



**Essex Restorative
& Mediation
Service**

**19 ANNUAL
20 REPORT**

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Foreword

The continued successful use of Restorative Justice in Essex, both to help victims recover, and to reduce reoffending among perpetrators, is something that makes us proud. The achievements of our service here in Essex are demonstrated by the feedback from the people who have taken part. 93 per cent of participants report being satisfied with the experience and 78 per cent say Restorative Justice had a positive impact on them.

Our service makes a real difference to people's lives, making such an impact on the welfare of victims, helping them to move forward. We continue to develop and embed Restorative Justice and practices for the 5th year running. This year we welcomed a new full time Administrator and interim Restorative Justice and Mediation Service delivery manager. This report also sees the introduction of new data on reoffending rates of those involved in Restorative Justice; enabling us to understand the impact of our service and enable comparators with other services.

Since April last year, our incredibly committed and hard-working Restorative Justice volunteers have logged more than 900 hours of service and completed 63 successful outcomes for cases they have been involved with. The service would not be able to function without their dedication and we would like to say thank you to them for that.

Our volunteers really strengthen our relationships within the communities we serve and makes the Service one of the most efficient schemes in the country. Their skills bring people together, which is especially important in these difficult times.

Roger Hirst
Police, Fire and Crime
Commissioner for Essex



One year at a glance...

We continue to monitor feedback from referrers and participants, receiving a return rate of 23%. Participant satisfaction rates have maintained at 93% so we know that once someone engages, they feel the benefit. 78% reported a positive impact and we received a 4.9 / 5 average star rating for facilitator satisfaction and a 4.7 / 5 average star rating for overall service satisfaction. We also measured our referrer feedback; 100% would refer to our service again.

“

I was very anxious prior to the meeting but it was run with respect to everyone and I think it is a good tool for potentially difficult situations.

”



303

TOTAL
REFERRALS
2019-2020



93%

PARTICIPANT
SATISFACTION



78%

POSITIVE
IMPACT ON
PARTICIPANT



100%

REFERRERS
WHO WOULD
REFER AGAIN

Overall, we received a drop of 146 referrals with almost every referral source sending fewer referrals compared to 2018. This could be due to several factors including reduced resources in both the RJ and partner organisations and a focus on quality rather than quantity. For example, the RJ team have pushed for a reduction in low-quality 'letter of apology' referrals due to this having little impact on victim or offender but requiring resource from the small ERMS team. Additionally, we are no longer receiving cases which aren't suitable (such as possession of drugs or weapons). Perhaps rather than increasing more positive restorative outcomes, this push may have caused individuals to not refer at all. To mitigate this, training has been amended to include 'quality' referrals and we have adapted our referral processes within Essex Police. As of August 1st, 2019 – where we have started to see a decrease in referrals from Police - Police non-court disposals are now received via the Out of Court disposal team who act as a gatekeeper. This means we should

be challenging poor quality referrals less often, thereby reducing unnecessary work for the Restorative and Mediation Service. For other referral sources decreasing in referrals, these will be raised during our Restorative Justice Strategic Board meetings, with awareness sessions being offered to ensure RJ is embedded consistently throughout the Criminal Justice System (CJS).

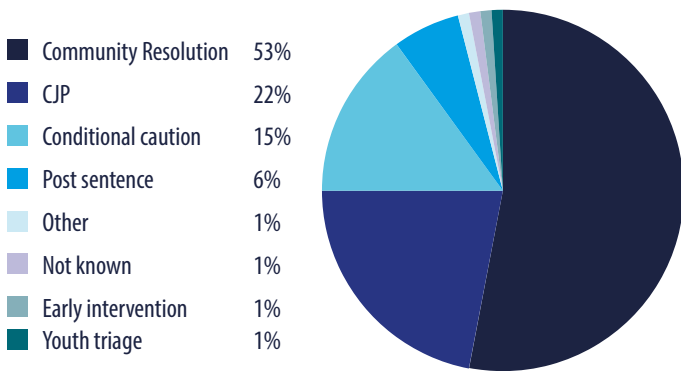
“

Facilitators were brilliant, understanding and impartial all the time. Very nice people; didn't judge.

