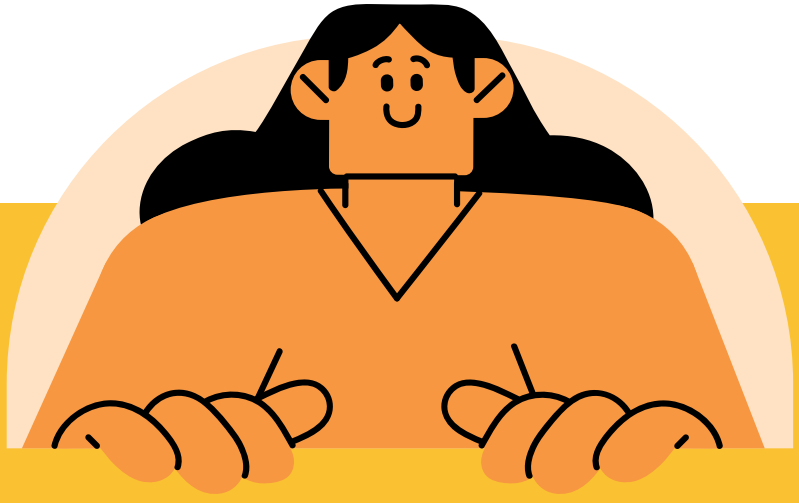


RESTORATIVE JUSTICE - THE EVIDENCE:
A PILOT FOR THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM OF ENGLAND & WALES

IMPLEMENTING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN YOUTH JUSTICE SETTINGS: SHARED PRACTICE MODEL

PRACTICAL GUIDE

Restorative Justice Series no 63

RJ4ALL PUBLICATIONS
coram INSTITUTE FOR CHILDREN
Youth Justice Board
YOUTH ENDOWMENT FUND

RJ4All Publications

https://www.rj4allpublications.com/

contact@rj4allpublications.com | https://rj4all.org/

RJ4All Publications is an independent publisher specialising in social sciences and the publication of cutting-edge research on restorative justice, criminal justice, equality and human rights. RJ4All Publications is the publishing arm of the Restorative Justice for All (RJ4All) International Institute, and the publisher of the international, peer reviewed Youth Voice Journal (YVJ™) and the Internet Journal of Restorative Justice (IJIR®)

Restorative Justice for All (RJ4All) International Institute is an international Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) with a mission to advance community and social cohesion at the local, national and international levels. Through our programmes, we redistribute power within society using education and the values and practices of restorative justice.

First published in the UK in 2026 by RJ4All Publications

©2026 RJ4All

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of RJ4All, or as expressly permitted by law or licence or under terms agreed with the appropriate reprographics rights organisation. You must not circulate this publication in any other form and you must impose the same condition on any acquirer.

Trademark notice: “Restorative Justice for All”, “Internet Journal of Restorative Justice”, “IJIR®”, the Youth Voice Journal, “YVJ™”, the RJ4All Logo, the IJRJ® Logo and the YVJ™ logo are all trademarks of Restorative Justice for All International Institute cic. All rights reserved. Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only in good faith and for identification purposes.

Database right RJ4All Publications (maker)

