



1st September 2016

Why me? response to the Justice Committee Restorative Justice Inquiry (2016) report:

The Justice Committee Restorative Justice Inquiry report issued on 1st September 2016 is welcomed by Why me?, the national Restorative Justice charity for victims of crime.

Victims of crime should be given the right in law to request Restorative Justice but Why me? is concerned that this is a distraction from more pressing practical considerations. These are addressed by the Committee and include:

- Lack of victim awareness about Restorative Justice
- Access to victim and offender data
- Smooth collaboration between criminal justice agencies, such as police, probation and prisons
- Police and Crime Commissioners' Restorative Justice expenditure and delivery

Our initial summary response to the Committee's report is as follows:

1. **Entitlement to Restorative Justice** in a Victims Law is a worthy aim but a clear timescale is required for ensuring that capacity and provision are sufficient. We will be interested to understand how such an entitlement can be enforced and by whom. (JC recommendations 19 and 20)

2. We support the proposal that a progress report should be written on the **Ministry of Justice Restorative Justice Action Plan** (due to report in March 2016). This report should provide an explanation of how Restorative Justice is working across the Criminal Justice system, especially with probation services (JC recommendation 11).

3. The Committee recommendation for the Ministry of Justice to work **with Police and Crime Commissioners** to publish how their victim services money has been spent on Restorative Justice services reflects the conclusions of the Why me? Valuing Victims Report (April 2016) and it is of some urgency to account for the £23m allocated to them between 2012-2016 specifically for this purpose. (JC recommendation 4).

4. We particularly welcome the conclusion of the Committee that Restorative Justice can be used for all types of crime and their recommendation that Level One should not be used by police forces in cases of **domestic abuse**. In our view any new guidance should be backed up by awareness raising work and online information and tools for officers on the frontline and senior leadership teams. (JC recommendation 7)

5. Victim awareness of Restorative Justice is low, as the report points out (JC recommendations 12 and 13). We strongly support the Ministry of Justice focussing on ensuring that **Restorative Justice is better understood by Criminal Justice agencies** and recommend a clear timetable of how this will take place and with whom.

6. We are concerned that a **tickbox exercise by Police** is too little and out of context. More likely to succeed is victims being approached when an offender pleads guilty and given a leaflet explaining Restorative Justice. (JC recommendation 13).

7. **Restorative Justice Standards** are important to ensure that victims and offenders are protected and supported and get good results. We are pleased that the Committee endorses the RSQM as a national standard. However we have concerns about the feasibility of other standards complying with the RSQM and how this will be monitored.

8. The role of Probation Services has been addressed in the report, however we are of the view that **Community Rehabilitation Companies**, who have responsibility for reducing offending on low level offences, are in pole position to use Restorative justice with their cohort and with the victims they have affected and urge the Government to consider RJ targets in the next round of contracts.

For more information please contact:

www.why-me.org/news for more information on evidence.

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