

MAKE AMENDS CASE STUDY

APRIL – OCTOBER 2020

Nature of case	Robbery at knife point
Narrative around situation	The offence took place in September 2017. The harmed was working a night shift in her place of work which was a convenience store. The harmer approached the harmed at the till wearing a mask and with a knife. He asked her for the money which was in the till. The money was given to the harmer and the police apprehended him six weeks later.
Organisations/others involved	Victim Liaison Officer Probation Officer
Risks	<p>It became clear that the harmed was very nervous about being in contact with the harmer, who had been released into the community after serving his prison sentence.</p> <p>Before contacting the harmed, the Make Amends practitioners spoke in depth with the Victim Liaison officer (VLO). The VLO explained the background of the case and the main reasons why the harmed felt so terrified. Throughout the case, regular conversations took place with the VLO to provide updates. This worked well and resulted in a cohesive package of support for the harmed.</p> <p>Reassurances were also given to the harmed about how she would be kept safe. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this had to take place over the phone rather than face to face.</p>
Restorative Justice interventions provided and outcomes	<p>Following the initial telephone call, a second session was arranged with the harmer via video call. This enabled a rapport to be developed face to face.</p> <p>During this session the harmed was very open about all the things she was worried about in relation to this case. It was clear that the trauma of the offence had stayed with her and had been hugely re-triggered by harmer's release from prison.</p>



It seemed to be because she did not feel safe and had a fear that she could be attacked by the harmer at any time in vengeance for her reporting him to the police.

The Make Amends Practitioner worked through the five steps of the restorative conversation. During this, the harmer identified that she needed an apology, to feel a weight had been lifted and to feel she was safe when she went into the town where the harmer lived. She decided she wanted a face-to-face conference.

At this point, another Make Amend Practitioner joined the case and consulted with the harmer's Probation Officer. They too developed a good working relationship where they spoke regularly in order to support the harmer. Restorative steps were then completed with the harmer. He was very nervous and found it hard to express how he was feeling. His need was to do anything that would make the harmed feel better. Even though he was very nervous he agreed to take part in a face-to-face conference.

The process of preparing for the conference was very convoluted because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It took many months and throughout this time regular contact was maintained with both parties.

When it was safe to have face to face appointments, they were facilitated separately with the harmer and harmed. They discussed their fears and fully risk assessed the process. Once both parties were fully prepared, the conference was held.

It was held at a venue that both parties felt comfortable with. The harmed had requested to walk in after the harmer to help with her nerves. She managed this which felt like a huge success because she had thought she might walk in shaking or crying, but all the prior preparation work meant that she walked in superbly composed and calm.

The conference flowed effortlessly and very early on in the process the harmer was able to apologise. The harmed was able to express all the things that she wanted to and stated that "I am not scared of you anymore". This was very positive and a complete turnaround for her because she had spent 3 years of her life feeling frightened due to this harm. She said it felt like this fear had just been lifted.

The two agreed that it would be fine if they passed each other in the street and they would simply nod to acknowledge the other. They ended the meeting by shaking hands, which was above and beyond what the harmer had hoped for.

During post-conference check in's, the harmed asked that the harmer was told that she forgave him. After hearing this, the harmer stated, "that means a hell of a lot". They both felt like they had moved on and felt much better about the incident.



<p>Learning from experience/case</p>	<p>It once again reminded the Make Amends Practitioners that with enough preparation, even the most nervous participants can find a face-to-face conference beneficial. The participants had to trust that they had prepared both participants thoroughly and this proved to be the case. It was a good example of working effectively in trauma informed practice.</p>
<p>Feedback from harmed and harmer</p>	<p>Feedback from the harmer</p> <p>“It’s brought closure. It is good to know that the other party feels better. I wanted the harmed to feel better and she does. It was a very positive experience.”</p> <p>Feedback from the harmed</p> <p>“My harmer was initially a monster/demon that I had created in my head, but after the meeting, I found that I wasn’t scared anymore. We were both able to share with each other in depth. I feel free again. I was also able to tell my harmer that I had forgiven him, which was amazing. Restorative justice was everything I needed. I can’t explain the emotion I felt, I felt free and so incredibly grateful.”</p> <p>“I struggle to remember how I felt for those three years after the incident. I don’t think about my harmer, I don’t feel anything negative now when I think about what happened. I’m so pleased I stuck with the process. I went from feeling scared to feeling free. I can’t recommend Make Amends enough and I’m so grateful.”</p>