British Library Cataloguing in Publication

Data ISBN 978-1-80463-078-5

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19846701

TABLE OF CONTENT

Table of Acronyms 5

Figures 5

Foreword 7

Preface and Acknowledgements 8

Introduction 10

Guide context and background 10

How restorative justice is currently implemented: The Guide's remit 10

Why restorative justice now? 11

The Shared Practice Model and Randomised Control Trials' objectives 12

Participating Youth Justice Services 12

Restorative Justice Practitioners' Board 14

Methodology 14

How to Use the Guide 15

The legal and policy framework 16

Laws in England and Wales 16

UK non-statutory guidance, policy frameworks and standards 16

International laws, guidance and policy frameworks 17

The Conceptual Framework 18

Definitions 18

Restorative Justice 18

Restorative Justice Practice (Direct/ Indirect) 18

Restorative Justice ethos 19

Restorative Justice Outcome 19

Violence 19

Harming Party 19

Young peoples' profiles and Victim - Harmed Party 19

Community 20

Complex Restorative Justice Cases 20

Restorative Justice Practitioner & Senior Restorative Justice Practitioner 20

Human Rights 20

The Pre-Requisites for success ('red lines') 21

The Evaluation Framework 22

Background and initial evaluation intentions 22

Theory of Change 23

Proceeding with Caution 25

Indicators of impact 25
Indicators & impact: what we know so far from the literature 25
Reduction of re-offending (recidivism) & resilience 25
Offenders' Satisfaction 27
Victim Satisfaction 28
Victim Monetary/ material Compensation 29
Victim Non-material Compensation 29
Benefits for Communities 30
Indicators of Impact: Findings from the co-design phase with young people 31
The Pilot Rct's Outcome Variables 34

Practical Framework: The Shared Practice Model 36

SPM's Core elements 36

The 10 Steps towards SPM's delivery and timeline for case work 36
Step 1: Beyond Risk-Need-Responsivity 37
Step 2: Understand and Manage Power 38
Step 3: Child First: Do No [Further] Harm & the restorative justice red lines 38
Step 4: The restorative justice offer/ referral and the right to be informed 39
Step 5: Preparatory stage 40
Step 6: Risk Assessment 41
Step 7: The encounter (direct or indirect) 42
Step 8: Reaching Restorative Justice Outcomes 43
Step 9: Monitoring Restorative Justice Outcomes 44
Step 10: Follow-Up Holistic Support – the restorative justice ethos 45

Annex I: Delivery and Evaluation Pilot Checklist for practitioners 47
Stage 47
Delivery 47
Evaluation 47
Checklist 47

Annex II: Practical Framework 10 Steps Checklist for Practitioners 51
Step 1: Move Beyond Risk–Need–Responsivity (RNR) 51
Step 2: Understand and Manage Power 52
Step 3: Child First – Do No [Further] Harm & Restorative Justice Red Lines 53
Step 4: The Restorative Justice Offer / Referral and the Right to Be Informed 54
Step 5: Preparatory Stage 56
Step 6: Risk Assessment 58
Step 7: The Encounter (Direct or Indirect) 60
Step 8: Reaching Restorative Justice Outcomes 62
Step 9: Monitoring Restorative Justice Outcomes 64
Step 10: Follow-Up Holistic Support – The Restorative Justice Ethos 66

Annex III: The RJ4All team **67**

Annex IV: Evidencing Child First – Decision Making Tool **69**

Annex V: Theory of Change (table and figure) **77**

References **79**

TABLE OF ACRONYMS

CDA	Crime and Disorder Act 1998
CoE	Council of Europe
CPD	Continuing Professional Development certificate
ECHR	European Convention of Human Rights
E&DP	Evaluation and Development Phase
PP	Planning Phase
RJ	Restorative Justice
RJPB	Restorative Justice Practitioner Board
RJ4All	Restorative Justice for All International Institute
RNR	Risk-Need-Responsivity Model
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SPM	Shared-Practice Model
ToC	Theory of Change
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
WHO	World Health Organisation
YEF	Youth Endowment Fund
YJB	Youth Justice Board for England and Wales
YJS	Youth Justice Service
YJSTs	Youth Justice Service Teams

FIGURES

Figure 1 Restorative Justice Practices in the Youth Justice System	11
Figure 2 Theory of Change	23
Figure 3 What made you want to take part in a restorative justice meeting?	32
Figure 4: What do you think restorative justice should achieve for young people like you?	32
Figure 5: If you agreed to take part in a meeting, what would help you get ready for it? .	32

FOREWORD

STEPHANIE ROBERTS-BIBBY

(CHIEF EXECUTIVE - YOUTH JUSTICE BOARD)

The Youth Justice Board is pleased to support this important work to strengthen the evidence base for restorative approaches within the youth justice system in England and Wales. Restorative justice plays a crucial role in helping children to understand the impact of their actions, take responsibility and move forward with more positive identities and futures. It is not simply about repairing harm but putting victims front and centre of the criminal justice system. When delivered well, restorative approaches can support healing for victims, strengthen communities, and build confidence in how we respond to harm. Achieving this consistently is essential.

