



Restorative Justice

Toolkit technical report

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This report is produced in collaboration with staff from the Campbell Collaboration Secretariat. It is a derivative product, which summarises information from Campbell systematic reviews, and other reviews, to support evidence-informed decision making’.

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Abstract/Plain Language summary

The objective of this technical report is to review the evidence on the impact of restorative justice in the justice system on children's involvement in crime and violence. The Crown Prosecution Service defines restorative justice as 'a process through which parties with a stake in a specific offence collectively resolve how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future'.¹

Restorative justice (RJ) can take many formats. The core of restorative justice is that the perpetrator should be aware of, and make reparations for, the harm their offence caused the victim. This may be done in several ways: (1) victim awareness either through general presentations on the impact of crime on victims and their families, or being given information on the impact of their specific offence, or participating in conferences or face-to-face meeting with the victims; (2) an apology to the victim, either in person or face-to-face; and (3) restorative work, which may be work for the community or directly related to repairing damage caused by the offence. RJ can be included in a wide range of different settings. The focus of this technical report is restorative justice programmes that are delivered in the criminal justice system.

This technical report is based on two systematic reviews: Strang et al. (2013) and Wong et al. (2016). Strang et al. (2013) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of the effect of face-to-face restorative justice conferences (RJCs). These were defined as events that "brings together offenders, their victims, and their respective kin and communities, in order to decide what the offender should do to repair the harm that a crime has caused" (Sherman & Strang, 2012, p. 216). Only four of the evaluations included by Strang et al. (2013) included children and young people involved in crime and violence and were restricted to cases in which there was a direct victim, thus excluding cases like shoplifting or damage to public property.

Wong et al. (2016) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of the effect of restorative diversion programmes, which focuses specifically on restorative diversion

¹ <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/restorative-justice> (accessed 1/8/21).

programmes for children and young people involved in crime and violence. These are defined as diversionary programs, where offenders are diverted away from traditional processing, that specifically used a restorative justice approach (p. 1314).

Using the AMSTAR critical appraisal tool, Strang et al. (2013) is rated medium and Wong et al. (2016) as low.

Both reviews report similar magnitudes of effect, with $d = 0.216$ in Strang et al. (2013) and $d = 0.137$ in Wong et al. (2016). The Strang estimate has an evidence rating of 2 and the Wong estimate has an evidence rating of 3. These effect sizes correspond to an approximately 12% reduction in youth reoffending, with the same effect expected for violent crime. Our headline effectiveness rating is “Moderately Effective”, with an evidence rating of 3.

Strang et al. (2013) report that restorative justice is more effective for violent crime than property crime, though these results combine the findings for both adult and youth offenders. Restorative justice also appears to be more effective when it is a supplement to, not a substitute for, traditional prosecution – though this conclusion is based on a small number of studies and more research is needed. This relationship may be confounded with the seriousness of the offence, whereby restorative justice in addition to traditional prosecution may be more effective for more serious crimes, but more research is needed².

Implementation studies from the UK found that victims and perpetrators were highly supportive of the use of restorative justice but found some reservations from some practitioners, especially police. Establishing good relationships can facilitate the RJ process, especially so that the youth involved feel they are being treated with respect. Reparation work can also play an important role in establishing self-esteem and skills development. Key challenges were good communication, low referrals and contacting victims.

² We are grateful to Dr Heather Strang for her comments and expert knowledge that contributed to this technical report.

It would be useful to know more about different approaches to RJ in the UK setting, and to update the review of the global evidence, expanding the scope to cover the full range of RJ approaches.

Objective and approach

The objective of this technical report is to review the evidence on the effect of the use of restorative justice programmes in the justice system on children's involvement in crime and violence.

This technical report is based on two systematic reviews: Strang et al. (2013) and Wong et al. (2016). Strang et al. (2013) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of the effect of face-to-face restorative justice conferences (RJs). Wong et al. (2016) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of the effect of restorative diversion programmes. Both reviews evaluated the impact of restorative justice programmes delivered within the criminal justice system on the later reoffending of children who were involved in crime and violence.

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to inform the selection of systematic reviews.

Inclusion criteria

To be included in this report a systematic review must have included evaluations of restorative justice programmes that were implemented with children and young people³ within the criminal justice system.

Exclusion criteria

The current technical report excluded reviews of restorative justice programmes that were implemented in non-criminal justice settings. For example, Weber and Vereenoghe (2020) and Song et al. (2020) reviewed the effectiveness of restorative justice programmes in schools and so were excluded from this technical report. Moreover, Strang et al. (2013) was preferred to the similar systematic review and meta-analysis of restorative justice conferencing

³ Young people are those aged 15-24, although those under 18 are also referred to as children. In practice, a review may not identify the age cut off for young people, so we take studies in a review as including youth or young people based on reporting studies as such. For example, youth offenders referred to all those under 18 in the Strang review except for Canberra RISE Violence experiment (JVC) where all offenders were aged <25.

programmes for young offenders by Livingstone et al., 2013 as Strang had a greater number of included studies and reported on violence outcomes.

Outcomes

Both included reviews evaluated the effects of restorative justice programmes on outcomes related to youth involvement in crime and violence.

Wong et al. (2016, p. 1319) evaluated the impact of restorative diversion programmes for “at-risk youth on criminogenic outcomes”. This primarily involved measuring whether or not participants in the restorative justice programme, and the control group, reoffended after implementation of the intervention. Offending was measured using official records and/or self-report measures. Wong et al. (2016) do not specify further about the type of offences included.

Strang et al. (2013) evaluated the effect of restorative justice conferencing on the frequency of reoffending, measured by official conviction data in the two years following participation in the programme. Evaluations that were focused on children and young people included outcomes such as property crime, violent crime, and general juvenile offending.

