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# Police perceptions of restorative justice: findings from a small-scale study

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## ABSTRACT

This paper considers the views and perceptions of police officers and staff from a local police force in England, on the training provided in, and use of, restorative justice. These views were obtained through the use of an online questionnaire as well as the recording of comments made by police officers and staff after one training session. While the overall sample is too small to draw any concrete conclusions, participants appeared to share views expressed in similar, larger studies. This study adds to the literature on restorative justice as police views in this area are underresearched in England and Wales.

## INTRODUCTION

There can be no doubting that there has been a revival in the fortunes of the development and use of restorative justice (RJ) in England and Wales in recent years (Acton, 2014). Examples of this revival include increased funding for Youth Offending Teams to expand on the use of RJ, the introduction of a Code of Practice for Victims of Crime, giving victims the right to information about participation in RJ schemes, which implements the EU Victims' (2012) Directive 2012/29, and the introduction of the Crime and Courts Act (2013), which introduced RJ for victims of adult offenders in England and Wales (Hoyle & Rosenblatt, 2016). Also, between 2011 and 2014 the National Offender Management Service "embarked on a restorative justice capacity building programme ... to increase awareness and build capacity to deliver RJ conferencing in both prisons and probation" (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2014, p. 6). Another area which has seen a significant expansion in the use of RJ has been policing. Research undertaken by the Association of Chief Police Officers (2009; cited in Shewan, 2010) revealed that RJ is being used in at least 33 police forces in England and Wales. In 2013, the Ministry of Justice announced that at least £29 million would be provided for Police and Crime Commissioners to help deliver RJ in their local police areas (Ministry of

Justice, 2013). This shows that RJ is no longer an option which sits on the fringes of the criminal justice system, but rather one which has come from the margins into the mainstream (Collins, 2015; González, Buth, & Sattler, 2018).

Given the increased use of RJ by the police in England and Wales, this paper could be considered to be timely, as it considers the perceptions and views of police officers and staff in one local police force on the training they received in and the potential use of Level 1 RJ. These views were obtained through an academic partnership between Bath Spa University, Wiltshire Police, and the Office of the Wiltshire Police and Crime Commissioner. This paper presents an examination of the literature on police-led RJ programs both in England and Wales and internationally. The use of such programs has grown considerably in the last 20 years and they are now used in many jurisdictions, including Australia, the Republic of Ireland, and Northern Ireland. It then considers and analyzes the findings of this study. However, in order to have any meaningful discussion on the topic of RJ, consideration must be given as to how RJ is defined. This discussion is necessary as it sets out the parameters for the use of the term RJ in the overall study.

## DEFINING RJ

One of the most enduring problems of RJ is that of definition (Jones & Creaney, 2014). Daly (2016) notes that while those familiar with RJ have “a settled idea of what it is ... [the] definitional problem is aggregating all the individual understandings into a coherent whole” (p. 11). It has been described as both a movement (Richards, 2004) and a philosophy (Braithwaite & Strang, 2000; Gavrielides & Artinopoulou, 2013), which can mean all things to all people. As such, this has resulted in RJ being “a deeply contested concept” (Johnstone & Van Ness, 2007, p. 6). Given that RJ has been a part of the criminological discourse for several decades, its meaning has undergone significant change, and the use of the term restorative is “now applied to a variety of practices—community reparation boards, surrogate victim (or offender meetings), community service, and so on. It is also now used in myriad settings such as schools, prisons, and workplaces, and in contexts including not only criminal justice but transitional justice (i.e., truth and reconciliation commissions), institutional responses to abuse, and so on” (Wood & Suzuki, 2016, p. 150). Providing a universally agreed-upon definition of RJ is next to impossible, “not least because its advocates themselves adhere to different

conceptions of RJ and what it should achieve... Even the name 'RJ' has been criticized as misleading for the implication that restorative approaches are a form of justice" (Sheary, 2016, pp. 157–159).

There are many definitions of RJ and they are usually dependent on the context in which it is being discussed. For example, in the Republic of Ireland, it has been defined as a "victim sensitive response to criminal offending, which, through engagement with those affected by crime, aims to make amends for the harm that has been caused to victims and communities and which facilitates offender rehabilitation and integration into society" (National Commission on Restorative Justice, 2009, p. 20). The Restorative Justice Council (2009) in the United Kingdom defines it as processes which "bring those harmed by crime or conflict, and those responsible for the harm, into communication, enabling every-one affected by a particular incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward." Zehr (2002) has defined it as "a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offence and to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligation, in order to heal and put things as right as possible" (p. 37), while Umbreit, Wilson, and Roberts (2006) state that RJ involves the provision of "opportunities for those most directly affected by a crime to be actively involved in the process of addressing harms, needs, and obligations. RJ is about offender accountability, victim healing, and community safety, through mediation and dialogue whenever possible." A widely recognized definition was put forward by Marshall (1999), who, when researching RJ for the Home Office in the United Kingdom, defined it as "a problem solving approach to crime which involves the parties themselves and the community generally, in an active relationship with statutory agencies" (p. 5). While there is no universal definition of RJ, Marshall's is widely accepted as it refers to the parties involved (both victim and offender) as well as the community and statutory agencies, and thus supports the general consensus that RJ "prioritizes individual, relational, and community restoration" (Greg, 2018, p. 3) in the aftermath of a crime or harmful event. In the interests of clarity and simplicity, Marshall's (1999) definition of RJ was used for this paper.