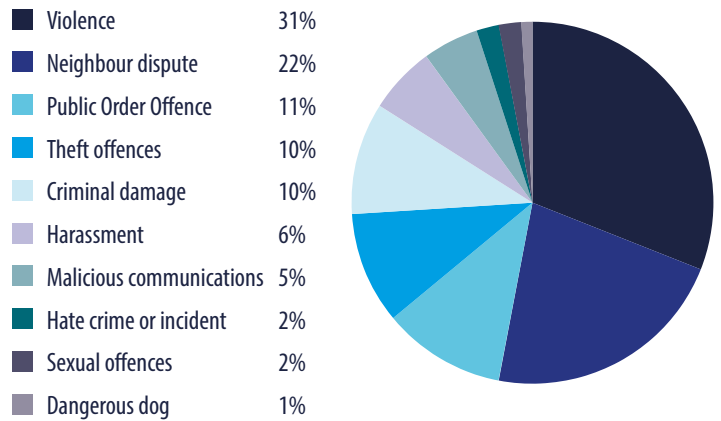
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We delivered an effective service

Referral type



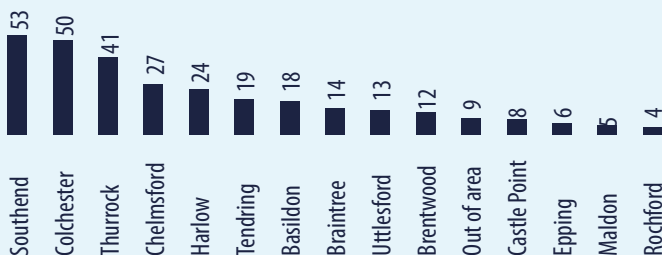
Incident type



Same as last year, Community Resolutions continue to be our most common referral type, making up 53% of our referrals. This was followed by Community Justice Panels (22%) and Conditional Cautions (15%). The lowest referral types were Post Sentence (7%). Part of the business plan for 2020 is to monitor and challenge when referral numbers are low and identify potential new areas of business.

Looking at referrals by incident, the highest referrals continue to be violence (89), neighbourhood disputes (63) and public order offences (30). Our lowest referral incidents were homicide (1), fraud offences (2) and driving offences (2). We will continue to target and increase our awareness sessions in teams who specialise in these areas, such as FLOs and detectives.

Referrals by area



In terms of referral by area, our highest referral areas continue to be Southend, Colchester and Thurrock. Our lowest referral by area was Rochford, where we only saw 4 referrals; a 69% decrease compared to last year. Our other lowest areas were Maldon (38%) and Epping (78%). We will look at offering refresher awareness sessions to teams who fall into these areas to increase these.

Cases declined



Declined	126
Unable to contact	88
Indirect	45
Direct	18

Decline reasons

Feel it's not appropriate	32
No wish to engage	21
Resolved themselves	19
Stopped responding	8
Changed their mind	8
Refusal to compromise	2
No issue to resolve	1



Case outcomes

We contacted 378 victims and 219 offenders to offer them a restorative process. 126 participants declined to engage and 88 were unable to contact, however 383 agreed to engage which resulted in 63 positive outcomes. This included 18 direct meetings and 45 indirect communication between participants.

Although indirect routes decreased by 30 compared to 2018, the number of direct meetings remained the same. There are still 25 active cases, meaning these numbers are likely to increase.



383
RESTORATIVE ENGAGEMENTS



63
POSITIVE OUTCOMES

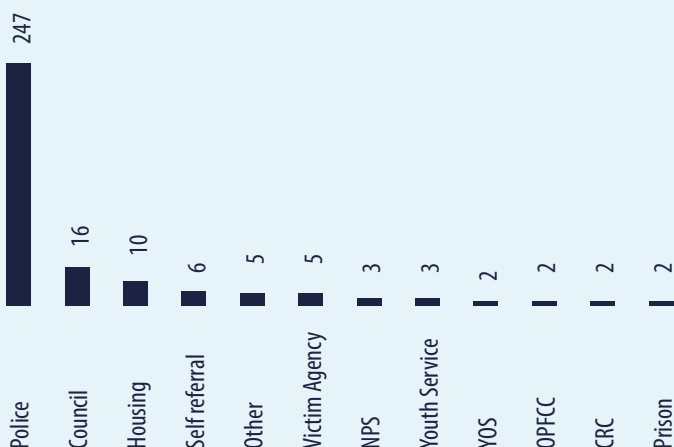


18
DIRECT MEETINGS



45
INDIRECT COMMUNICATIONS

Referrals by organisation



From April 2019 – March 2020 we received 303 referrals, a decrease of 33% from the previous year. Referrals increased from some sources such as victim services (a 400% increase), ECFRS (100%), Youth Services (300%) and self-referrals (50%). Some referral sources decreased such as prisons (a 67% decrease), National Probation Service (63%), Youth Offending Service (50%). Albeit a 37% decrease, our largest referral source continues to be from Police with 247 referrals.

