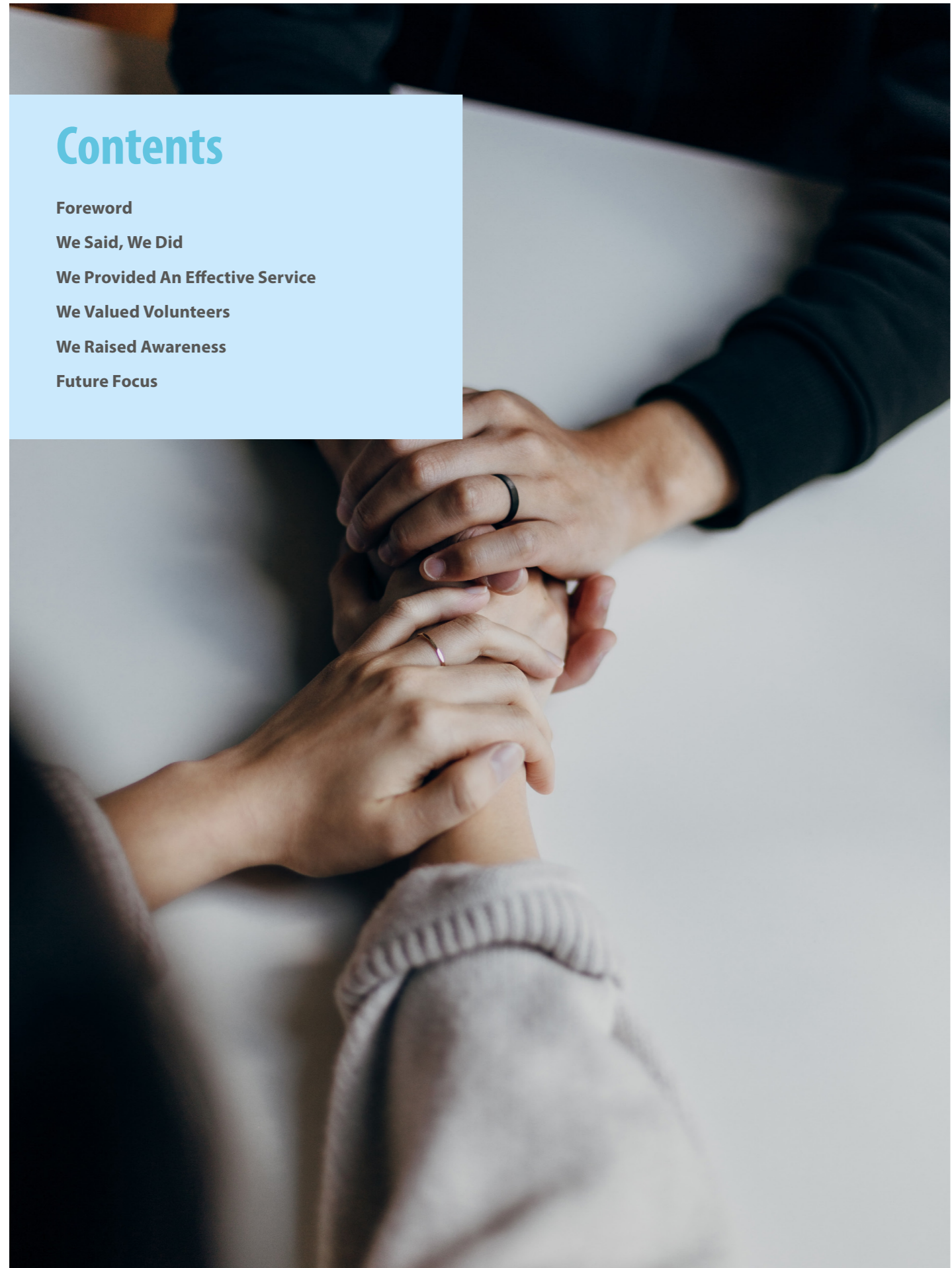




**Essex Restorative
& Mediation
Service**

20 ANNUAL
21/22 REPORT

PFCC 
POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME
COMMISSIONER FOR ESSEX



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Foreword

Restorative and Mediation Service Annual Report Foreword:

It gives me great pleasure to present the Annual Report for the Essex Restorative and Mediation Service (ERMS) in its seventh year. A report which demonstrates how the scheme is going from strength to strength, year on year. Restorative Justice is proven to be incredibly effective in enabling the victim, their families and anyone affected by crime and anti-social behaviour to express how they feel about what happened, to seek answers and in some cases ask for an apology. For the perpetrator it can also have a significant impact as, by putting a face to their crime, they see first-hand the repercussions and consequences their actions have had.

