

Model strategy for implementing restorative justice (RJ)

Introduction

This document outlines a possible strategy for implementing RJ on a substantial scale in a relatively large organisation. It is based on the experience compiled by the Home Office. It can be adapted as necessary for smaller organisations, or those introducing RJ in only one part of an organisation (for example, a BCU or School). It can also be adapted into a multi-agency strategy for use by an (Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB).

It contains the following sections:

- Levels of responsibility and management;
- An outline model strategy for implementing RJ;
- The importance of organisational awareness.

Levels of responsibility and management

In a large organisation like a police force, local authority or registered social landlord there is little chance of successfully introducing RJ into its policies by simply selecting and training RJ practitioners and facilitators. So for an organisation simply to send a number of officers on suitable training courses – or for a YOT or a school to do similarly – will in itself achieve little. Those staff working with the facilitators locally also need to understand the rudiments of RJ.

Proper policies and standards need to be written on how RJ will be used. And none of this is likely to work if there is no awareness about RJ from those at the top, or middle management, in the organisation.

There are in effect 3 tiers in a large organisation at which special work on RJ is necessary for effective implementation. For smaller organisations, it is likely the top two tiers can be merged.

The Top Management Team

There has to be strong leadership from the top. This is of course essential for any organisational change, but it is particularly so with RJ for the reasons above.

There are different ways in which this leadership role can be delivered. If the Chief Officer them self leads on and champions RJ – for example, they understand it in some

detail, they lead on policy within the top management team, they get out and about to set an example on RJ, they are constantly promoting and communicating about it - then that is likely to be effective.

But there are other equally good models. It may be the Chief Officer, whilst supportive of RJ, does not have time to undertake this specialist role them self.

In these circumstances it is vital that one of the top management team is given the clear mandate to lead and champion RJ on their behalf, with full support.

Whoever it is who is to be the champion of RJ, that person needs to have a good grasp of what RJ is all about. He or she needs to understand the theory; to have observed or participated in RJ in action; to know about the benefits and risks; and, above all, to realise that practitioners on the ground need to be well trained, well supported through networking and buddying, and having their practice monitored regularly.

Line Management – Specialist RJ Unit

Just as there needs to be leadership from the very top, so this needs to be replicated through the appointment of a suitable middle manager in a specialist RJ policy post (or part of a post), working to the top management 'champion'.

This is the person who 'makes it all work'. He/she is responsible for determining policy and communicating it; putting in place the appropriate training and networking processes; and developing robust monitoring and data collection systems. He/she needs a higher level of knowledge than the top management 'champion'.

To do this there will probably need to be a small specialist unit or team working to him/her. This could all be just one person, or in a large organisation a small team. It is vital that as much specialist expertise as possible resides within this small unit; and that it is resourced sufficiently for regular monitoring of RJ processes on the ground through visits, observations etc. This is because it is possible for practitioners to start developing bad habits, whilst the big gains to be had from RJ only come from ensuring good practice.

Research shows that it is the high standards of facilitation, maintained through self-inspection, buddying and independent monitoring, that is the key to ensuring top results. Whilst the resources here may seem something of a luxury in a typical hard-pressed organisation, in fact they should be seen as an investment on which a high return can be expected. To miss this out risks the development of poor practice, disillusionment amongst practitioners and 'customers' alike, and poor results.

If in a large organisation utilising (say) 25 specialist practitioners working largely full-time on RJ, the specialist unit may ideally need to consist of 3 or 4 people. In a smaller

organisation such as a YOT this role could probably be carried out by a RJ Manager, or the Prevention Manager, depending upon local circumstances.

Facilitators/Supporters on the Ground

This is the third tier of implementation, those who are the RJ practitioner specialists. There are of course different models of delivering restorative practices on the ground: in some a trained facilitator will act as the case officer, undertake all liaisons with victims and offenders, and facilitate the restorative process themselves. In other models a victim liaison officer will deal with the victim contact.

An outline model strategy for implementing restorative justice

Applying all these principles, what then is the best way to 'grow' RJ in an organisation? There are of course different models to do this – the essential actions can be carried out in a different order or in different ways – depending on the particular characteristics of each organisation, such as size, culture, history, etc. The model below is put forward to illustrate one approach that would be relevant to a large organisation.