Description of interventions

The Crown Prosecution Service defines restorative justice as ‘a process through which parties with a stake in a specific offence collectively resolve how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future’.⁴

Restorative justice can take many formats. The core of restorative justice is that the perpetrator should be aware of, and make reparations for, the harm their offence caused the victim. This may be done in several ways: (1) victim awareness either through general presentations on the impact of crime on victims and their families, or being given information on the impact of their specific offence, or participating in conferences or face-to-face meeting

⁴ <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/restorative-justice> (accessed 1/8/21).

with the victims; (2) an apology to the victim, either in person or face-to-face; and (3) restorative work, which may be work for the community or directly related to repairing damage caused by the offence. Table 1 provides a list of activities categorised on a scale from fully to partially restorative.

RJ can be included in a wide range of different settings. The focus of this technical report is restorative justice programmes that are delivered in the criminal justice system. Whereas traditional prosecution and sentencing in the criminal justice system is primarily led by retributivist theories with a focus on the punishment of the offender, in restorative justice, the focus is on the restoration of the harm caused by the offender in the commission of their offence (Wong et al., 2016).

Restorative justice programmes often include, victim-offender mediation, family group conferences (restorative justice conferences), and peace-making circles (Latimer et al., 2005; Wong et al., 2016). Table 1 outlines a range of different restorative practices, organised by the relative degree of restoration involved (Wilcox & Hoyle, 2004; Table 1). For example, Wilcox and Hoyle (2004) categorised family group conferences as ‘fully restorative’, but conferences that take place without involvement of a victim are considered ‘mostly restorative’. Other practices, such as compensation, are considered ‘partly restorative’, or in other words, involve some element of restorative justice principles, but are not considered to be full restorative justice. The review by Strang et al. (2013) – on which this report is based - assesses interventions with a face-to-face restorative justice component, that is restorative justice conferencing which is classified as fully restorative.

Table 1 Types and degrees of restorative justice practice

<i>Fully restorative</i>	<i>Mostly restorative</i>	<i>Partly restorative</i>
Family group conference	Victim offender mediation	Compensation
Community conferencing	Victim support circles	Victim services
Peace circles	Conferences without victim participation	Offender family services
Restorative justice conferences		Family centred social work Victim awareness

	Therapeutic communities Direct reparation to victim	Community reparation
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The thread that links these activities together is the aim of facilitating direct communication between the offender(s) and their victim(s) that results in an agreement between all parties about the actions required to repair the harm caused (Zehr, 2002). Restorative justice can also involve indirect communication, where offender and victim do not meet face-to-face and discussion is facilitated by a mediator.

Strang et al. (2013) reviewed restorative justice conferences. These were defined as events that “brings together offenders, their victims, and their respective kin and communities, in order to decide what the offender should do to repair the harm that a crime has caused” (Sherman & Strang, 2012, p. 216). Based on the research of Braithwaite (1989), Strang et al. (2013, p. 8) outline the following core components of restorative justice conferences:

- ‘Facilitative discussion’ with all those involved, about what a restorative justice conference is, what it involves and whether they consent to participate.
- A conference is then scheduled for a time convenient for the victim.
- During the conference, all participants are seated in a circle in a private room. Possible settings include police stations, prisons, schools, or community centres.
- At the beginning of the conference, all participants are introduced with a particular focus on how they are ‘emotionally connected’ to the crime committed.
- Offenders are asked to describe their crime and victims/all participants are asked to describe the harm caused by the crime.
- Discussion about how to repair the harm caused follows, and all participants aim to reach agreement about action that is to be taken.
- This agreement is then filed with official institutions, such as the court or police, and these parties are responsible for monitoring the offenders’ compliance with the agreement.

This procedure is also descriptive of victim-offender mediation and family group conferences (FGCs). The former, however, requires a much more prominent role for the mediator in directing the course of the meeting than is the case for facilitators in RJ conferences or FGCs, and usually does not include supporters of offenders and victims beyond those directly involved in/impacted by the offence. Wong et al. (2016) also described peace-making circles (or sentencing circles), during which a judge or respected member of the community

facilitates the discussion and a 'talking piece' (i.e., a physical object, that when held, signifies that the holder is the speaker and others are expected to listen) is used to ensure that the discussion is balanced, and all parties have equal opportunity to contribute (Zehr, 2002).

Only four of the ten evaluations included by Strang et al. (2013) included children and young people involved in crime and violence. These programmes were categorised as mainly having a diversionary purpose; to divert children and young people who had committed an offence away from traditional criminal justice processing and instead involve a restorative justice conference element.

The review by Wong et al. (2016) was specifically concerned with restorative diversion programmes for children and young people involved in crime and violence. These are defined as diversionary programs, where offenders are diverted away from traditional processing, that specifically used a restorative justice approach (p. 1314). Wong et al. (2016) do not provide a list of included studies or further details about the interventions.

Targeted or Universal

The restorative justice conferences reviewed by Strang et al. (2013) are targeted interventions. They concern the offenders and victims directly involved in and affected by a crime. Sometimes offenders and/or victims may have supporters, such as family members present during the restorative justice conference, but the mechanism of change specifically targets the individual offender and the victims. In Wong et al. (2016)'s review, the focus was specifically on programmes in school settings implemented with 'at-risk youth' mostly aged between 12 and 18 years old.

Implementation setting and personnel

The facilitators of the restorative justice conferences received special training, and in Strang et al.'s (2013) review this training was organised by the same providers in all interventions that were studied. Whilst this was true for all interventions evaluated by Strang et al. (2013), we do not anticipate that it is true for all restorative justice interventions as there are many providers and organisations that provide training.