Last year ERMS committed to working even more closely with partners to increase referrals by 15% and I am pleased to say it exceeded that target and delivered a 24% increase, a number bolstered by the significant rise in cases from Essex Police and the National Probation Service. The service also worked hard to increase post sentence referrals and consequently delivered a rise from 17 referrals to 37. Satisfaction with the service continues to be positive with 94% of those going through a restorative process saying they would recommend the process to others.

But we could not deliver this service and get these results without the hard work and dedication of our volunteers. Last year we committed to upskilling facilitators to take on the more complex and sensitive cases where there is a highly traumatic impact to the victim or their family, and we

now have a third of our volunteers equipped to take these cases on. Last year, our volunteers gave over 945 hours of service and are on track to give even more hours next year, as 10 new facilitators have joined the scheme.

Looking ahead, ERMS will continue to set ambitious targets in order to bring about positive outcomes for victims and help resolve conflict. Driving up referrals will continue to be a priority, as will the continuation of bringing about policy change to allow equal access for survivors of domestic abuse. There is also still much work to be done with partners in the prison and probation services to reduce the delay in progressing complex and sensitive cases.

By continuously striving to develop and adapt the Essex Restorative and Mediation Service and their volunteers are making a real difference in the county, by helping to give victims a voice and putting them at the heart of what we do. I'm incredibly proud of the team and the volunteers and the difference they are making to people's lives and look forward to seeing even greater strides made in the coming months.



Roger Hirst
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex.

We Said, We Did

We set out some aims in our previous report, here is how we did against them.

We said	We did
<p><u>Increase referral volume</u></p> <p>Referral numbers have steadily declined since a peak in 2018. We aim to increase referral numbers this year by 15%. We will focus on gaining greater engagement from areas with the lowest referral numbers and encouraging more use of RJ post-sentence.</p>	<p>This year we received a total of 368 referrals, an increase of 24% from last year. Geographically, our lowest referrers were from Brentwood, Rochford and Maldon. This year, both Brentwood and Rochford submitted fewer referrals than last year, however Maldon increased from 3 to 13.</p> <p>Post-sentence referrals made up 10% of total referrals, an improvement on 7% last year and an increase of almost double the total number of post-sentence referrals from last year.</p>
<p><u>Increase post sentence referrals</u></p> <p>Engaging post sentence referrers remains a priority for ERMS this year and we aim to increase post sentence referrals by 40%.</p>	<p>This was an area that we focused strongly on and increased our post-sentence referrals from 17 to 37 (an increase of 118%).</p> <p>The most common post-sentence case offence type were violence and sexual offences, both categories making up 11% of total referrals each.</p>
<p><u>Enhance volunteer skills</u></p> <p>We will upskill our volunteers in line with the rate of referral increase for complex and sensitive cases. These are cases in which there is a highly traumatic impact to the victim or their family such as loss of life or life changing injury. Volunteers who meet the criteria for these advanced cases will be offered extra training before taking them on.</p>	<p>In addition to 10 new volunteers joining the team, we upskilled 4 existing volunteers to take on complex and sensitive cases. This addition means that over a third of our volunteers are equipped to work on sensitive and complex cases.</p>

We said	We did
<p><u>Allow equal access to RJ for Domestic Abuse survivors</u></p> <p>We will continue to work with Chief Officers in Essex Police to allow them to refer victims of domestic abuse for an RJ process. It is our hope that by next year, the change in policy will be in effect.</p>	<p>Our Essex Police RJ Lead, Superintendent John Hallworth, is now the portfolio lead for the National Police Chief Council's 'end on blanket ban' workstream. In addition to our representation on national strategy groups, we are moving ever closer to survivors of domestic abuse having unrestricted access to RJ.</p>
<p><u>Improve feedback return rates</u></p> <p>Getting participants experience through evaluation is valuable. We will review and amend our processes to increase the feedback return rate to 20%.</p>	<p>We have created a new evaluation online form and requested the RJ facilitators themselves ask participants to complete an evaluation form. This has risen the return rate to 23% this year.</p>

“Excellent and very worthwhile!”



