

**Portsmouth Children's Trust
Children's Trust Plan 2016 - 2019**



Priority 1 – Stronger Futures

**A transformation programme to improve safeguarding, resilience,
health, wellbeing and success of families**

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE STRATEGY

Final: October 2016

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A. Introduction

Since 2014 Portsmouth Children's Trust - a partnership of key public service agencies working with children and families - has been delivering a series of changes to service delivery to improve outcomes for children and respond appropriately to public sector savings.

The centrepiece of the change has been the creation of the Multi-Agency Teams (MATs) for children and families serving three locality areas of the city. The MATs have been created through a strong partnership between the council, NHS and Barnardo's - committed to providing joined-up support for children and families in the city.

The strategy for the MATs was always more than just co-location and integration. It was (and is) also about improving practice with children and families. In early 2016 we launched the next stage of our transformation programme - known as Stronger Futures. The practice model for working with children and families remains at the heart of that programme.

In January 2016, we launched a significant piece of multi-agency 'change team' work to develop a practice model which would become 'the way we work in Portsmouth with children and families'. Following a thorough assessment of different approaches, we selected Restorative Practice as the model we are going to roll-out both within the MATs and across wider children and family services in the city.

We chose Restorative Practice for a number of reasons;

- it has a strong evidence base;
- it is applicable in a range of health, safeguarding, education and criminal justice contexts;
- it is inexpensive to roll-out;
- it forms a clear 'unifying framework' for multi-disciplinary work;
- it is underpinned by a set of principles that 'feel right'
- we already have good examples of it in the city;
- it chimes with what families say they want from us.

This decision has very significant implications for what we offer to children and families, how we work with them, in what contexts and even where.

This strategy seeks to:

- i. Provide a basic overview of restorative practice
- ii. Outline how we will govern and manage the roll out of restorative practice in Portsmouth
- iii. Provide more detail on our roll-out plan
- iv. Describe how we intend to evaluate impact

B. What is Restorative Practice?

The fundamental premise of restorative practices is that people are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes when those in positions of authority do things *with* them, rather than *to* them or *for* them.

International Institute for Restorative Practices

Restorative Practice or Restorative Approaches are essentially a way of affecting change in people's behaviours by focussing on their relationships - seeking to prevent relationship breakdown - or restore it when it has.

There are a few simple concepts that help explain restorative practice.

a) **The Social Discipline Window**

The Social Discipline Window describes the relationship between 'control' and 'support'. The principle is simple - we want to move to a place where professional relationships with children and families are described as 'doing with' rather than:

- 'doing to' - e.g. punitive responses to behaviours
- 'doing for' - which can create dependency
- not doing at all - which is neglectful.

The principle is a simple one - if we 'do with' - change is more likely to be embedded and be sustained without requiring long-term dependency on public services.

