

## Introduction

At the beginning of the meeting you will either be introduced or asked to introduce yourself. Prior to the meeting we will discuss how you would like to be introduced. The participants will be informed of the presence of observers.

## During the meeting

Please make sure you switch off your mobile phone.

When you enter the conference you will be directed to your seat. Please do not move your seat as it will have been strategically placed.

If you would like to take notes you would need this to be agreed by the practitioner/Why me? coordinator in advance. Please do not speak during the meeting. The role of the observer is to observe.

## After the meeting

To fully understand the process it is recommended that you stay until after the participants have left the venue.

You are requested not to publicise the meeting and what happens in it. Decisions about the publicity are the prerogative of the participants.

Following the conference, you will be invited to debrief with the Observer Programme Coordinator who can also answer any questions you may have. You may also be able to contact the practitioner.

The Why Me? Observer Programme is run in partnership with Restorative Justice Council and supported by the Ministry of Justice.

## About Why me?

Why me? was set up by a victim of crime for victims of crime. Will Riley, an Islington businessman, was burgled by Peter Woolf. He met Peter in prison in a restorative justice meeting and had the opportunity to tell him how he felt. He challenged Peter and got some answers – his life changed – he could open his front door without fear – and Peter went ‘straight’ after years of crime, saving hundreds of people from the experience of crime. This is the power and the potential of restorative justice.

## The Observer Programme is currently funded by:

The Ministry of Justice, the Saint Sarkis Charity Trust and the Barrow Cadbury Trust.

### Thank you for your interest in participating in the Observer Programme.

The aim of this Observer Programme is to demonstrate the power of restorative justice to decision-makers by allowing them to be present during the process.

Contact the Observer Programme Coordinator  
[info@why-me.org](mailto:info@why-me.org) [www.why-me.org](http://www.why-me.org)

Why me? 7-14 Great Dover Street, London SE1 4YR  
T 020 3096 7708 M 078 8598 1272

# Why me?

## Guide to observing Restorative Justice Meetings



In partnership with



Ministry  
of Justice



## Restorative Justice

A restorative justice meeting brings a victim of crime and an offender together in a facilitated face-to-face meeting to discuss the harm done. The meeting runs alongside the criminal justice process and deals with all types of crime from burglary to homicide. Restorative justice has been demonstrated to have an 85% satisfaction rate with victims. For offenders, meeting their victim can often be more challenging than any punishment, and reoffending can drop by up to 27% following the process. Currently, less than 1% of victims have access to restorative justice.

### Purpose of restorative justice meetings

Restorative justice meetings provide a structure for individuals to talk about the harm caused by the crime. In bringing victims and offenders together to talk face-to-face and without intermediaries, such as solicitors, judges or other criminal justice professionals, the meeting allows each party to answer questions and provide answers. Restorative processes give victims the chance to tell their offenders the real impact of their crime, to get answers to their questions and an apology.

Restorative justice holds offenders to account for what they have done, helps them understand the real impact of their crime, and encourages them to take responsibility and make amends.

The key tenets of restorative justice are that the offender admits responsibility; both sides participate voluntarily, and are ready to respect the process.

### Structure of the meeting

Trained practitioners facilitate restorative justice meetings through a set of structured questions. Practitioners will be working to the Restorative Justice Council Best Practice Guidelines which include thorough preparation of all parties and risk assessments. The preparation might take several meetings over the space of months.

Both the offender and the victim can bring friends and family and support workers with them. There will be one or two practitioners, who are appointed by the host agency, which will have Restorative Justice Council accreditation. You will have been invited to observe with the permission of all parties involved.

The meeting itself is divided into three parts: What happened? Who was harmed? How do we now repair that harm? The meeting usually results in an Outcome Agreement and then the re-integration process with refreshments. During this time a great deal of important exchanges take place and it is requested that you remain as an observer.

### Advice for those observing meetings

Please remember you are being given permission to observe a meeting between the victim and offender of a serious crime.

Please be aware that this is a difficult and intense experience for all parties concerned, strong emotions are often expressed which the practitioners are trained to handle in a safe way. It is important that you, as the observer, are aware of this from the moment you meet the participants until they leave the venue.

## Before the meeting

### Preparation

We will work with your existing commitments to find a time when you will be available to observe a meeting. It will normally be possible to give 7-14 days notice of precise times and dates. We appreciate that this is a limited timeframe but, unless the case is complex, meetings are usually planned around the participant's schedules within two weeks.

Before the meeting the Observer Programme Coordinator will prepare you for what to expect and you can contact Why me? at any stage to ask questions. You will receive joining instructions before the event. It is likely the practitioner will contact you prior to the meeting. In most instances, the Observer Programme Coordinator will be there to meet you.

### Location

The meeting may be held in a prison, a police station, or a neutral venue. You will be sent relevant information on how to get to the location.

Please be punctual.