

# Facing Forward: Restorative Possibilities in Serious Crime?



mediating the human impact of crime

# Our core values

valuing each person  
restoring relationships  
transforming conflict  
creating justice together  
seeking to repair the harm



# A note on Terminology and language

- Useful RJ definition
- Labels: “offender” and “victim”
- What do we mean by “serious” crime?



# Who we are

- A group of trained mediators and others who have experience of working with offenders and with survivors of every type of crime including serious crime, and with people who have experienced trauma, including ex-combatants
- To support the introduction of restorative approaches based on best practice that has emerged in other countries
- Established in 2005



# Training received

Over the past 7 years we have received specialist training in restorative practices for serious crime from:

- Marian Liebmann, UK
- Ken Cloke, USA
- Dave Gustafson, Canada
- Kristel Buntinx, Belgium
- Janine Geske, USA
- Mark Umbreit, USA



# Management Committee

People from a variety of backgrounds including:

- Mediation and conflict resolution
- Youth offending, criminal justice and policing
- Survivor support
- Psychology, therapy and trauma
- Community development
- Peace and reconciliation work.

Member based, voluntary organisation



# Our vision

- Working with all individuals touched by the ripple effects of crime and whose needs are not adequately met by the Criminal Justice System
- Extending restorative practices into serious crime
- Our work is embedded in a Human Rights framework with dignity and respect for all human beings at its core



# Why serious crime?

- 98% - 2%
- Most RJ is diversionary and court-based
- International practice for the 2% of RJ with serious crime is guided by the needs and the safety of the survivor



# Why serious crime? cont.

- International research led by Sherman, L. and Strang H. in 2007 shows that “in general, Restorative Justice seems to reduce crime more effectively with more, rather than less, serious crimes”.

# Our Restorative Practices

- Seek to engage both the people who have been harmed and those who have caused harm by serious crime in a parallel journey of conversations to understand and repair the human impact of the crime. These practices include direct victim-offender dialogue (VOD) and circle work
- Recognise the importance of careful and lengthy preparation
- Voluntary process



# The next steps

- We are consulting with:
  - Statutory agencies
  - Victim support agencies
  - Prison chaplains and
  - Others
- Initiating careful pilot work in serious crime. This will incorporate detailed evaluation to minimise risk and optimise potential benefits

# Research project

- Research title: *Sexual Trauma and Abuse: Restorative and Transformative possibilities?*
- Facing Forward and Dr Marie Keenan, UCD School of Applied Social Science



# Context

- National Commission on RJ
- Expanded diversion and court-based work – Probation Service and Garda Siochana
- IPS Strategic Plan
- Northern Ireland
- Government policy



# Find out more

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