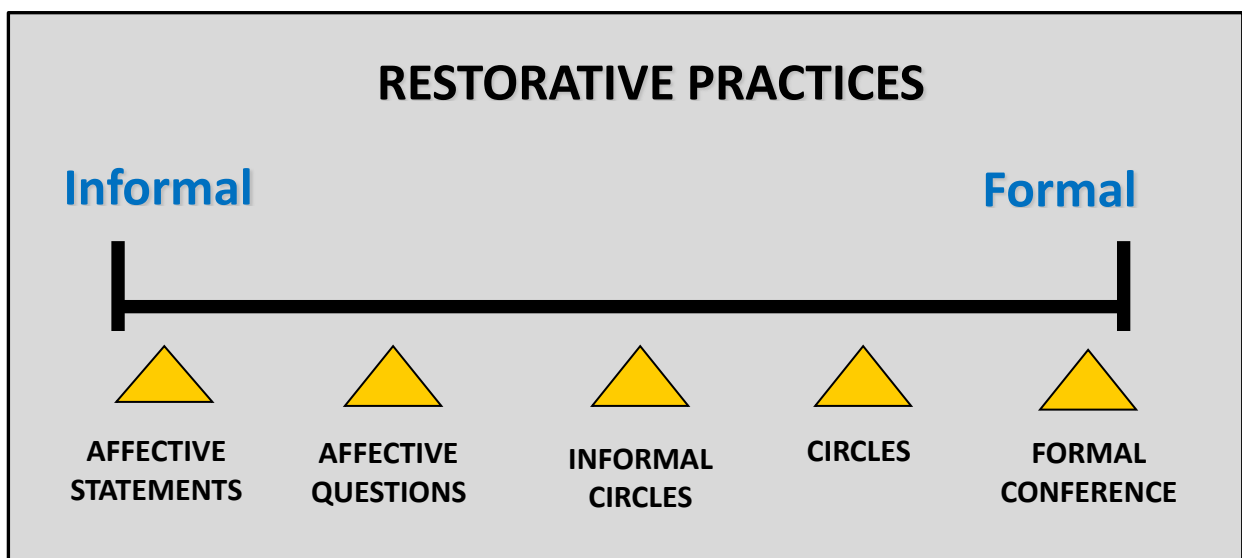


b) The Restorative Continuum

The diagram below illustrates a continuum of practice - from the informal 'everyday' practice and language through to much more structured and formalised interventions. This is not dissimilar to a 'Tiered' approach in that the more formalised practices would be focussed on more vulnerable children and families. However, restorative principles and restorative communication (e.g. 'affective statements') thread through all practices.

The more informal end of the continuum is very much focussed on prevention - building community (at a family, school, neighbourhood level) - and the more formal end is aimed at repairing harm - and of course preventing future harm.

Section C 'the restorative offer' fleshes out the restorative practices we will be creating in Portsmouth.



c) 10 Principles underpinning Restorative Practice

The box below summarises the ten principles of restorative practice.

1. Giving children and families responsibility within a framework of empathy and empowerment
2. High support with high challenge
3. 'Doing with' not 'doing to' or 'doing for'
4. Places strong relationships at the heart of change and improvement
5. Joint problem-solving
6. Solution-focussed
7. Forward looking
8. Respectful and honest
9. Mutual accountability for outcomes
10. Informs practitioner-practitioner relationships and manager-practitioner relationships

C. The Restorative Offer

It is important to say at the outset that by adopting Restorative Practice as 'the way we work in Portsmouth', we have - as professionals working with children and families - chosen a way of *thinking*, a way of *behaving* and a way of *being*. By thinking, behaving and being 'restorative', we have not only chosen to reframe our relationships with children and families, but also between ourselves as professionals.

In adopting Restorative Practice we also will be making significant changes to what it is that children and families receive from public services in Portsmouth.

The Restorative Continuum above introduced the range of work under the umbrella of restorative approaches. Below is a summary, together with our thinking about the contexts in which this offer could apply in Portsmouth.

a) Everyday Restorative Practices

This is what we call 'everyday restorative practice' and can be described as 'techniques'. There are two components:

(i) **Affective statements**

Explaining how your behaviour affects me (or others). For example, a teacher may say "*When you disrupt the class, I feel sad*" or "disrespected" or "disappointed." Hearing this, the child learns how his or her behavior is affecting others.

(ii) **Affective questions**

The basis for this technique is asking questions such as "*Who do you think has been affected by what you just did?*" and then follow-up with "*How do you think they've been affected?*" In answering such questions, instead of simply being punished, the child or adult has a chance to think about his or her behavior, make amends and change the behavior in the future.

In Portsmouth...

We will be training all professionals who come into contact with children and families - teachers, health workers, social workers, volunteers - to use these techniques to better prevent unsocial or unhealthy behaviours, restore low level harm and build more positive relationships.

b) Restorative Circles

A restorative circle is a versatile restorative practice that can be used proactively - to develop relationships and build community, or reactively - to respond to wrongdoing, conflicts and problems. Circles give people an opportunity to speak and listen to one another in an atmosphere of safety, decorum and equality. The circle process allows people to tell their stories and offer their own perspectives.