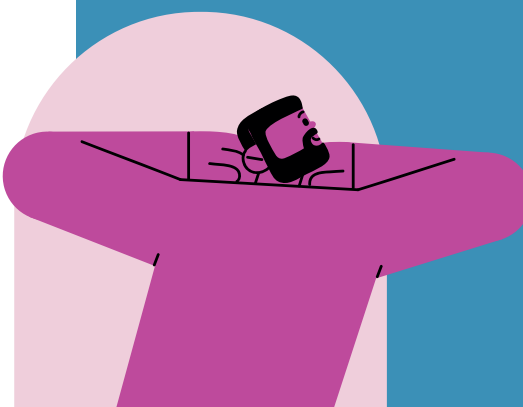
Restorative practice has been part of the youth justice system since the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Its potential has long been recognised, yet the way restorative justice is delivered, and the evidence of its impact, has varied across the system. This guide represents an important step forward. It strengthens our shared understanding of what effective restorative practice looks like and how it can be delivered with greater consistency.

Bringing together contemporary research, practitioner expertise and the voices of children who have experienced restorative processes, this work introduces a shared practice model designed to support confident, high-quality delivery. It provides a clearer foundation for practice while recognising the importance of professional judgement and the realities of local contexts. It also reflects key YJB principles that restorative processes must be voluntary, safe, appropriate and aligned with the Victims' Code and recognised practice standards, in line with our Case Management Guidance. The emphasis on neutrality, rights, and safeguarding is particularly welcome and aligns strongly with our commitment to Child First practice.

I strongly encourage practitioners from across the sector to read and draw on this guide to strengthen practice where appropriate and safe to do so. Not only does it offer both reassurance and ambition, but it reinforces the value of restorative justice as a powerful tool for supporting children, responding meaningfully to victims, and strengthening communities. At its heart is our shared commitment to consistent, evidence-informed practice that enables children to build safer and more positive futures and makes our communities safer.

Stephanie Roberts-Bibby

Chief Executive of the Youth Justice Board



PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PROF. THEO GAVRIELIDES, PHD

FOUNDER & DIRECTOR – RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FOR ALL INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE

Restorative justice practices have been formally part of the youth justice system in England and Wales for over two decades although there is evidence to suggest that informally they date as back as the ancient civilisations. Since the passing of the CDA, a consistent message from all governments was that there are "No More Excuses" and that we should do better for our young people. While acknowledging the value of traditional, punitive approaches, the promise of restorative justice has not been fully explored.

Having been in the restorative justice field for almost three decades, I was thrilled when the opportunity to contribute to the evidence base of restorative justice came up. During my years of practice, I have seen the potential and unique contribution of restorative justice, but also its risks and failed promises. Understanding the factors that lead to success or failure, as well as the evidence that should inform policy could be a game changer for our youth justice system.

This Guide takes an evidence-based, neutral approach to using restorative justice, reaffirming the higher position that human rights, equity and victims' rights have. Moreover, a key objective of this Guide is to support a critical and reflective approach to restorative justice. It is removed from politics, power-interest battles and vested interests that do not serve young people. It is also presented at a critical time for the youth justice system as laws, codes of practice and policies are being reviewed. These changes are expected to put more emphasis on restorative justice whether applied in the adult or youth justice systems.

This Guide is the result of an intense journey of evidence gathering which started in July 2025 and was completed in December of the same year. It adopted a co-design process which involved the recruitment and enthusiastic engagement of 10 Youth Justice Services teams. It also created a Restorative Justice Practitioners Board with 5 members and 2 advisors who also formed part of the fieldwork. Moreover, 15 young people who had offended and experienced restorative justice were also included in the research. These original findings were combined with evidence from the extant literature, **The Restorative Justice Practice Framework: A non-statutory international Guide**, RJ4All's expertise in research, policy, evaluation and practice as well as consultations with YEF, YJB and Coram.