Reoffending data

We reviewed referrals received between April – September 2017, interrogating only those with a successful restorative outcome. We reviewed whether the wrongdoer committed any further offences 6 months, 12 months and 3 years after the restorative process was

completed. Not every case has reached the three-year mark; these are still pending review.

When looking at all successful cases (RJ and mediation) between April – September 2017 we found the following:

Outcome:	Within 6 months	Within 12 months	Within 3 years
Re-offended	10 (10.64%)	22 (23.4%)	28 (29.79%)
Not re-offended	84 (89.36%)	72 (76.60%)	11 (11.70%)
To be reviewed	0	0	55
Total	94	94	94

We broke this down further into RJ cases and mediation cases:

Review of Restorative Justice cases:

Outcome:	Within 6 months	Within 12 months	Within 3 years
Re-offended	10 (13.33%)	22 (29.33%)	27 (36%)
Not re-offended	65 (86.6%)	53 (70.67%)	11 (14.67%)
To be reviewed	0	0	37
Total	75	75	75

Review of Mediation cases:

Outcome:	Within 6 months	Within 12 months	Within 3 years
Further known to Police	0	0	1 (5.26%)
No further reports to Police	19 (100%)	19 (100%)	0
To be reviewed	0	0	18
Total	19	19	19



The results show that a restorative process can have a positive impact on reducing re-offending and conflict. For cases where there was a clear victim / offender and restorative justice successfully took place, 87% of offenders did not commit offences within 6 months. Within 12 months, only 29% of offenders committed further offences¹. Although not all cases have been reviewed due to not reaching a 3-year period yet, only 35% of offenders have committed further offences within 3 years of completing restorative justice.

For mediation cases, outstandingly there were no further incidences reported to police within a year after mediation took place. This demonstrates just how powerful mediation can be in helping participants to manage conflict and find positive solutions without the need for further Police intervention.

¹ 92 out of 94 reviewed cases received a sentence of less than 12 months. The MOJ figures show the overall reoffending rate for adults serving sentences of less than 12 months had a proven reoffending rate of 63%.

“
The team were friendly, approachable and easy to speak to - listened patiently, kept me informed and called when they said they would, thank you.
”

Community Justice Panel Case Study

many thanks for all that you did to make this project the success that it was

Wilkin & Sons and Restorative Justice joint partnership project

What happened?

In autumn 2018, we were invited to work with an issue of criminal damage and antisocial behaviour at a local Wilkin & Sons jam factory. Factory employees and police had concerns that people trespassing and causing damage were affecting the crops, causing mess and posing a health and safety risk to themselves. This situation was escalating and recent criminal damage costs amounted to thousands of pounds to repair.

What we did

We spoke to all parties involved, including Wilkin & Sons staff, Essex Police and local school as those responsible were identified as youth members of community.

We arranged a two-day workshops where students from local school took part in a combined session around raising awareness of restorative justice, conflict resolution skills and also took part in a tour around the jam factory. This was designed to raise awareness of their work and the importance of maintaining a positive relationship between the jam factory and the local community.

Overall, over 200 students took part in the programme.

Students were given the opportunity to reflect on the importance of the factory, the impact of antisocial behaviour on others as well as to the opportunity to learn skills on how to resolve conflict. Some learning points received from students were:

“ Something one person does can affect many people; everything has a consequence. ”

“ Staying calm in a situation enables you to get your point across better. ”

“ You should listen to the other side of the story before making assumptions. ”