At this point it should be noted that there is the issue of a potential conflict between the core values of RJ and the relationship they have with policing. Van Ness and Strong (2015) identify what they call four "corner post values" of RJ, which are inclusion, encounter, amends, and reintegration. Inclusion means that all

affected parties are invited to shape and engage in the restorative event. This leads into encounter, whereby all affected parties are given the opportunity to meet and discuss their impact of the crime in a safe and controlled environment. Such discussion will then hopefully result in amends being made, whereby those responsible for the harm take responsibility for repairing it. After this is reintegration, whereby the parties are given the opportunity to fully rejoin their community with the event left in the past, rather than continuing to bear the stigma of the harm and offense (pp. 49–50). These values relate to policing through the “acknowledgement that the outcomes of traditional police and criminal justice procedures are frequently unsatisfactory for victims, offenders, and the wider community” (Paterson & Clamp, 2012, p. 6). Paterson and Clamp (2012) also note that the development of restorative initiatives within policing can be understood as “attempts to repair the harm caused by offending behavior; reinvigorate the use of police discretion; encourage the informal resolution of community problems; enhance public confidence in policing; and to reduce costs” (p. 7). In his examination of the institutionalization of RJ in two English forces, Marder (2018) states that restorative-led policing is:

**an abstract philosophy which is said to encompass various ideas depending on the speaker's beliefs regarding the most appropriate or useful way to apply the concept of RJ to policing ... restorative policing has been conceptualized as both as a fundamental shift in the police's mission, and as a discrete group of practices which the police can use when responding to specific incidence. (pp. 45–46).**

According to MacCold and Wachtel (1998), the practice of restorative policing is related to three trends which are involved in a re-examination of the Western system of justice. They claim that these trends are “(1) community policing and problem-oriented policing; (2) reintegrative shaming theory; and (3) restorative justice” (MacCold & Wachtel, 1998, p. 7). More recently, Clamp and Paterson (2017) have noted that restorative policing is situated “within the general community policing experiment that sought to reduce the boundaries between the police and their local communities and the problem-oriented experiment which sought to provide police officers with the tools to address crime problems, as opposed to single crime incidents, in a more systematic manner” (p. 3).

## POLICE-LED RJ INTERNATIONALLY

Family Group Conferencing was introduced in New Zealand by the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act (1989) as a response to the failings of the then existing youth justice system. The legislation required that the Youth Court must refer all cases (except murder and manslaughter cases) to a Family Group Conference, and consider the conference recommendation at sentencing. The aim of the conference is to reach agreement among the participants on the best ways of meeting the needs of the victim and addressing the offending of the young person. Once the conference recommendations are agreed upon and accepted by a judge they are binding, and are effectively the sanction of the court. Typical conference plans can include an apology, reparation, community work, and involvement in programs such as helping an offender address problems such as substance abuse or anger (National Commission on Restorative Justice, 2009, pp. 52–54). These conferences are of great significance to police-led RJ, which was first developed in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, Australia. Terry O'Connell, an Australian police officer, had learned about the New Zealand model and adapted it for use by the police as an alternative to charging young offenders with juvenile offenses. Victims, offenders, and families and supporters of both are brought together in order to decide how best to respond to an offense. If a conference is successful, an outcome plan will be drawn up by the participants. Conferences were initially conducted by police in an unlegislated capacity between 1991 and 1994. Following the Young Offenders Act (1997) conferencing was led by the New South Wales Department of Juvenile Justice. The Act requires that the plan must constitute a community-based negotiated response, which involves all affected parties, and should be no more severe than any order a court might impose for a similar offense. The Act provides that a plan may contain a requirement for an oral or written apology, or both, to a victim; reparation to the victim or community; participation in an appropriate training program; or actions directed toward the reintegration of the child into the community. An evaluation of the New South Wales youth conferencing scheme (Trimboli, 2000) examined the views of 969 participants (263 victims, 353 offenders, and 353 supporters of offenders) in 391 conferences, and it found high levels of satisfaction. Attendance by victims at conferences was high at 72.5%, and the overwhelming majority of victims and offenders were satisfied with the way in which their case had been dealt with. A total of 91% of offenders and 98% of victims agreed or strongly agreed that they

were given the opportunity to express their views; 89% of victims and 91% of offenders agreed or strongly agreed with the conference outcome plan (Trimboli, 2000). Every Australian state now has a legislated RJ program in place for young offenders, although these vary in scope and in operation. Currently, only two Australian jurisdictions are reported to still use police-led conferencing (Australian Capital Territory [ACT] and Northern Territory). The Crimes (Restorative Justice) Act (2004) in the ACT allows for conferences to be conducted at several points in the criminal justice process (Richards, 2010).