We Provided an Effective service

Essex Restorative and Mediation Service was very proud to be shortlisted for the Essex Police Team of the Year 2021. This recognition verified the effectiveness of the service, and the value it holds for organisations such as the Essex Police Constabulary.

This year, ERMS received 368 referrals, an increase of 24% on last year and the highest volume since 2019. 14% (42) cases resulted in parties communicating either face to face or indirectly and 796 participants were contacted including 532 victims and 253 harmers.

74% of referrals were received from Essex Police, 14% from councils or housing agencies, 7% from Probation, 3% Youth service and 2% self-referrals.

Some referrers increased their referral numbers this year, including Essex Police (32% increase) and Housing organisations (35% increase). Essex Police had dropped in referral numbers in the last 2 years, so this rise to the largest volume since 2019 was encouraging. The biggest increase was from Probation services, including the National

Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Company who have now reunified. They referred 27 cases this year, an increase of 1250% from 2 referrals collectively last year. This year, 11 of the 27 referrals came from the Victim Contact Scheme as victim-initiated, post-sentence referrals.

Some referrers decreased their referrals, including Victim Support who referred 1 case (a reduction from 3 last year), Witness care referred 4 fewer cases with a total of 8 referrals, self-referrals fell to 6, from 8 last year, and the Youth Offending Service referred 1 fewer than last year with a total of 13 referrals.

The chart below shows the referrals received by district in comparison to last year's figures. Colchester and Southend remain the biggest referrers in terms of numbers, with Tendring and Braintree referring more cases than in previous years. Maldon, Rochford and Brentwood remain the lowest referral areas with Brentwood and Rochford decreasing their referral numbers by 2 and 3 respectively. Despite being at the lower end of the referral numbers, Maldon sent 10 more referrals than last year.



“ The whole time I was looked after, for the weeks they were helping, very caring, understanding and also of my illnesses. Kept me informed of everything and made sure I understood each stage. It was brilliant service, also a positive outcome. Thank you for all your brilliant help. ”

