

# Criminal justice and you

An essential guide for victims and witnesses

## Restorative justice

**By Mark Myer**

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Hello, my name is Mark Myer, and I'm the restorative justice coordinator with Devon & Cornwall Police.

As someone who may have been harmed as a result of criminal behaviour, you have the right under the Victim's Code, both to receive information about restorative justice – or RJ for short – and to access restorative justice services in your area should you so wish.

I'd like to help you understand what restorative justice is, how it could benefit you and how you can access RJ in Devon and Cornwall.

So what is restorative justice or RJ? RJ gives those harmed by crime, the chance to meet or communicate with the person who's caused them harm and to explain the impact their actions have had upon them. All victims of any type of crime can ask for restorative justice, if they wish. It's completely voluntary and does not affect the criminal justice process in any way.

Restorative justice is used alongside the criminal justice system, it does not replace it. Choosing RJ does not allow an offender to get off lightly. It can take place as part of alternatives to prosecution such as a community resolution or a caution, as well as following a successful prosecution through the courts.

In the case of a reported crime, restorative contact between those affected would not occur until after a criminal investigation or court case had concluded.

You can ask for RJ at any point in the criminal justice process, and at a time that feels right for you, it can only take place with both the victim and the offender's consent, with the help of a trained and accredited facilitator and provided it is safe to do so after thorough preparation and careful risk assessments. It can occur face to face, but also via letters, video link, or any other practical methods the people involved may choose.

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What are the benefits of restorative justice? The benefits include: Giving you a voice and holding those responsible for causing harm to account for what they've done; helping those affected by crime to better cope and recover from its impact; helping you find answers to your questions and helping you to feel more in control of the situation. It can in turn help those responsible for causing harm to take responsibility and make amends for their actions and help prevent them from committing more crime or causing further harm to others.

So how can you access restorative justice? In Devon and Cornwall in order to access RJ you can ask the officer dealing with your case for information about RJ and to be provided with further information from the police RJ coordinator. This information is also available on the Devon and Cornwall Police website. You can also contact the Victim Care Unit direct and they can answer any questions you might have and arrange for the RJ coordinator to contact you.

Restorative justice services in Devon and Cornwall are provided through an organisation called Make Amends and you can also approach them directly from information about RJ or make a self-referral, particularly in cases of non-reported crime or anti-social behaviour.

I hope this short video has been helpful, informative and if you wish for further help or information about restorative justice, you can use the contact details at the end of this film. Thank you for your time.

## Useful links

[Restorative Justice](#)

Email [victimservices@dc.police.uk](mailto:victimservices@dc.police.uk) or call **01392 475900** (8am to 8pm Monday to Friday, and 9am to 5pm at the weekend and bank holidays).

## Glossary

Restorative Justice (RJ) – is an approach to justice that seeks to repair harm by

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providing an opportunity for those harmed and those who take responsibility for the harm to communicate about and address their needs in the aftermath of a crime.

**Victim Code of Practice (VCoP)** – The Victims’ Code focuses on the victims’ rights and sets out the minimum standard that organisations must provide to victims of crime.