In the Republic of Ireland, police-led RJ is undertaken by An Garda Síochána (the Irish police force) at a youth justice level. The Children Act (2001) introduced RJ as an attempt to divert potential offenders before they enter the mainstream criminal justice system (Sweeney, 2013). Section 26 of the Children Act (2001) provides the legislative basis for the Garda Youth Diversion Programs to facilitate both restorative conferencing and restorative cautioning. Section 29 of the Act provides for the convening of a conference in respect to a child who is being supervised by a Juvenile Liaison Officer. The aim of the program is to divert any child who takes responsibility for their offending behavior away from the criminal justice system by way of a caution, which can be either formal or informal (Gavin & Joyce, 2013), and there are currently over 100 Garda Youth Diversion Projects in operation throughout the country. There has been a substantial increase in the use of police-led RJ in the Republic of Ireland since 2006, when there were only 307 cases where RJ was used, and An Garda Síochána are now “fully committed to utilizing RJ principles for young offenders” (Gavin, 2015, p. 160). The most recently available statistics shows that during the period 2011–2016 An Garda Síochána dealt with 6,190 cases using RJ, an average of 1,015 per annum (An Garda Síochána, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). Many of these referrals involved cases of assault, both on members of the public and on members of An Garda Síochána, robbery, arson, burglary, and public order (An Garda Síochána, 2016).

In 2002, two police-led schemes in Northern Ireland were evaluated (O'Mahony, Chapman, & Doak, 2003). While the overall evaluation found that the police were very much committed to engaging with RJ, and that the majority of conferences resulted in a written or verbal apology being conveyed to the victim, there was very little in the way of reparation. Furthermore, concerns were raised over some venues that were used (i.e., police stations), which could not be considered to be neutral. Also, there was a real possibility of net widening, whereby petty first-time

offenders would get drawn into the criminal justice system. Net-widening can have serious consequences. It refers to “the problem of expanding the social control over individuals through different new programs. Although the initial goal of these reforms is usually to divert people from the criminal justice system, sometimes just the opposite occurs. The net of social control may be wider, stronger, and newer” (Kantorowicz-Reznichenko, 2013, p. 5). In this case, it was due to the majority of conferences being used for less serious offenses, which normally would not have resulted in formal action. Such minor offenses did not warrant the intensive time and resources, which were often devoted to such conferences, and it was found that 80% of the cases examined were for property offenses worth less than £15 (O'Mahony & Doak, 2004).

## POLICE-LED RJ IN ENGLAND AND WALES

RJ has been used in police forces across England and Wales since the 1980s. From a policing perspective, the use of RJ has been described as a “tool to enable the police to make decisions about how to deal more proportionately with lower level crime and is primarily aimed at first-time offenders where there has been an admission of guilt” (Youth Justice Board & Ministry of Justice, 2013, p. 7). Police-led RJ can range from the use of conferences and mediation sessions facilitated by police, to referrals of cases to specialist teams that are trained in the use of RJ (Paterson & Clamp, 2012). Clamp and Paterson (2017) claim that restorative policing allows police to “promote beneficial forms of social capital” and allows them to “move away from the traditional police use of force paradigm” (p. 19).

Community policing philosophies and strategies are now embedded into all 43 police forces in England and Wales (Clamp & Paterson, 2017) and RJ is being used in at least 33 of these police forces (Restorative Justice Council, 2009; Association of Chief Police Officers, 2009, cited in She-wan, 2010). Thames Valley police were one of the first pioneers in the use of police-led RJ in England and Wales (Clamp & Paterson, 2017; O'Mahony & Doak, 2017). In 1994, it began using a scripted conference approach as an alternative to traditional police cautions, rather than an alternative to prosecution. The program was subject to evaluation between 1998 and 2001 (Hoyle, Young, & Hill, 2002) during which 1,915 restorative conferences took place. A further 12,065 restorative cautions were issued where the victim was not present, but where the officer in question attempted to input some form of



victim perspective. The findings from the evaluation included 94% of victims and 89% of offenders being generally satisfied that they were treated fairly, and 55% of victims and 63% of offenders feeling that the encounter helped the offender to understand the effects of the crime. Almost one third of offenders entered into a written reparation agreement, and within a year the majority of these were fulfilled. A total of 58% of victims and 77% of the participants felt that they could put the incident behind them, and 73% of victims and 60% of offenders said that they felt better because of the meeting (Hoyle et al., 2002).