There are a number of models within this practice which can be used in schools ('circle time' is a familiar model to schools), in social work and family work. Most circle models are facilitated but not all.

In Portsmouth...

We will be developing models of restorative circles as part of our Team Around the Child/Family practice. Our question is a simple one - is it better to have six professionals around a family, or six existing members of the family/community network who can provide longer-term support, be closer, more immediate and less threatening to the family than professionals can feel.

c) Family Group Conferences

Family Group Conference (also known as Family Group Decision-Making) brings together family support networks — parents, children, aunts, uncles, grandparents, neighbors and close family friends — to make important decisions that might otherwise be made by professionals. This process of engaging and empowering families to make decisions and plans for their own family members' well-being leads to better outcomes, less conflict with professionals, more informal support and improved family functioning.

In some models of Family Group Conference (FGCs), following some facilitation and explanation, professionals leave the room and allow the family to create their own plan which is later monitored by the family with professional support.

In Portsmouth...

We have a long history of using Family Group Conferences (FGCs) in the child protection arena with strong evidence of good outcomes. Currently the model is to contract with an independent provider to facilitate the conferences, in other words, it is not led by the social workers.

We will be expanding the use of the FGCs with a particular focus on their application in the early help sphere.

We will be considering the extent to which independent facilitation is the key to success or if we should be remodelling parts of the workforce to act as facilitators. This will challenge our traditional thinking about what it means to be a lead professional.

d) Restorative Conference

A restorative conference is a structured meeting between those who have harmed and those who have been harmed. It includes both parties' family and friends and within the conference they deal with the consequences of the harm and how best to repair it. It is neither a counselling nor a mediation process. The conference is a victim-sensitive, straightforward problem-solving method that demonstrates how citizens can resolve their own problems when provided with a constructive forum to do so.

Restorative conferences were designed originally within the criminal justice field - hence the language around 'offender' and 'victim'. This is often understood as *restorative justice*.

In Portsmouth...

There is existing good practice in the Youth Offending Team using restorative conferencing with young offenders and victims of crime.

We are exploring if, with changes to language and process, we could improve the impact of child protection conferences by adopting some of the language, techniques and practices of the restorative conference. Whilst some of the principles of the restorative conference are applicable within the child protection field, the victim-perpetrator paradigm is not helpful - particularly when we consider neglectful care - the *omission* of safe care as distinct from the *commission* of abuse by a perpetrator.

We are increasingly exploring a similar paradigm shift in our thinking about domestic abuse where the perpetrator-victim dichotomy is not always helpful in enabling safe environments for children to grow up in. The place of restorative practice in tackling domestic abuse needs serious thought so as not to further endanger victims of abuse.

D. Strategy Governance and Management

The roll-out of restorative practice is part of the wider Stronger Futures transformation programme for children and family services in Portsmouth. However, is also strongly linked to a wider range of strategies and plans in the city including the plans for;

- The Education Partnership for school improvement
- The School Attendance Plan
- Social Emotional and Mental Health plan as part of the wider SEND strategy (being developed Autumn 2016)

The Stronger Futures Board will monitor the progress of the delivery of this strategy on behalf of the Children's Trust Board.

The detailed work will be led by the city's multi-agency Practice and Workforce Group working alongside the MATs Locality Managers Group. See Appendix 1 for the membership of the Practice and Workforce Group.

We are acutely aware that the adoption of restorative practice as the 'way we work in Portsmouth' is as much about cultural change. The leadership of this strategy will mean we have to adopt new ways of thinking, of behaving and of leading change.

E. The Roll-Out Plan

The roll-out plan has four parts to it:

- E1. The Training Plan
- E2. Restorative practice in assessment and planning
- E3. Reshaping the offer
- E4. Restorative Schools

The ambitions and scope of each are set out in more detailed Action Plans. Below we outline the ambition for each part.