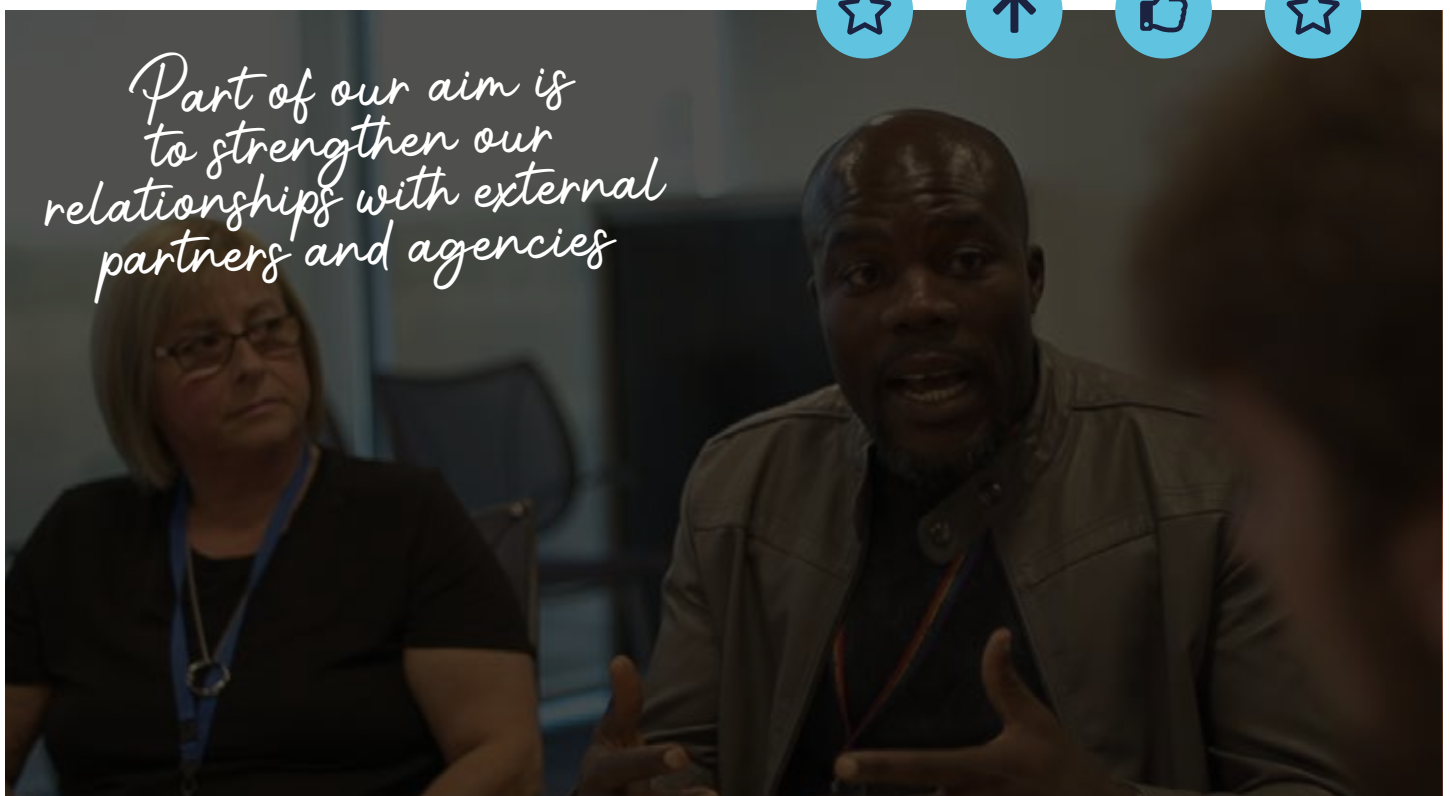
We raised awareness

Part of our aim is to strengthen our relationships with external partners and agencies. To achieve this, we aim to attend multi partner agency meetings. We attend the weekly Youth Out of Court Disposal panel to ensure RJ is considered for each case. Our volunteers regularly attend LAG meetings meaning we can encourage the use of CJs across the county and pick them up at the earliest opportunity. We also attend the reducing reoffending board, ensuring RJ remains part of the strategy throughout the criminal justice system due to the benefits of reducing reoffending. In November, we also attended the RJC annual conference and this was fed back and positively received by the RJ strategic board, one of the key take recommendations based on victim interviews' being that RJ should be offered at all stages of the CJS and that multiple offers should be made. Our networking led us to being approached to take part in university student interviews.

Awareness sessions were delivered to two Family Liaison Officer teams, Victim Support, Witness Care, 11 Local Policing Teams, 5 sessions for new Police recruits and new Detectives, National Probation Service, SASP board, Thurrock Council, the Out of Court Disposal Team, and

at a Hate Crime conference and strategic board. We also attended HMP Chelmsford and HMP Hollesley Bay to carry out three Firebreak sessions. Additionally, we delivered a lecture to a university, attended volunteer career fairs (organised by universities, volunteer centres, Essex Police) and have seen an increased amount of volunteer applications from younger members of our community, such as universities.

In order to promote our service to members of the public, we developed a case study video which highlights how our work in Southchurch Hall Gardens, including the use of a community meeting, has empowered residents to take ownership back of their community. This was published on the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner social media as well as directly on our website. We have also completed many successful cases where victims have consented to our media team to write up case studies, all of which are due to be published in 2020 to promote the good work that we do. One victim has expressed her gratitude to the service, despite the offender declining to engage, and consented to publicly talking about her experience via our media platforms.



We valued our volunteers

Our service wouldn't operate the way it did without the hard work of our 40 volunteers. They are our most valuable resource and have logged over 900 hours since April 2019.