No information about the professional background of the facilitators in these interventions was provided, but these individuals were likely to be police, other criminal justice professionals, or trained mediators from the voluntary sector. In England, Youth Offending Teams can be involved in implementing RJ under referral orders. Wong et al. (2016) also didn't provide information about the professional background of the implementation personnel. This review excluded programmes implemented in schools during school hours, in youth custody settings, in hospitals, or other youth residential settings.

Restorative justice may be used at any stage in the criminal justice system: as an alternative to arrest, custody, post-plea but pre-sentence, as part of a diversion programme, in prison or on probation.

Duration and Scale

Restorative justice conferences are typically a one-off occurrence, involving extensive discussion between offenders, victims, and other relevant participants. Sessions usually last between 1 and 2 hours (Strang et al., 2013). Some programmes may involve a follow-up letter to update the victim of the offenders' progress or how they have met the conditions agreed upon during the face-to-face conference.

Other components of restorative justice, such as reparations, usually take place over a longer period, such as a few weeks or months.

Theory of change/presumed causal mechanisms

Restorative justice programmes are partly based on the theory of reintegrative shaming, introduced by Braithwaite (1989). As Wong et al. (2016, p. 1312) state, "Reintegrative shaming allows for the expression of disapproval of the offender's actions by the community, followed by re-acceptance of the offender into the community". The aim of restorative justice is therefore to minimise the stigma and labels often associated with involvement in the criminal justice system, and instead encourage an understanding of the impact of the harm caused on behalf of the offender, while also providing the victim with a voice. This should

encourage greater prosocial behaviour and assist the offender to desist from offending (Wong et al., 2016).

Strang et al. (2013) also outlined the importance of theories of procedural justice, defiance, and responsive regulation in restorative justice programmes, but emphasised that there is no single theory that fully and appropriately explains the theory of change in restorative justice programmes. Strang et al. (2013) highlighted Collins' (2004) theory of interaction ritual chains, in which the presumed causal mechanism is centred on the motivational impact of the intense emotions experienced by participants in restorative justice conferencing.

It is possible that the RJ process increases a young person's level of empathy. Low empathy, or a diminished ability to understand or experience the emotions of others is commonly implicated as a risk factor for offending (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2021a). There is some evidence that being in the presence of the victim (i.e., where there is no face-to-face meeting), then interventions and being encouraged to appreciate the harm an offence has caused may increase empathy (Kuehn et al., 2014).

Reparations can work in various ways, which may be deterrence but also included developing self-worth and a sense of community. Furthermore, theoretically the beneficial impact of RJ may also be partially attributed to the fact that RJ is often used to supplement diversion from the criminal justice system. Diversion from official processing is widely evidenced as an effective way to reduce the offending of young people (Petrosino et al., 2019).

Evidence base

Descriptive overview

Strang et al. (2013) included 10 randomised controlled trials of restorative justice conferencing programmes. Four of these RCTs reported the effects of restorative justice conferencing on juvenile crime, with 2 evaluations conducted in Australia (JPP; JVC), one in the United States (IND) and one in the United Kingdom (NFW). The results of these evaluations are based on data from approximately 1,317 children and young people. Outcome measures of reoffending included property crime and violent crime, but not separately for youth and adult offenders. Strang et al. (2013) categorised all of the evaluations

involving children and young people as 'diversion from prosecution' programmes and the control groups involved diversion to other programmes, traditional prosecution, or police cautions. In comparison, evaluations involving adult participants were nearly all implemented post-plea and pre-sentencing or in prison (Strang et al., 2013). No information on the gender and ethnicity of children and young people was provided in relation to reoffending outcomes.

Wong et al. (2016) reviewed 21 evaluations of restorative diversion programmes for children and young people, of which the majority ($n = 13$) were evaluated using a design the authors defined as 'quasi-experiment with weakly matched comparison group'. Five evaluations were conducted using a quasi-experiment with matched comparison group design and three were randomised controlled trials. The majority of the evaluations were conducted in the United States ($n = 15$), five were conducted in Australia/New Zealand and one in Europe. Most of the evaluations ($n = 13$) had sample sizes of more than 100 participants, and most of the evaluations that reported information on the gender of participants had a predominantly male sample ($n = 15$). Only two of the evaluations that reported information on gender had 'nearly equivalent' numbers of male and female participants. Sixteen evaluations reported information on the ethnicity of participants and of these, nine included predominantly Caucasian children and young people and seven included predominantly children and young people from a minority or mixed ethnicity.

Assessment of the strength of evidence

At the time of writing, the reviews by Strang et al. (2013) and Wong et al. (2016) are the best available evidence on the effectiveness of restorative justice programmes in the criminal justice system for children and young people. Our decision rule for determining the evidence rating is summarised in the technical guide.

Two independent coders used a modified version of the AMSTAR2 critical appraisal tool to appraise the reviews of Strang et al. (2013) and Wong et al. (2016). According to this tool, the review by Strang et al. (2013) was rated 'medium' and the review by Wong et al. (2016) was rated 'low'. The rating criterion are shown in Annex 3.

Both reviews adequately specified the research questions and the inclusion/exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria included components relating to the population, intervention, comparison group and outcome of interest. Strang et al. (2013) and Wong et al. (2016) clearly outlined the purpose and focus of the review, restorative justice conferencing and restorative diversion programmes respectively.

Strang et al. (2013) did not state that they created a review protocol before undertaking the review or whether the protocol was published, but one is available on the Campbell website. Similarly, Wong et al. (2016) make no reference to a protocol for their review.