Referral types

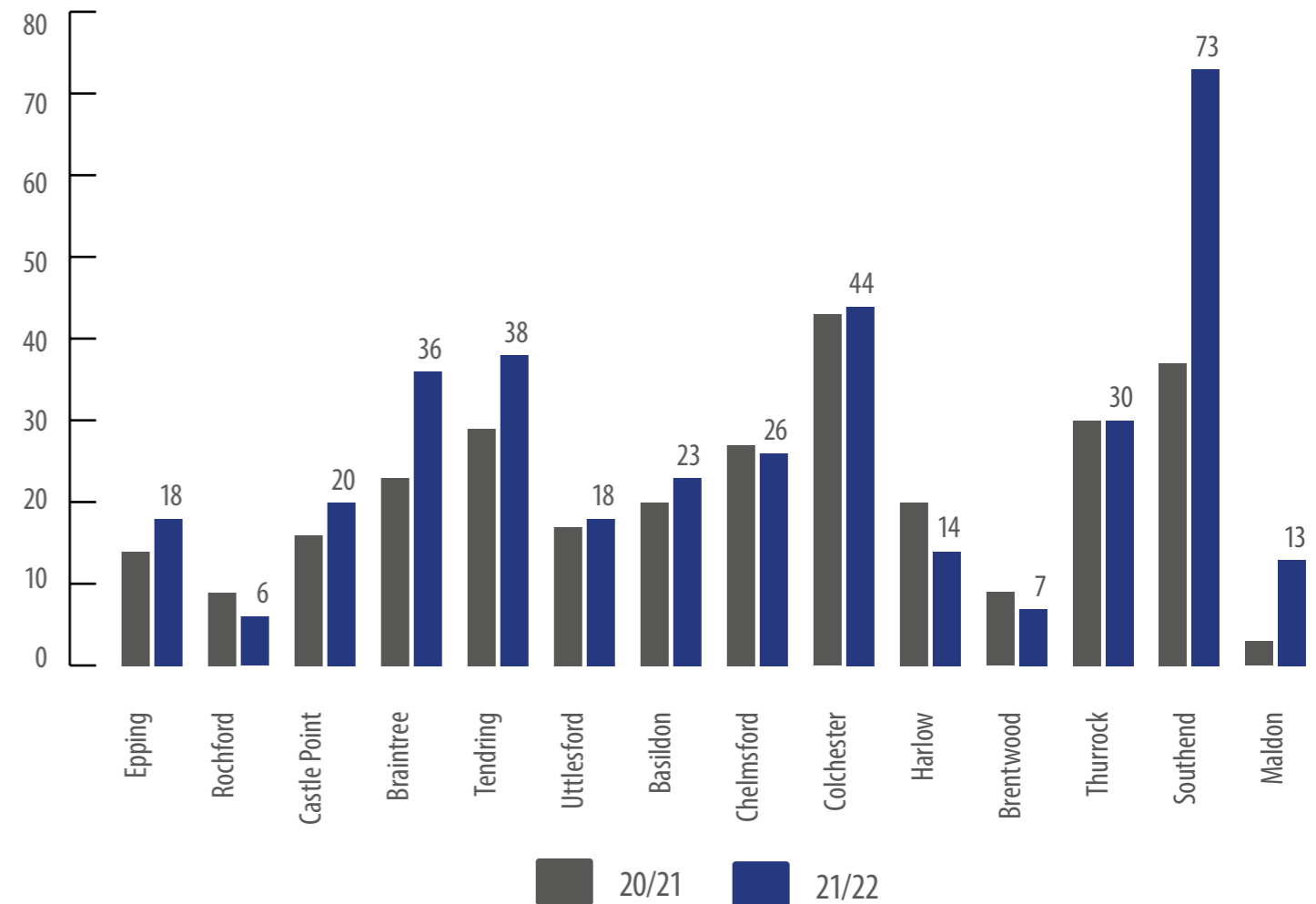
Reflecting a steady increase in Community Justice Panel (CJP) referrals (typically mediation cases between families, friends or neighbours), these referrals now make up 52% of all cases. For context, last year these cases were 43% of all cases and pre-pandemic made up around 22% of all referrals.

The previous front-runner, Community Resolution referrals, now make up 25%, Conditional Cautions 11%, Post sentence 10% and the remainder either unknown or other. In comparison to last year, CJP referrals have increased by 51%,

Community Resolution referrals have dropped by 18%, Conditional Cautions have increased by 35% and post sentence referrals have increased by 118%.

Owing to the nature of the CJP cases, they are often less desirable to the volunteer facilitators and therefore are more difficult and take more time to allocate. The team are working on ensuring that CJP cases are appropriate before allocating to a volunteer facilitator and will continue to encourage referrals amongst the other referral types and sentence stages.