In January 2020 we introduced the buddy scheme, with the purpose to continue new facilitator's training. It is an additional layer of development and support for new volunteers where experienced facilitators provide 'on the job' training to further develop and enhance their skills. This improves their confidence, allows experienced facilitators to pass on their knowledge, and encourages mutual learning. So far we have received six applications from facilitators who wish to pass on their expertise!

We arrange training for our volunteers as often as possible and try to offer varied and interesting sessions. This year we delivered 4 refresher sessions and trained them in other areas including trauma, drug and alcohol, stalking and harassment, and J9 training. We have also handpicked two experienced volunteers who are delighted to be promoted to our 'advanced' facilitator pool. They will attend complex and sensitive training later this year, enabling them to take on some of our most serious cases including sexual offences, domestic violence and homicide.

We try to ensure the work our volunteers receive is varied. This year they have attended a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) open day, Essex Police Health and Well-being day, and Parent & Child First-aid Training. We also offer as much support as possible and hosted 5 facilitator meetings this year to meet as a team and discuss cases, issues and best practice.

We take reward and recognition very seriously. In July 2019 we held a Volunteer Appreciation Event where certificates of long service and special mention were distributed. During National Volunteer week, we sent all our volunteers a letter of thanks and a honey jar as a token of our appreciation, asking them to keep being awesome! We are also proud that our volunteers were nominated for the Who Will Care Awards for their dedication and hard work. Furthermore, we were also shortlisted for the Lord Ferrers Awards, receiving a personal letter of thank you by MP Kit Malthouse in recognition of the fantastic contribution to volunteering in policing.

As our volunteers are essential to the effective running of our service, we regularly collate feedback from them. It's very pleasing to hear such positive feedback from our volunteers, including:

I always feel supported

The in-house training is excellent

It is obvious how much the team care and make us feel valued

This is the best management I've had

I always feel involved

Future Focus

There should be stronger challenge to areas with low volume / quality of referrals.

As such we have made the following priorities:

1 Increase post-charge referrals

Given that post-charge referrals only made up 7% of our referrals, this is one of our main priorities. Some police officers see RJ only as a disposal method. This can prevent them from discussing RJ for anything other than low level crimes. Their high workloads also put pressure on them to clear cases quickly meaning that clear referral routes to RJ are important to encourage the option to be considered and for offers to be made to victims.

Other staff may be selective about when to raise the option of RJ. There is a tendency to only offer RJ when they think the person is likely to accept it, rather than letting the victim make that decision for themselves. Our aim is to push the message that victims should be able to make the decision about restorative justice for themselves, reinforcing the point that victims should be empowered to make this choice. We will work closely with prisons and probation (both of whom we received the least referrals from) to develop meaningful actions on how to encourage the offer and take-up of RJ by offenders and increase referrals from these organisations.

2 Increase awareness of RJ

We will do more to promote the work we do and offer refresher training to referral sources in areas with fewer referrals including Rochford, Maldon and Epping, as well as policing teams who deal with more serious offences such as fraud, driving offences and homicide; our three lowest areas by incident. We will also raise our profile and reach out to external partners to encourage similar awareness sessions, such as magistrates. We will also aim to have a stronger social media presence and publish more case studies.

3 Domestic abuse

We will seek to embed the use of RJ and DA in the PFCC's Police and Crime extension plan and will work closely with the Domestic Abuse Investigation Team in Essex Police to increase referrals for intimate and non-intimate DV cases; this year we only had 9 referrals of a DA nature. We have adapted our dashboard to monitor referrals related to domestic abuse in order to identify referral numbers throughout the year. Whilst we already have volunteer trained in this area, we will aim to upskill and appropriately train at least two additional facilitators to be able to take on DA related cases, coping with the anticipated increase of referrals.

4 Hate crime

RJ has been incorporated in the Hate Crime Strategy 2018-2021 and RJ now sits within the Hate Crime strategic board. Work will be done with partner agencies to explore how we can increase referrals in this area, such as the introduction of an RJ checklist across agencies. This year we had 8 referrals and aim to increase this.

5 Complex and sensitive cases

We aim to increase our facilitator pool to take on more of these cases and keep up with demand should these referrals increase. We will carefully select and upskill facilitators to be able to deliver RJ with serious, domestic and sexual offending cases. We will also aim to build relationships with ISVAs and IDVAs to promote our service.

Restorative Justice

Essex Restorative and Mediation Service provides safe and effective communication between people in conflict to encourage mutually agreed, positive outcomes for all involved.

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