

# MAKE AMENDS & RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FAQ's

## GENERAL RESTORATIVE JUSTICE QUESTIONS

### Q. What is restorative justice (RJ)?

A. Restorative Justice (RJ) supports people who have been affected by crime, conflict, anti-social behaviour or harm caused by the actions of others. Restorative Justice creates opportunities for people who have been harmed to come together into communication with those who are responsible for that harm, in order to get answers to their questions and to explain the effect the incident has had on them. It gives those who accept responsibility for the harm, an insight into the real impact their actions have had on the person affected, their friends and family or the community. The process aims to help everyone move on.

### Q. Does RJ work?

A. Yes, we believe it does. From our experience the RJ process enables everyone involved to have a voice and be able to move on, whatever that looks like for the individuals involved. On a wider scale, there are several national statistics outlining more about the success of RJ as follows:

- RJ can reduce reoffending by 14-21%
- For every £1 spent on an RJ face-to-face meeting, £8 is saved through reductions in reoffending
- Government research shows that 85% of victims who take part in restorative justice found the experience useful and were satisfied with the outcome

### Q. What do RJ participants say about the process?

A. You can [watch our lived experience videos](#) which shares the stories of those harmed.

You can also read below quotes from those who have recently completed RJ. Case studies can also be found on our website: <https://shekinah.co.uk/what-we-do/make-amends/case-studies/>

"I feel free again. I was 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 feel. I feel free and so incredibly grateful."

"The RJ process made me feel that someone was there to listen and to understand. It enabled me to draw a line under the situation - I feel like a weight has been lifted."

"Restorative justice was an overwhelmingly positive process and I think the work done by the team is vital."

"Restorative Justice was a good alternative way to educate the offender on the consequences of their actions."



### Q. What is the process of RJ? What's involved?

**A.** Following a referral, which can be made on our [website](#), RJ Practitioners are assigned to the case. There are usually two Practitioners who work a case. This could include volunteer(s) as well as paid Practitioners. Preparation then takes place with both the harmed and the harmer which includes signing consent forms, contacting other agencies (if required) and meetings with the assigned Practitioners to understand more about what took place and what's needed to repair the harm and enable both parties to move on.

During the preparation work it's decided whether restorative justice will be facilitated with both parties via a face-to-face conference or by another means. RJ can be delivered in several ways, this can include telephone or video conferencing, written correspondence, and 'shuttle restorative justice' through the Practitioners - these approaches may or may not lead to a face-to-face meeting at a later stage.

Whichever means is chosen, the following takes place:

- Those harmed explain to the person(s) who cause the harm the impact the incident had on them and others around them.
- The person who caused the harm has an opportunity to explain what was happening for them before, during and after the incident.
- At this point, an apology might be offered by the person who caused the harm
- An opportunity is then created for a reparative agreement or rehabilitative activity for the harmer if appropriate e.g., paying to repair any material damage, working for free for a charity, or keeping the person harmed informed of any future progress the harmer makes. It's also discussed what they would do if they were to see each other again in future.

The Practitioners will then follow up with both participants prior to closing the case. Participants are fully supported throughout the process, and if helpful, they can bring a supporter with them to help with their journey.

### Q. Do I have to be 18 years or older to access RJ?

**A.** No, RJ works for young people and adults. As a service, Make Amends can work with children as young as 6 years if they have the capacity to understand what is taking place and can participate in the process.

### Q. Can I be made to do RJ?

**A.** No, RJ is completely voluntary for those harmed and those who caused the harm, unless they are subject to a Pathfinder contract which includes a conversation with an RJ service. Consent can be withdrawn at any time, even once the process has started.

### Q. What types of crime aren't suitable for RJ?

**A.** We work with all crime types including those of a serious and violent nature, however, honour-based killings aren't suitable for RJ given the impact of these on the community groups involved. Also, RJ isn't suitable where there is a risk the harmer is looking to re-access the person harmed. RJ can be used for community disputes if people take responsibility for their part in the harm. RJ can also be used for domestic abuse cases but extra risk assessing, and support mechanisms are applied.



**Q. I haven't reported the incident, can I still do RJ?**

**A.** Yes, you can. RJ can be used for both reported and non-reported crime, anti-social behaviour, conflict, and the harm caused by the actions of others. It's important to note though that our Practitioners aren't legally privileged so if any concerns are raised during the process in relation to safeguarding, our Practitioners would need to pass this information onto a relevant person(s) or organisation(s). Likewise, in certain situations, given we aren't legally privileged, our Practitioners might be obliged to report crimes if disclosed during any RJ sessions.

**Q. We are a family; can we do RJ?**

**A.** Yes, at Make Amends we have two full-time members of the team who specialise working with families and young people. We have experience working restorative cases where there has been harm caused within families.

**Q. Will RJ give the person who caused the harm more opportunity to control or gain further power over the person harmed or to access them?**

**A.** No. At Make Amends the Practitioners complete extensive preparation and background work from the point of referral. This includes risk assessments and using [MARAC](#) for any domestic abuse cases. We work on a multi-agency basis and would not proceed with a case if it was felt the harmer was using RJ to re-access the person they harmed.

**Q. Is RJ religious?**

**A.** RJ isn't religious but is suitable to engage with for people from all religions and backgrounds.

**Q. What about those who see their crimes as victimless, such as crimes against businesses etc.? Can RJ work for those cases?**

**A.** There is an expectation that the person who caused the harm takes responsibility for their actions. They would need to accept that their actions resulted in a person(s) harmed.

**Q. Is RJ effective if someone keeps re-offending?**

**A.** Yes, RJ can be effective for repeat offenders. Even if someone has come through RJ before, they may not have had an opportunity for change to take place in other parts of their lives. For example, the person who caused the harm may have full intention not to offend again, but their circumstances haven't changed, and they end up in the same environment again. This may lead to another offence taking place. Our team works with repeat offenders in the hope that change will take place going forward.

**Q. What's the role of the police in RJ?**

**A.** When Police Officers attend a crime, they have a responsibility to assess the victim (based on the [Victim's Code](#)) and to ensure they receive appropriate information. This information should include about Restorative Justice. Devon and Cornwall Police have a fulltime RJ Coordinator who manages any referrals which are made by Police Officers following conversations with victims. In addition, two of our RJ Practitioners are co-located in local police stations to build a rapport with officers and to be on hand to manage any referrals.

**Q. What's the role of the courts in RJ?**

**A.** If a person who caused the harm is charged and attends court, and has also been offered RJ, this will be explored after any sentencing takes place and not before. There are several organisations



who provide support in the courts for those going through the criminal justice system. RJ information is supplied to these organisations so RJ can be accessed post-sentence and provided as an option for recovery. In addition, Make Amends has links with local prisons to enable those sentenced to access RJ.