Number of Referrals by District, in Comparison to 2020/21



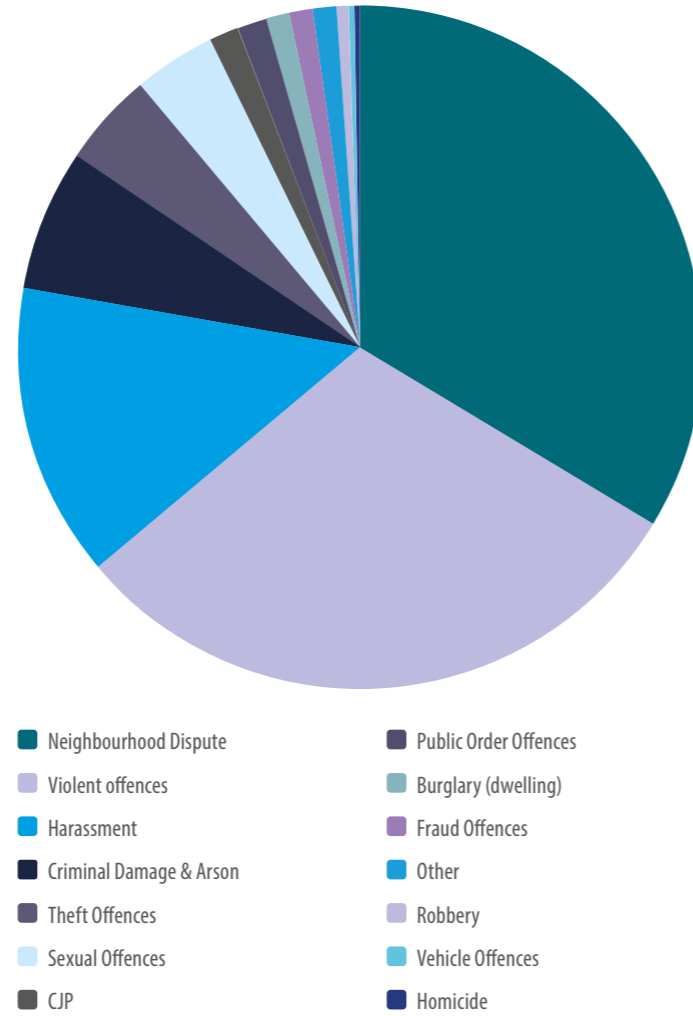
Incident types

Neighbour disputes remain the largest incident type this year at 34% of the total referrals. Violent incidents have increased to 30% of total referrals (from 19% last year), and harassment has decreased from 22% last year to 14% this. The number of referrals received involving a sexual offence has increased from 1 last year to 14 this year. 4 of these cases involved sexual abuse of a child.

Last year ERMS committed to continuing efforts to improve access to RJ for survivors of domestic abuse. We have been a voice in national consultations, and the Essex Police RJ lead is now heading the National Police Chief Council’s workstream on ending blanket bans for RJ. Referrals involving domestic abuse increased from 14 last to 38 this year (171% increase) and hate crime referrals increased from 22 to 24 (9% increase). We will continue to work in both domestic abuse and hate crime arenas to ensure equal access to RJ for victims of these crime types.

ERMS wanted to improve post-sentence referrals by 40% this year. The service received 37 post-sentence referrals, constituting a 118% increase in this area. 4 new volunteers were trained to cope with the increase in complex and sensitive cases (those involving death or other high trauma incidents).

Changes in the processes of partner agencies, such as HMPPS, have increased the length of time taken to progress a complex and sensitive case. These changes, whilst a welcome concept of more in-depth risk assessment, have led to delays of more than 6 months before cases are progressed passed initial assessment and ERMS remains concerned regarding the impact that this has on victims, harmers and volunteer facilitators. This will be an area of focus for ERMS.



Case outcomes

ERMS received 368 referrals involving 796 people this year. 71 cases are still ongoing and 297 were closed. Of those completed cases, ERMS could not make contact with one or both parties in 162 cases. In 93 cases either one of the parties, or ERMS, declined the case as unsuitable at this time. 42 cases resulted in communication between parties. Of those successful cases, 69% resulted in indirect communication and 31% in a face to face meeting between participants.

14% of all cases resulted in communication this year. This is a reduction from 23% last year. ERMS believes that this is due to the increase in CJP cases which historically have a lower number of positive outcomes. This is often because participants are entrenched in their views or not committed to the mediation process and finding a resolution. For context, only 7% of CJP cases result in communication between parties. For cases which have had some criminal justice intervention such as Community Resolution, Conditional Caution or Post Sentence that number increases to 22%.



“ It is a very good thing that people like us have access to your service. Sometimes in life the greatest cause of misunderstanding is miscommunication, and having a service like this to help make things easier between both parties is such a good thing. All I can say is thank you. ”

Feedback

Last year, ERMS received a feedback return rate of around 10%. This year, the survey links were updated to allow for easier completing online as well as on written forms. In the last 3 months of the year facilitators were asked to request feedback, rather than this request coming from the office team, in an effort to improve feedback return rates. The rate of return increased this year to 23% with feedback received from 20 victims and 6 perpetrators.

Monitoring the rate of return will continue to be an area of focus and ERMS hopes to increase this to 30% return next year.

Feedback continues to be positive, with an 89% overall satisfaction rate. 94% would recommend the process to others and 100% of those responsible for the harm said that they would behave differently in future as a result of the RJ work they experienced.