I had the pleasure of authoring the Guide which would not have been possible

without the active and enthusiastic contribution of Carmen Costa and Ronja Healy Karlsson RJ4All, Langley Kate from the YJB, Max Stanford and Emily Blackshaw from Coram, Susan Bello, Yasmin Jeddaoui and Shola Apena Rogers from YEF. I was humbled by the keen interest of many Youth Justice Services teams to participate in the programme, and I am particularly grateful to the ten that have been selected (Cambridgeshire Youth Justice Service, Cardiff Youth Justice Service, Buckinghamshire Youth Justice Service, Isle of Wight Youth Justice Service, Lambeth Youth Justice Service, Leeds Youth Justice Service, Northamptonshire Youth Justice Service, Salford Youth Justice Service, West Mercia Youth Justice Service, Southwark Youth Justice Service).

INTRODUCTION

GUIDE CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

This Guide has been produced as part of the programme "Restorative Justice – the evidence: A pilot for the youth justice system of England and Wales". The programme is funded by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) and supported by the Youth Justice Board of England and Wales (YJB) The Restorative Justice for All International Institute (RJ4All) is the delivery partner for the programme. Coram is the independent, evaluation partner.

The programme was developed in response to a gap in scientific evidences on the effectiveness of restorative justice (RJ) in the youth justice system (YJS) of England and Wales (Banwell-Moore, 2022; Gavrielides, 2011a, 2025c; Strang et al., 2013). Attempts were made by the YJB to bridge this evidence gap, but this was incomplete as it was faced with a number of challenges (Wilcox & Hoyle, 2004; Youth Justice Board, 2004)[iii]. RJ's delivery varies significantly across YJSTs, and there is limited publicly available information on what is delivered, how it is delivered, and with what outcomes. Evidence on its impact for children and young people across the UK also remains scarce (Banwell-Moore, 2022; Gavrielides, 2012; Skinner et al., 2025; Strang et al., 2013). It is also important to acknowledge that there is no regulatory body for RJ and past attempts to create a practitioners' register failed (Gavrielides, 2013b; Gavrielides, 2019). To overcome the barriers faced by previous studies, the project sought to co-design a SPM that will be applied across all the participating YJSTs during the RCTs. This involved identifying and defining the core components of RJ's delivery, and the minimum shared elements that each YJST will incorporate into their practice.

HOW RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IS CURRENTLY IMPLEMENTED: THE GUIDE'S REMIT

Restorative justice is largely used for **education, resilience building, victim awareness and general prevention**. This is done both by formal (e.g. schools) or informal (e.g. community-based organisations) structures. This Guide does not cover this type of delivery.

The Guide covers the implementation of restorative justice practices in the formal youth justice system. Restorative justice practices have been formally part of the YJS since the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (CDA) although there is evidence to suggest that informally they date as back as the ancient civilisations (Gavrielides, 2011b). A case may be referred to restorative justice as part of a "**sentence**" through any of the following routes:

- out-of-court resolution (OOCR)
- Youth Restorative Disposals (YRDs)
- Youth Conditional Caution
- Referral Order
- Youth Rehabilitation Order.

The Guide also acknowledges that restorative justice can be used for any type of sentence and at any time within the youth justice process:

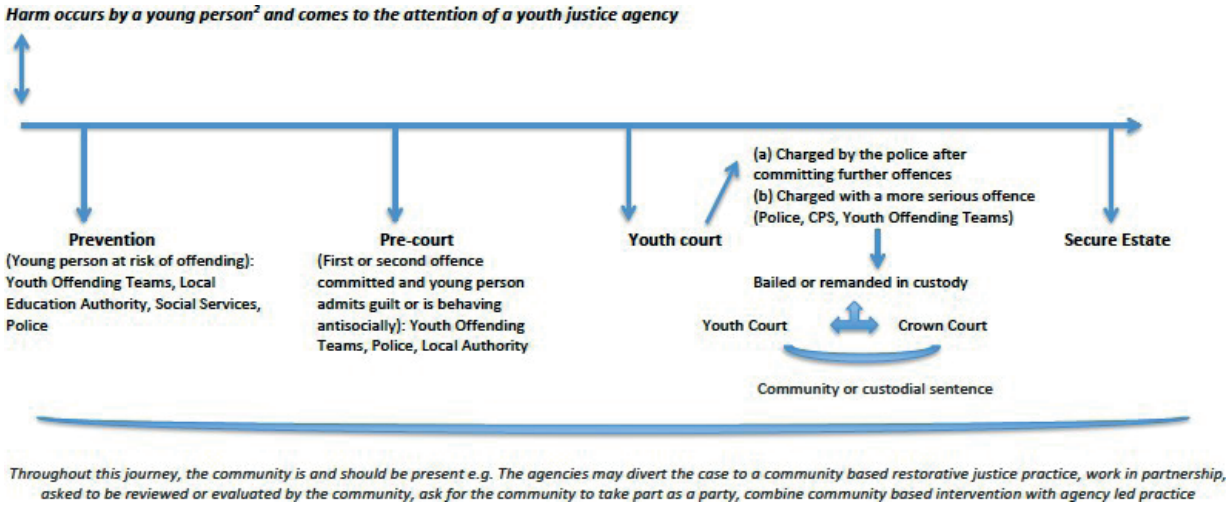


Figure 1 Restorative Justice Practices in the Youth Justice System

Restorative justice can also be delivered with young people within:

√ youth offending institutions
√ secure training centres
√ secure children's homes[iv].
√ probation (after their release).

WHY RESTORATIVE JUSTICE NOW?

Since 1997, UK governments have accepted that there are "No More Excuses" (Straw, 1997) in getting it right for young people. Increasing concerns around youth violence and children and young peoples' safety and rights led to the passing of the CDA and the creation of dedicated institutions to support a better YJS (Crawford & Newburn, 2003).
YEF and the YJB acknowledge that more needs to be done to provide children and young people with alternatives and a more effective YJS. Statistics for the year ending March 2023 from England and Wales painted a daunting picture of youth justice (Youth Justice Board, 2024). For instance, stop and searches of children surged by 13%, with Black children representing 20% of those stopped, a stark overrepresentation. Arrests of children also rose by 9%, while first-time entrants into the system increased by 1%, marking the first uptick in a decade. Additionally, the percentage of children held in custody on remand doubled over the past ten years, now standing at 44% of the population. Sentencing of children saw its first increase in a decade, alongside a rise in the reoffending rate for the first time in eight years. Equally disappointing is the unconstrained exposure to violence online. A recent study conducted by YEF, involving 7,500 teenagers aged 13-17 in England and Wales, revealed alarming statistics: 60% of children witnessed real-world acts of violence on social media. This percentage surged to over 85% among children most vulnerable to involvement with violence (Youth Endowment Fund, 2023). Along with these, notably, youth cautions decreased by 4% from the previous year, with a staggering 84% decline since 2013, and for the second consecutive year, fewer cautions were issued to Black children while increasing for White children (Youth Justice Board, 2024). These trends underscore systemic disparities and challenges within the YJS, while nothing implies a successful system dealing with youth offending. Looking at the financial implications for the YJS of England and Wales, putting one young person in prison costs as much as £140,000 per year (£100,000 in direct costs and £40,000 in indirect costs once they are released) (Knuutila, 2010). Two thirds of the YJB budget, or about £300 million a year, is spent on prisons, while the money it uses for prevention is roughly one-tenth of its budget (Youth Justice Board, 2009).

@RJ4ALL

RJ4ALL

@RJ4ALL

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FOR ALL INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FOR ALL (RJ4ALL) INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE

9 781804 630785

RJ4ALL INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
30 PLOUGH WAY LONDON SE16 2LJ
+44(0)7708758600 | +44 7502 201799
WWW.RJ4ALL.ORG

RJ4ALL PUBLICATIONS