, the conference room and the court room. Restorative practice is about how we build relationships by listening carefully, asking questions and expressing empathy; enabling everyone to have a voice, participate, cooperate and model the behaviour we would like to see. Restorative Practice seeks to repair harm by enabling and empowering people to take responsibility for behaviour that has affected others, it is used to resolve conflict when it arises by allowing others to freely express emotions, have a voice and be part of finding the solution.

This two-minute video from the International Institute for Restorative Practices provides a useful summary https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_obyZY4Xzal

Restorative **practice** is proactive - recognising that relationships and community matter, it shifts our focus from behaviour to relationships, prioritising 'connection before correction'. Being restorative is to be relentless in the elimination of battles (it is no longer about winning or losing), rather it is having a shared purpose and growing social and relational capital.

Restorative **justice** on the other hand is reactive, it is a much smaller dimension within the restorative offer, occurring after an event (or crime) to repair harm and/or put things right. There is a substantial body of evidence that restorative approaches within criminal justice settings are effective in repairing harm and makes economic sense - further information and resources are available from the Restorative Justice Council <https://restorativejustice.org.uk/>.

Restorative practice is not a liberal 'hug-it-out' approach! Rather it recognises that punitive and retributive approaches rarely bring the hoped-for change in behaviour, so instead cultivates relationships and invites those who have caused harm to be part of the solution with a strong emphasis on responsibility and accountability, support and challenge.

Restorative Practice in Portsmouth

In Portsmouth we include a range of language (including restorative approaches and relational practice) under the broad umbrella of Restorative Practice. Restorative Practice was first introduced to Portsmouth in 2016, through an in-depth multi-agency process to choose a model of practice to frame all our work in the city with children and families - **the purpose being improved outcomes for children**. Restorative Practice was the favoured model - providing a framework for relational practice under which can sit a range of interventions, support and 'ways of being' with children and families. This development was largely informed by similar practice developments in Leeds where children were more effectively safeguarded when Restorative Practice was introduced. Leeds saw reductions in the numbers of Looked After Children, and those on 'child in need' plans and 'child protection plans'. The robust evidence for the effectiveness of this approach is compelling [Leeds Family Valued Evaluation report (Children's Social Care Innovation Programme Evaluation Report 43) Department of Education July 2017].

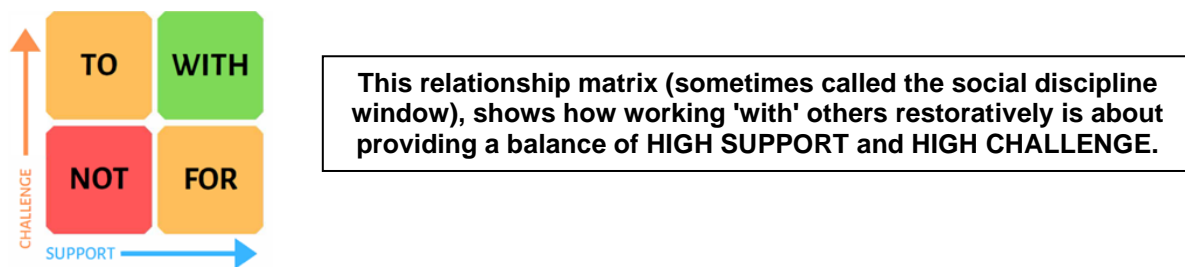
This approach is also a key thread within the Council and with the Portsmouth Education Partnership effectively improving school inclusion (and addressing absence, exclusion). The Education RP OMG is available on the PSCP website. This TED Talk from Michelle Stowe is a brilliant introduction to Restorative Practice in schools

https://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_stowe_empathy_the_heart_of_difficult_conversations?language=en

There is a close fit between Restorative Practice and work across the PSCP on trauma (e.g. PACE), behaviour change (e.g. motivational interviewing), whole-family practice (e.g. family safeguarding and early help), and Child Centred Policing. The Portsmouth Children's Trust Plan (2020-2023) states: *"The City continues to be committed to embedding the language, practice and principles of restorative practice."*

How we do it

In Portsmouth we have an explicit restorative framework founded on the principles of working 'with' people (families and colleagues), rather than doing 'to' or 'for'. When we work with and alongside others, rather than make decisions about (without) them, positive changes are more likely.



Restorative and relational practice can range from formal to informal processes that enable workers, colleagues, managers, children, young people and their families to communicate effectively, build social bonds, strengthen communities and know how to put things right when they go wrong.

As well as a culture of strong relationships, restorative approaches can include restorative circles - a way of intentionally being together to strengthen communities (teams, schools, families) and explore issues. There are many other tools that support working 'with' others. The restorative framework provides a conversational or meeting scaffold to address challenges or facilitate putting things right/repairing harm. The framework (sometimes expressed in a series of questions) breathes life into our relational intentions: moving us from taking sides and having battles (which often generates resistance) to empathy and connection (fertile ground for transformation and change).



Restorative Practices are widely established and accepted both nationally and internationally as a highly effective way of achieving better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Useful Links and Books

<https://www.connectrp.ie/> led by Michelle Stowe hosting excellent CPD resources, events and courses.

<https://i30relationalsystems.co.uk/childrens-services/> founded by Mark Finnis.

<https://www.iirp.edu/> The International Institute for Restorative Practice.

Restorative Practices. Mark Finnis (2021).

Building a Trauma-Informed Restorative School. Joe Brummer (2021).

Just Culture: Restoring Trust and Accountability in Your Organization. Sidney Dekker (2017).

For more information and the RP Training offer visit the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership [website](#)