E1. The Training Plan

Portsmouth is developing a comprehensive training plan which will be delivered in partnership with a commissioned training provider. The focus will be on developing a 'cascade' training model which will see us develop a cadre of restorative practice training professionals in the city. The aim is to have training delivered by practicing local professionals rather than being dependent on an external training provider.

Nonetheless, we do require restorative expertise which is not currently available in the city.

Our approach to training is will be to focus on the following layers;

- Leaders
- Managers and supervisors
- Trainers
- 'Restorative Champions'
- Restorative practice facilitators
- Front-line practitioners across the partnership

E2. Restorative practice in assessment and planning

Our ambition is to embed restorative practice principles in everyday practice, including our work with vulnerable families in need of intensive support through formal safeguarding processes and targeted early help.

In Portsmouth, we have good assessment and planning for children and families where the council and partners discharge their statutory responsibilities for safeguarding, looked after children and youth justice. We also have some significant areas of good practice in early help assessment and planning although we do not see that across the full early help system.

The adoption of restorative practice across Tier 3 and 4 children and families practice provides us with an opportunity to rethink how we assess and plan for children and families in a way that is more enabling, more sustainable and moves us from a 'care package' referral-based culture to a more affordable system and sustainable system of outcomes based planning

For Children's Social Care, this is the next chapter in practice improvement and builds on the investment in systemic family practice over the past three years through the Social Work Matters programme.

For early help, this means making some changes to the Early Help Single Assessment and in particular how the universal and early help system identifies and responds to need and risk.

E3. Reshaping the offer

Over the next few months and years we will be reshaping the offer to children and families based on restorative approaches. This will require a remodelling of key parts of the workforce to provide short-term impactful restorative interventions.

This will include rethinking and reframing our work in social work, in community health services, in children's centres and in schools.

We will be looking in detail at how we carry out child protection conferencing and introducing restorative principles whilst retaining safe and effective decision-making that complies with child protection legislation, guidance and good practice. We will be exploring the place of Family Group Conferencing in early help contexts and putting in place family circle models to enhance our current range of evidence based practice and programmes.

Critically, we will be putting in place robust supervision arrangements to ensure that front-line practitioners are supported to embed restorative practice in all their work.

E4. Restorative Schools

There is significant evidence that restorative practice in schools can make a real impact on behaviour, attendance and bullying - three issues that continue to offer us challenges in achieving good educational outcomes for children in Portsmouth.

As with all restorative work, restorative schools is as much about culture as it is about 'interventions'. There are already examples in the city of school adopting restorative approaches which shift the culture from one of punitive, reactionary responses to one of enabling behaviour change through engagement, high challenge and high support within a respectful, exploratory, restorative environment.

Our approach is to firstly map the restorative work already taking place; to then understand the skillset and capacity of the schools workforce; to pilot restorative interventions in a handful of schools who have already volunteered and then share the learning with other schools.

This will be strongly linked into the work of the new Education Partnership in the city.

F. Evaluation

We are keen to evaluate the roll-out and impact of our work on restorative practice in the city. The Local Government Association has granted us some resources to carry out a thorough assessment of impact over the next two years.

There are two components to the evaluation;

- a) The MATs Outcomes Framework will help us understand what the data tells us about process and outcomes at city, MAT and family level (quantitative)
- b) A series of surveys, questionnaire and interviews with leaders, managers and professionals pre- and post- roll out will help us gauge the level of engagement and impact on practice of the roll out (qualitative).

We have engaged with a University Professor who has significant experience in both evaluation and in restorative approaches to help us with the evaluation and give us a level of independence and rigour to the evaluation.

Appendix: Organisations Leading this Strategy

The Workforce and Practice Group

- Portsmouth City Council
- Solent NHS Trust
- Barnardo's
- Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Board
- Portsmouth Hospital Trust
- Harbour School
- Cottage Grove School
- Springfield School
- Priory School
- King Richards School