Strang et al. (2013) included evaluations with random or quasi-random assignment to two groups, the experimental group, which participated in face-to-face restorative justice conferencing, or the control condition which did not participate in any restorative justice programme, but received treatment as usual. Wong et al. (2016) also included evaluations that used a variety of methodological designs. These included non-experimental designs with one group and before and after comparisons of level of reoffending. Wong et al. (2016) also included experimental studies both with and without random assignment to an intervention and control group.

Both reviews reported a comprehensive literature search strategy including several different databases, designated keywords, and search strategies. Wong et al. (2016) restricted inclusion criteria to only peer-reviewed publications or only reports in English and French and furthermore, only included evaluations conducted in high-income countries (i.e., Canada, United States of America, Australia, New Zealand, and Western European countries). No justification for this restriction was provided. Strang et al. (2013) also restricted their inclusion criteria to reports published in English.

One author reviewed the titles and abstracts of the search results in the Strang et al. (2013) review and also identified includable studies. Two authors then extracted study-level information and outcome data, but no assessment of the measurement of agreement between these authors was provided. Studies included in the Wong et al. (2016) review were coded according to a number of different moderators, but information regarding who carried

out this coding was not provided. Moreover, information about whether there was more than one coder, and any assessment of interrater reliability was not given.

Strang et al. (2013) did not undertake a specific risk of bias analysis but did conduct a series of analyses to evaluate the impact of possible bias on outcomes. This included comparing effect sizes for randomised to non-randomised studies and examining the impact of differential attrition and the use of intention-to-treat analyses. Wong et al. (2016) did not conduct any risk of bias analyses, beyond examining potential publication bias.

Wong et al. (2016) stated that funding was received for an earlier version of their review and Strang et al. (2013) clearly outline the funders of their project. The authors declare no monetary interest in the results of the review and declare their involvement in previous restorative justice research.

Both reviews conducted a random effects meta-analysis and reported detailed information on the synthesis and estimation of weighted effect sizes and adequately reported the heterogeneity (using the Q statistic) between primary effects. Both of the meta-analyses assessed multiple moderators as possible explanations for heterogeneity among primary effect sizes. Wong et al. (2016) reported one mean effect size for all studies involving children and young people. Strang et al. (2013) reported one overall mean effect size, and independent mean effect sizes for studies with children and young people, and the outcomes of property crime and violent crime.

Strang et al. (2013) provide a direct estimate of the overall effect on reoffending based on 10 studies including adults. The results were reasonably homogenous ($I^2 = 16\%$) and, as this review was rated as 'medium' per the AMSTAR tool, the overall evidence rating for the impact is 4.

Strang et al. (2013) also reported a direct estimate of the mean effect of juvenile restorative justice conferencing on youth reoffending based on 4 studies. The results were homogeneous ($I^2 = 3\%$) but given the small number of studies, the evidence rating for the impact is 2.

Wong et al. (2016) presented a direct estimate for youth reoffending based on 21 studies with high heterogeneity ($I^2 = 99.7\%$) and the review was rated 'low' as per the AMSTAR tool, so the evidence rating for the impact is 3. This is our preferred headline estimate for effects on violence and crime outcomes.

Impact

Summary impact measure

Based on the two meta-analyses that inform the current technical report, restorative justice programmes have a small desirable impact on youth reoffending outcomes.

Strang et al. (2013) found that the weighted mean effect size for reoffending was statistically significant and indicated that restorative justice conferencing programmes had a desirable impact on youth reoffending.

Wong et al. (2016) found that the weighted mean effect size for reoffending was statistically significant and indicated that youth restorative diversion programmes had a desirable effect. In other words, these programmes effectively reduce reoffending. These mean effect sizes are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1

Mean effect sizes for crime and violence outcomes

Review	ES (<i>d</i> and OR)	CI (ES)	<i>p</i>	% reduction	Evidence rating
Strang et al. (2013); Restorative justice conferencing for youth outcomes	<i>d</i> = 0.216 OR = 1.39	not reported	not reported	16.32%	2
Wong et al. (2016);	OR = 1.28 <i>d</i> = 0.137	1.07, 1.53	< .01	12.28%	3

Restorative diversion programmes					
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Note: ES = the weighted mean effect size; CI = 95% confidence intervals for the mean ES; p = the statistical significance of the mean ES; n.s. = not significant; OR = odds ratio; d = Cohen's d ; OR > 1 indicates a desirable intervention effect; OR = 1 indicates a null intervention effect; OR < 1 indicates an undesirable intervention effect.

In order to convert the d effect sizes to a percentage reduction, we first used the equation: $\ln(\text{OR}) = d / 0.5513$ (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001, p. 202). Then we assumed that there were equal numbers ($n = 100$) in the experimental and control conditions, and that 50% of persons in the control condition were delinquent (or demonstrated externalising behaviour). With these assumptions, the OR of 1.39 for Strang et al. (2013) translated to a 16.32% relative decrease. For Wong et al. (2016), the OR of 1.28 translated into a 12.28% relative reduction.

Strang et al. (2013) also reported a mean effect size for all studies included in the meta-analysis (i.e., also including those with adult samples). The mean effect size for all evaluations ($n = 10$) was OR = 1.32 and corresponded to an approximate relative reduction of 13.8% in reoffending.

Moderators and mediators

Strang et al. (2013) conducted two moderator analyses in their review to compare mean effect sizes. They also reported the mean effect sizes for property crime ($d = .001$, SE = 0.099, $p = .999$) and violent crime ($d = -0.198$, SE = 0.047, $p = .001$), which suggested that restorative justice conferencing was more effective in reducing violent reoffending than property reoffending. However, these mean effect sizes also included evaluations of programmes implemented with adult participants, and each effect size included only one evaluation with youth participants. Therefore, it is uncertain whether this finding would also be true for children and young people.