// Very professional polite staff, made me feel so much better to have a neutral body to talk to. I have to thank Essex Police for suggesting this route, I cannot thank the mediation staff enough. //



// The whole process was calm and gave you the opportunity to talk to someone about the issue/s. Facilitators never made you feel rushed which was nice. They gave time to explain / express yourself. //

We valued volunteers

As ever, the Essex Restorative and Mediation Service could not run effectively without the dedication of its volunteers. This year, they logged 945 hours of volunteering work against cases, in addition to the training and meeting requirements we ask of them.

As ERMS navigated COVID and moving back to face to face meetings where possible, the volunteers were understanding and supportive. One commented: "The staff have done an amazing job in keeping a service which depends heavily on relationships effective when meeting has been severely restricted".

ERMS added to its volunteer pool this year, with 10 new facilitators joining the team. 32 volunteers (76%) received refresher training and 4 were upskilled to take on complex and sensitive cases.

26 volunteers responded to our request for feedback this year, they had been volunteering for the service for between 2 months and 6 years. The service has restarted in-person volunteer meetings, as well as continuing virtual ones

where this is more appropriate. This year, ERMS organised a friends and family picnic, continued to provide a weekly newsletter and put on a volunteer appreciation event which included speakers, awards and a display from the Essex Fire Service Dogs. The team also provided a thank you gift to the volunteers during National Volunteer Week. 92% of volunteers said that they felt valued and 70% felt recognised and worthwhile. Once volunteer said: "The team, training and support is outstanding."

We asked the volunteers what they liked best about the role and the responses included:

- Making a difference
- Interesting and challenging work
- The team
- The variety



“ Volunteering with ERMS has been one of the greatest experiences of my life. Our permanent staff are just fantastic and my facilitator colleagues make the whole experience magical ”



“ Being a facilitator with ERMS has to be one of the best things I have ever done. It has boosted my confidence, taught me so many things and having had traumas in my own life, it has enabled me to help others who have experienced them in their lives too. In doing that strengthens my own abilities to deal with things better ”

We raised awareness

ERMS relies on professionals across the county having knowledge of and understanding the work that it does. This year, the training materials were revamped and 4 volunteers were trained to deliver awareness sessions when requested by partners.

39 inputs were delivered to Essex Police teams this year by ERMS, with more being delivered by Essex Police themselves. The teams who received this session included new officers, detectives, local and community policing teams and roads policing.

From April - June 2021, ERMS was part of a criminal justice outcomes course delivered virtually to 1052 officers. An evaluation of this training found that officers reported a 48% increase in awareness that RJ is a requirement of the Victims' Code of Practice and a 33% increase in confidence in relation to understanding how RJ and mediation benefit all parties involved.

In addition to this training, 7 sessions were delivered to other partners including education establishments, probation services, NHS mental health teams and councils.

The majority of the awareness raising work that ERMS carried out this year was local, however, ERMS Co-ordinator, Kasia Grabka, took part in a project by Why me? called Articulate which aims to widen access to RJ for people with English as an Additional Language. The video can be found here: [Video Testimonials — Why Me? Restorative Justice \(why-me.org\)](https://www.why-me.org). ERMS manager, Emma Goddard, spoke at a Joint webinar organised by the European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ) and the National Association of Community and Restorative Justice (NACRJ) on Police, community and youth relationships in relation to RJ work the team carried out in 2017.

ERMS continues to maintain positive relationships with its partners through attending multi-agency meetings such as weekly Youth Out of Court Disposal Panels and regular Local Action Group meetings across the county. ERMS is represented on the Reducing Reoffending Board, Strategic Hate Crime Prevention Partnership and the Out of Court Disposals Scrutiny Board. These partnerships mean that RJ is included in numerous strategies across the county including the Crime Against Business Strategy and the Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024.

“ The meeting achieved more than I had expected. ”



Future focus

1. Continue to increase post sentence referrals by a further 25%
2. Continue to work towards changing Essex Police Policy to allow equal access for survivors of Domestic Abuse
3. Increase referrals for incidents of hate crime by 30%
4. Continue to work with our partners in HMPPS to reduce the delay in complex and sensitive cases
5. Continue to monitor evaluation responses and increase to a 30% return rate



“ After years of dispute, finally we came to an agreement where everyone is happy to move forward after mediation. Everything was dealt with professionally and thank you very much. ”

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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