It is suggested that the following stages are necessary:

Phase 1 – Policy and Planning

- a. Decision by Top Management Team, based on an informed view of RJ, to introduce restorative approaches. It is suggested that the process is started by developing the criminal justice model of RJ into the organisation first. This can be expanded subsequently into (for example) in schools, community, internal staff grievances, discipline and 'complaints by citizens against the organisation';
- b. Appointment of a Lead Member or 'RJ Champion' from Top Management Team;
- c. Appointment of 'RJ Implementation Manager', a senior or middle-ranking member of the organisation's management team;
- d. Selection of Pilot site or sites for development of RJ project, and appointment of local leader(s) of pilots;
- e. All appointed people at (b)-(d), together with any others (for example, others who will be working closely with them) to familiarise themselves with RJ principles and practice. This can be done in different ways, but should include experience of RJ practices through observations;

- f. Consider setting up an Supervisor Group including other CJS partners such as CPS, Courts, Magistrates, Judiciary, Probation, Prisons, YOTs, etc;
- g. Develop and write policy documents (models available from other organisations) for the project, in conjunction with key partner agencies.

Phase 2 – Setting up and running Pilot Sites

- h. Select, appoint and train specialist RJ practitioners at the pilot sites.
- i. Ensure good communication with and awareness training for others at pilot sites, who will need to be working with the RJ project. These people need to have an understanding of the principles and practices of RJ;
- j. Ensure all people right across the organisation have a broad awareness of RJ and the RJ project, albeit not to the level of those at (i);
- k. Pilot sites start operations. There will be a need in the early stages for close monitoring and support.

Phase 3 – Spreading RJ across the whole organisation

- l. After a specific time it will, subject to successful implementation of the pilot(s), be appropriate to take stock and move on to the next phase to expand and replicate the model across the rest of the organisation. This will need its own Development Plan;
- m. The essence of this will be – in each area or department where it is to be introduced – to mirror the actions taken to set up the original pilot site(s) in the new Areas/Departments. The speed and spread of this will depend on a number of factors, some organisation-wide and some local;
- n. A key part of ‘growing RJ’ within the organisation will be the development of a cadre of highly experienced RJ practitioners. These will be the people selected at the start to work in the Specialist Unit and the Pilot sites. As they become more and more competent, it is these people who need to become the policy and practice specialists, the trainers and the monitors, for the on-going expansion and replication across the organisation. The selection criteria therefore for this cadre – those identified at stage h. above – is critical to the whole RJ programme;
- o. Over time – with careful development and monitoring – RJ units will through the RJ Plan have become set up and be running effectively across the organisation.

Phase 4 – Developing further RJ applications

- p. At different points during the 'growing' of a RJ culture, options will occur for applying restorative practices to different uses as laid out at stage 1 above. These may be confined to the standard uses of restorative practices for other activities. To some extent this will happen naturally, as trained personnel start using their new-found RJ skills in a variety of different operational situations. But extra training to upgrade skills and knowledge will also be necessary.

The importance of organisational awareness

If specialist experience and knowledge about RJ is necessary amongst those directly responsible for implementing and overseeing RJ, so too does everyone in the organisation – or certainly in that part of the organisation where RJ is practised on the ground – need to have a certain level of awareness.

This is not easy to achieve, because RJ may involve a different way of thinking from what staff are used to - thinking more about victims and communities as well as offenders, in terms of seeking positive, forward-looking, practical solutions, and of empowering participants, including offenders, to find their a solution that is best for them.

RJ theory is therefore only one part of the picture: the other and arguably most important part is actually seeing RJ 'in action'. Whilst awareness training and communication is a significant part and can be delivered by reading materials, video (although there are currently few good videos on the market), lectures, and standard communication methods, often the most effective way is by people experiencing RJ. This can be done by being involved in a RJ process directly (for example, in a police example, after being the arresting officer); or by observing a RJ meeting; or by participating in or observing a RJ role-play.

The significance of this is that in creating the right culture for implementing RJ, specialist RJ practitioners need to have a pro-active approach to providing experience to others. This culture should emphasise the idea that whenever an RJ process is carried out where the participants are willing to have an observer present (there are protocols available on how this can be managed – it is rare that people object), then every opportunity should be given to ensure that the 'observer slot' is filled. There is nothing like experiencing a reasonable RJ process to learn, understand and appreciate what RJ is and what it is possible to achieve.