This review also reported the mean effect size for programmes categorised as a substitute (or a replacement) for traditional prosecution or a supplement to traditional prosecution. Studies where restorative justice was a substitute for traditional prosecution had a mean effect size that indicated a small desirable, but statistically insignificant impact on reoffending ($d = -0.051$, $SE = 0.207$, $p = .807$). Both of these evaluations were of programmes implemented with young offenders. Programmes that implemented restorative justice conferencing as a supplement to traditional prosecution were associated with a stronger desirable impact on reoffending ($d = -0.193$, $SE = .050$, $p < .001$). Experts have advised that this effect may be moderated by the seriousness of the offence, but evaluations have only compared the effect of restorative justice in addition to traditional prosecution for serious offences. However, this mean effect size only included two evaluations of programmes implemented with children and young people involved in violence.

Wong et al. (2016) conducted several moderator analyses to compare the effectiveness of restorative diversion programmes. This included an analysis which compared mean effect sizes according to the methodological design of the evaluation. This analysis found that evaluations conducted with higher methodological rigor found lower effect sizes than those of lower methodological quality. Wong et al. (2016) found that the difference between these mean effect sizes was statistically significant ($Q_B = 648.46$, $p < .001$). However, Wong et al., (2016) do not provide information on the list of included studies or a detailed description of the interventions, so the extent to which these findings can be taken into account is unclear.

Wong et al. (2016) also compared effect sizes based on important study characteristics such as the year of implementation, the sample size of the intervention group, and the proportion of the sample that were Caucasian or a minority ethnicity. The results can be summarised as follows:

- Programmes implemented between the years 2000 and 2015 had a slightly larger mean effect size ($OR = 1.40$, $z = 1.24$, $p = 0.215$, $n = 7$) when compared to programmes implemented between 1990 and 1999 ($OR = 1.23$, $z = 2.30$, $p = 0.021$, $n = 14$). Although the mean effect size for programmes implemented between 2000 and 2015 were not statistically significant overall.

- Programmes that included less than 100 participants (OR = 1.24, $z = 1.39$, $p = 0.165$, $n = 8$) were as effective as programmes implemented with more than 100 participants (OR = 1.30, $z = 2.34$, $p = 0.019$, $n = 13$). Although the mean effect size for programmes implemented with less than 100 participants was not statistically significant overall.
- Programmes that were implemented with samples that were predominantly Caucasian (OR = 1.72, $z = 5.00$, $p < .001$, $n = 9$) were associated with greater effectiveness than programmes implemented with samples that were predominantly of minority ethnic or mixed ethnicities (OR = 0.861, $z = 0.53$, $p = 0.598$, $n = 7$). Overall, the mean effect size for evaluations that included predominantly a minority ethnic or a mix of ethnicities were not effective and associated with increases in reoffending, but the mean effect size was not statistically significant. Wong suggests that the ineffectiveness of the intervention with minority populations may reflect the discrimination against them at all levels of the justice system.

Implementation and Cost analysis

Qualitative evidence on the implementation of restorative justice programmes in the criminal justice system is taken from six studies. These are summarised in Annex 2.

- An evaluation of 44 restorative justice programmes funded by the Youth Justice Board (Wilcox & Hoyle, 2004)
- An arts-based restorative justice programme between predominately black youth in Gloucestershire and police (Payne et al., 2020)
- Restorative justice approaches in young people's residential units in Hertfordshire (Littlechild & Sender, 2010).
- An analysis of restorative justice from referral orders implemented by two Youth Offending Teams (Lacey, 2012).
- An evaluation of the Youth Restorative Intervention implemented under Surrey Police and Surrey County Council (Mackie et al., 2014).
- An ethnographic analysis of two RJ interventions in a town in England (Willis, 2020).

Overall, the qualitative data support the view that both victim and perpetrator find restorative justice useful, with the perpetrator taking responsibility for their actions. However, this may not be the case with all children and young people. Some offenders do not feel remorse or a need to apologise, especially if they feel the other party is at fault. Experience suggests that apologies should not be forced – the process is only effective if the offender willingly agrees to take part. Other participants may feel anxious about speaking in public, and unable to adequately express their views, issues which may be addressed by careful facilitation.

Nonetheless, there are concerns, especially amongst police, that some children and young people may simply go through the motions. It was also felt that subsequent interaction with family and peers may undo the progress made in the restorative justice session.

Good practice includes good communication between all relevant agencies, including involving them in training.

Generally, for young people, it is better for those responsible for restorative justice to approach the victim rather than the police, as the former will have more time and experience to go through the options and benefits. A common message to emerge is that perpetrators appreciate the process if they feel they have been treated with respect. However, there is often perceived to be an unequal power relationship between those involved in the process, as well as problems for some participants in articulating their views, and these may limit its usefulness. A good relationship between offender and those in the justice system assigned to work with them can help in various ways, such as acceptance of the process and building self-esteem.

The evaluation of 44 restorative justice projects found three substantial challenges: low level of referrals, difficulties in contacting victims and poor communication. These problems were worse for independent providers compared to those run in-house by Young Offender Teams (YOTs), with hybrid approaches falling between the two. These problems are related. Poor communication between agencies means a lack of information of the full range of restorative justice options available. YOTs were unable to contact victims directly as the police would be not share information because of data protection issues, and this was an even more significant barrier for independent projects. Also, limited police resources meant that the police had less time to spend contacting victims and convincing them to take part, thus victims were less likely to agree to participate.

The residential units in Hertfordshire included children with disabilities and learning disorders. Staff felt that restorative justice was problematic with these children, and also of

limited use for children with attachment disorders. It was also observed that not all staff bought into the idea of restorative justice, even after training.

Restorative justice also includes reparations, which may be community reparations rather than directly related to the offence. Offenders can appreciate this work if it is seen to be meaningful, both in terms of making a clear contribution to the community and providing them with a skill.

Finally, the time and resources for restorative justice may get squeezed out by other priorities.

Findings of effectiveness from UK/Ireland

The review by Strang et al. (2013) included seven evaluations of restorative justice conferencing programmes that were conducted in the United Kingdom (e.g., Shapland et al., 2008).

Only one of these evaluations of restorative justice conferencing was conducted with children and young people involved in crime and violence: the Northumbria Final Warning for juveniles. The randomised controlled trial of restorative justice conferencing in Northumbria was conducted with youth offenders who had received a final warning for property or violent offending where there was an identifiable victim. In total, youth from 165 criminal cases were referred and randomised to the restorative justice conferencing condition ($n = 80$) or a treatment-as-usual control group ($n = 85$). Forty four percent of the control group were reconvicted within two years compared to 36 percent of the treatment group though this difference is not statistically significant (Shapland, et al, 2008: Table 2.1).

In total, three evaluations of restorative justice programmes in the United Kingdom are reported by Shapland and colleagues (2008), but only one involved only restorative justice conferencing, and only one involved youth. The other programmes involved either direct mediation, indirect mediation or a combination of both.

Shapland et al. (2007) conducted a mixed methods evaluation and reported findings for a range of outcomes, including the reasons and motivations for offenders and victims to take part in restorative justice and their overall experience of taking part. The opportunity to communicate with the other party was the main motivation for taking part in the restorative justice conference, for both offenders and victims. For youth in particular, Shapland et al. (2007, p. 17) note that “linking being told to take part and believing taking part would affect what would happen to their case” was an important factor.

Shapland et al. (2007) found that the format of restorative justice conferences was arranged by the facilitators and involved all participants sitting in a circle. Both victims and offenders were permitted to have ‘supporters’ present, and these were most commonly family members (e.g., parents, siblings, other relatives). Most of the conferences were held in police stations, prisons, or specially prepared conference rooms, but Shapland et al. (2007) do not distinguish between these locations for youth offenders. A minority of restorative justice conferences took place in community venues, and none of the young participants were imprisoned, so we can deduce that restorative justice conferences involving youth offenders most likely occurred in police stations.

Qualitative evidence from interviews with young offenders and victims found that almost all victims (90%) and young offenders (92%) found that the restorative justice conferences went well. Shapland et al. (2007, p. 22) quote, “Fine. Really good. Got everything sorted and out in the open. Cleared the air”. Some young offenders and victims noted that their supporters did not get an opportunity to ask questions or contribute to the discussion and these supporters were disappointed by this aspect of the restorative justice conference.

Finally, an interesting result from the evaluation by Shapland et al. (2007), was that only 36% of offenders and 44% of victims reported any follow-up after the restorative justice conference. This was mostly information received about the outcome agreement, an apology letter from offender to victim, or information for the victim about an offender’s sentence. The results were not disaggregated for young offenders.

What do we need to know? What don't we know?

Whilst the reviews by Strang et al. (2013) and Wong et al. (2016) show that restorative justice programmes are effective in reducing reoffending, there is still more research needed to better understand *how* these programmes work. We do not know the active ingredient of restorative conferences that is associated with the desirable effects seen. This could be because the restorative conference induces a psychological change in the offender (i.e., increasing empathy) or alternatively, it could be that restorative conferences, when employed as a diversionary approach, prevent the negative influence of criminal justice processing on the offender.

We also do not know whether the impact of restorative conferences are long-lasting as most evaluation follow-ups were relatively limited. In addition, most of the primary evaluations of restorative justice programmes were conducted almost 20 years ago and so we need more recent rigorous evaluations in this area. There is a need for further reviews also, particularly high-quality reviews that report effects on the involvement of children and young people in crime and violence, and which cover the full range of RJ programmes. Where future reviews also include evaluations implemented with adults, outcomes for children and young people should be reported independently. Ideally, future reviews would also report the results of moderator analyses independently for programmes implemented with children and young people also. This would allow us to better understand what works, when, with whom and in what context.

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Annex 1: Effect size calculations

This annex shows the calculations based on the results and assumptions given in the text. We assume 200 youth, evenly divided between treatment and comparison groups. That means there are 100 youth in the control group and 100 youth in the treatment group. Assuming that 50% of youth in the control group reoffended, the mean effect sizes for both reviews can be easily transformed to a percentage reduction in the relevant outcome.

If the odds ratio for reoffending is 1.28 (Wong et al., 2016), then using the table below and the formula for an OR, we can estimate the value of X. The odds ratio is estimated as: $A*D/B*C$, where A is the number of youth in the treatment group who do not reoffend, B is the number of youth in the treatment group that do reoffend, C is the number of youth in the control group that do not reoffend, and D is the number of youth in the control group that do reoffend. Therefore, the value of X is 43.86 in the case of Wong et al. (2016).

	No reoffend	not Reoffend	Total
Treatment	100-x	x	100
Control	50	50	100

Therefore, the relative reduction in reoffending is $[(50 - 43.86)/50]*100 = 12.28\%$. In relation to the review by Strang et al. (2013) the value of X is 43.10 and the relative reduction in reoffending is 13.8%.

The prevalence of reoffending is likely to vary between different studies and can be influenced greatly by the type of outcome (e.g., self-report or official records) or the time frame (e.g., any reoffending in the past couple of months versus reoffending in the past year, or two years), etc. If we were to adjust our assumption that 50% of the control group reoffend, the relative reduction in the treatment group is not greatly affected.

For example, if we assume that 40% of the control group reoffended, the 2x2 table would be as follows and the value of X would 34.25 for the Wong et al. (2016) review. Therefore, the relative reduction is 14.38% (i.e., $(40 - 34.25)/40*100$).

	Do not reoffend	Reoffend	Total
Treatment	100-x	x	100
Control	60	40	100

Similarly, if we assume that 60% of the control group reoffend, the value of X is 53.96 for the Wong et al. (2016) review, and the relative reduction in reoffending is 10.06%. Given, the dramatic difference in the assumed prevalence of delinquency, the percentage relative reduction does not vary greatly. Table 3 shows this further.

Table 3

Variation of the relative reduction in reoffending depending on different assumptions.

	Strang et al. (2013); OR = 1.32	Wong et al. (2016) OR = 1.28
Assumed prevalence	Relative reduction	
40%	16.1%	14.38%
50%	13.8%	12.28%
60%	11.35%	10.06%

Annex 2: Implementation analysis

Intervention	Success factors	Challenges	What children and young people say
<p>Evaluation of 46 restorative justice projects funded by YJB (Wilcox and Hoyle, 2004)</p>	<p>Good communication and training for all agencies. Allowing victim support to introduce YoT RJ contact where victim support already in contact. Better that YoT RJ contact victim than the police as they have more time and understanding of RJ.</p>	<p>Contacting victims, mainly because of differing interpretation of data protection law by the different police forces. Low levels of referrals because of poor communications, lack of understanding of services. Independent projects had more problems with referrals, contacting victims and communications. Time pressure on YOTs to process offenders meant insufficient time for RJ procedures Over reliance on community reparation as 'easy option' for reparation rather than a reparation related to the crime itself. Problems in recruiting staff and variable quality of training</p>	<p>Direct quotes not provided but surveys show the large majority agreed the intervention helped them to take responsibility for their offence, they understood better the effect their offence had on the victim, able to put offence behind them, they were treated with respect/listened to, and that their participation was clearly voluntary.</p>

<p>Mackie et al, 2014</p> <p>Youth Restorative Intervention Evaluation Final report</p> <p>Youth Restorative Intervention (YRI) is an alternative to youth caution, youth conditional caution and prosecution. This is an initiative by Surrey Police and Surrey County Council.</p> <p>It involves pre-court disposal for young offenders admitting offence who are under the age of 18. It also involves encouraging offender to access the services of Youth Support Services (YSS).</p> <p>YRI follows the principles of a good restorative practice. It involves direct or indirect mediation and voluntary and face-to-face communication of both the parties. The offenders take the responsibility of the offence and no criminal conviction takes place at the completion of YRI. Also, the</p>	<p>Consistent and strong leadership committed to restorative principles</p> <p>Good relationship of offenders with YRI key workers</p> <p>Victim satisfaction with the support offered by the staff</p>	<p>Lack of sufficient parental/carer involvement with the staff except for in more complex cases</p>	<p>The victim satisfaction survey suggests that there were high level of satisfaction (about 91 per cent) with their level of involvement in the YRI process. The break up suggests that as many as 50 per cent were 'completely satisfied' while about 41 per cent reported that they were 'satisfied'.</p> <p>The offender satisfaction survey by YRI suggests that as many as 92 per cent reported that the involvement in the YRI made them think about the victim and how it affected them. Also, as high as 98 per cent reported that participation in YRI process was useful for restricting them to commit another crime.</p> <p>Some of the offenders reported YRI as a 'wake-up call' for moving forward positively in their lives. "Moving forward" implied reparation as a part of YRI and involved registration for training or college courses.</p>
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<p>restorative outcomes are realistic, credible and fair.</p>			<p>Most young persons reported that YRI was there to help them. One of the young persons reported: <i>“Yeah, well you’ve got to (comply) really, they’re stopping you from going to court so they’re actually helping you, the police can just say “we’re going to court” but the Youth Support Service, they say “we’ll do this and then if they do that again ..”, “it’s your own choice because you’ve had the opportunity to sort it out and you haven’t, so it’s your choice really, if you want to take it, take it, if you don’t ...”.</i></p>
<p>Gloucestershire Youth Forums, an arts-based restorative intervention Payne et al. (2020): eight forum sessions, involving young people aged between 11 and 20, with the majority aged between 13 and 16. The lowest number at a session was 10 and the highest 12. Between eight and 10 officers were in attendance at each session, with roles including neighbourhood</p>	<p>The arts-based activities to break down barriers and challenge preconceptions The promotion of parity in interpersonal interactions was important Police officers were keen to explore how they might increase communication and interaction with young people in situations that did not revolve around crime The positive interactions between the groups added</p>	<p>The CYP who took part were not those police officers felt were the most problematic Perception that families and peers will undo the progress made</p>	<p>I just didn’t like the police –I just didn’t like them at all. I can see now they’re not all the same. (YP) I know now that if I show respect to the police, they will give me respect back. (YP) Not going to judge coppers like I used to. (YP) I feel more confident about talking to the police now after this. (YP)</p>

<p>policing, response policing and criminal investigation</p>	<p>personalism with emphasis given to emphasising the 'human' element</p>		<p>I feel much more comfortable now to interact in the street with the police; I didn't before. (YP) I know now that I should not be scared to go up to the police and talk to them. (YP)</p>
<p>Restorative justice approaches in young people's residential units in Hertfordshire. Littlechild and Sender, 2010</p> <p>RJ was introduced to tackle interpersonal conflicts, as well as residents' criminal and anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>Hertfordshire County Council staff also used mediation in conjunction with RJ and used both formal and informal approaches to RJ. The combination of RJ, mediation and other methods is referred as Relational Conflict Resolution (RCR).</p>	<p>Context-specific use of RJ approach as a base and a mix of formal and informal approaches that bend more towards informal approaches in RUs compared to the criminal justice system settings.</p> <p>Informal conferences can work better, and that is most common in the residential units. But formal meetings appreciated by some staff as 'send a message'.</p> <p>Good relationship between the staff and young person.</p>	<p>CYP may just pay lip service. Difficult to implement with children with disabilities or learning difficulties, or attachment disorder.</p> <p>Delays between incident and the conference.</p> <p>Punitive attitudes by victim. Staff don't 'get it' even after training.</p> <p>Meetings can go wrong if the perpetrator is not keen to do it.</p> <p>Everyday conflict RUs is a differmet setting to most RJ. One of the residents at Uprove unit shared;</p> <p><i>"Each day there is, like, a conflict – it depends on the conflict and stuff. I can't really tell you, like. It's just all different every day."</i></p>	<p>Young people reported that RJ was a useful way not only for dealing with conflicts and resolving problems through formal and informal meetings but also to let them express their feelings and a chance to understand the perspectives of other residents, victims and staff.</p> <p>Most young people viewed RJ as a positive method while some had mixed views about it as evident in the narrative of one of the young persons at Queensdale unit:</p> <p><i>"Well, it helps the young person realise the problem and will hopefully try and sort that situation out...calming and as easily as possible. Sometimes there is a negative effect when young people 'kick off' and can be quite threatening and quite dangerous to other people and property."</i></p>

		<p>RU is also prone to abuse of power in mediation and RJ and the victim may further be bullied or victimised during the RJ process. The staff found bullying as a major challenge in the RUs.</p> <p>Unsuitability of training for the RUs where more formal approaches are not feasible</p>	<p>“Well, it helps the young person realise the problem and will hopefully try and sort that situation out...calming and as easily as possible. Sometimes there is a negative effect when young people ‘kick off’ and can be quite threatening and quite dangerous to other people and property.” (Staff)</p> <p>One child found the meetings boring: “...goes into meetings, doesn’t pay any attention and then walks out of meetings.</p>
<p>Lacey 2012</p> <p>Youth Justice in England and Wales: Exploring young offenders’ perceptions of restorative and procedural justice in the referral order process</p> <p>Referral orders are an important constituent of restorative justice and aim at encouraging offenders to understand the consequences of their behaviour, and an opportunity to amend their</p>	<p>Trustworthiness and participation of teachers and youth workers, neutrality of police and a dignified and respectful treatment by these people.</p> <p>Where there was a good relationship with the worker in charge of reparation work, CYP continued to attend voluntarily after they were no longer required to do so.</p>	<p>Unequal power relationship between young people and police officers</p> <p>Lack of respect and dignity during stop and search/ arrests that young people believed were based on the biases of police officers rather than their code of conduct.</p> <p>Lack of information and support given to children and their parents prior to attending court.</p>	<p>Reparation work more positively viewed if seen as ‘meaningful’ (not work for the sake of it), including acquiring new skills. Generally not seen as punishment, even described as ‘fun’ and had pride in their work.</p> <p>But if tasks seem arbitrary or pointless than CYP may be frustrated and feel it is punishment.</p> <p>However, the idea that the work was ‘paying back’ was not widely understood by the CYP in one team,</p>

<p>mistakes and join the law-abiding community. Referral orders are aimed at providing a platform different from formal court proceedings and facilitating discussion of offence and reaching an agreement to bring a contract that the offender must follow.</p> <p>The study discusses young people's experiences with a variety of authorities engaged in the restorative justice process.</p> <p>Restoration includes (i) reparation work, which takes various forms but is not directly linked to the offense; (ii) victim awareness (though none met their victims); (iii) apology letters.</p>			<p>but better in the other where the task was more clearly of value of the community, and the YOT worker explain this function.</p> <p>Victim awareness often seen as boring but CYP did recall the lesson of consequences for the victim and their family.</p> <p>Some CYP happy to write letters of apology, but others not if they were not remorseful normally as felt victim also to blame for the incident.</p>
<p>Willis 2020</p> <p>Two interventions in an English working class town:</p> <p>Neighbourhood Resolution Forum (NRF), a community-level initiative which was a partnership</p>		<p>Working class participants are more likely to be anxious about speaking in a public setting and less able to articulate their views.</p>	

between the local council and the police force. Youth Offender Team (YOT) RJ activities			
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Annex 3: AMSTAR Rating

Modified AMSTAR item		Scoring guide	Restorative Justice	
			Strang et al. (2013)	Wong et al. (2016)
1	Did the research questions and inclusion criteria for the review include the components of the PICOS?	To score 'Yes' appraisers should be confident that the 5 elements of PICO are described somewhere in the report	Yes	Yes
2	Did the review authors use a comprehensive literature search strategy?	At least two bibliographic databases should be searched (partial yes) plus at least one of website searches or snowballing (yes).	Yes	Yes
3	Did the review authors perform study selection in duplicate?	Score yes if double screening or single screening with independent check on at least 5-10%	No	No
4	Did the review authors perform data extraction in duplicate?	Score yes if double coding	No	No
5	Did the review authors describe the included studies in adequate detail?	Score yes if a tabular or narrative summary of included studies is provided.	Yes	No
6	Did the review authors use a satisfactory technique for assessing the risk of bias (RoB) in individual studies that were included in the review?	Score yes if there is any discussion of any source of bias such as attrition, and including publication bias.	Yes	Partial Yes
7	Did the review authors provide a satisfactory explanation for, and discussion of, any heterogeneity observed in the results of the review?	Yes if the authors report heterogeneity statistic. Partial yes if there is some discussion of heterogeneity.	Yes	Yes

8	Did the review authors report any potential sources of conflict of interest, including any funding they received for conducting the review?	Yes if authors report funding and mention any conflict of interest	Yes Medium	Yes Low
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