There has been a significant increase in the use of RJ by police in the United Kingdom since the early days of its use by Thames Valley police, and its use is now widespread due to the police service embracing the concept (Acton, 2014). A survey by the Association of Chief Police Officers in 2009 (cited in Shewan, 2010) examined the extent that RJ was being utilized in policing in England and Wales. Key findings included 76.3% stating that their RJ initiatives involved other partners. A total of 73.7% said that their RJ practices involved response and neighborhood officers and 55% said that neighborhood officers utilized restorative conferencing as a part of the process. As stated earlier, it is no longer on the margins, but is now mainstream (Collins, 2015; González et al., 2018) and it allows the police to deal with offending in a flexible and creative manner, which can reduce unnecessary criminalization and target chasing (Acton, 2014).

There are a wide range of options available to police, including the use of referral orders, a youth restorative disposal, restorative cautions, and, more recently, presentence RJ has been introduced by the Crime and Courts Act (2013) to allow sentencing to be deferred after a guilty plea in order for a RJ conference to take place (Ministry of Justice, 2014; Muir, 2014). Referral orders require that an offender must agree to a contract of rehabilitative and restorative elements to be completed within the sentence (Criminal Justice and Courts Bill, 2018). A Youth Restorative Disposal, as a new option for police, holds 10–17-year-olds to account for minor crime and disorder through the use of RJ. It is only an option for low-level incidents, where guilt is admitted and where there is a practical option for an apology, or for the young person to put right the harm or loss they have caused. It aims to strike the right balance between addressing the offense and providing support for young people by encouraging them to not commit further instances of crime or antisocial behavior (Derby Police, 2018). Restorative cautions are meetings structured around a “script” which required the cautioning officer to put

certain questions to those present according to a set order. This script was derived from the police-led model of restorative cautioning developed in Australia, and is influenced by the criminological theory of reintegrative shaming (Braithwaite, 1989). This contends that the best way to control crime is to induce a sense of shame or remorse in offenders for their actions while maintaining respect for them as people (Wilcox, Young, & Hoyle, 2004).

There are typically three “levels” of RJ being used by police in England and Wales. Level 1 RJ, which this research is focused on, is sometimes referred to as either Youth or Adult Restorative Disposals, while terms such as community resolution and restorative resolution are also used. What should be acknowledged, however, is that all Level 1 RJ is intended to be an “instant or on-street disposal where police officers or PCSO<sup>i</sup> use restorative skills to resolve conflict in the course of their duties” (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2012, cited in Westmarland, Johnson, & McGlynn, 2017, p. 3). It is considered to be “an informal restorative resolution for low-level, first-time theft and criminal damage offences” (Muir, 2014, p. 11). If the offender is agreeable to a restorative approach being made toward the victim, and the victim is accepting of this, then the Level 1 RJ takes place there and then. This offers specially trained officers “a quick and proportionate response to low-level offending committed by both adults and young people. The process involves both the victims and the offender resolving the incident collectively on the street where the incident occurred or within a reasonable time following this” (Paterson & Clamp, 2012, p. 11). This has resulted in Level 1 RJ also being commonly referred to as Street Level RJ. One area of concern lies in the fact that while the Association of Chief Police Officers' definition of Level 1 RJ refers to the police using “restorative skills,” these skills are not defined. This, according to Marder (2018), enables a “departure from the idea that RJ requires dialogue and collective decision-making among victims and offender ... the concept of street RJ is ambiguous and empowers the police to determine whether or how to apply restorative principles on a case-by-case basis” (p. 55).

Level 2 RJ interventions can be utilized in addition to, or as an alternative to, the formal criminal justice process. Level 2 RJ usually takes the form of a carefully planned and managed face-to-face conference with the victim and offender present (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2012). In order to take place, the police must “feel that a case merits a youth or adult caution ... the offender accepts guilt and consent to the process [and] the victim should be offered some form of RJ

in the form of a face to face or written apology and, where appropriate either financial compensation (where feasible) or unpaid community work” (Muir, 2014, p. 11). RJ conferencing carried out at Level 2 can be more community focused and lends itself to allowing greater local community involvement in dealing with crime and antisocial behavior. Level 3 RJ then deals with offenders mainly postsentence and can be undertaken if the offender is in prison. It can be undertaken presentence as per the Crime and Courts Act (2013) but only in conjunction with probation, the Crown Prosecution Service, and other relevant agencies (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2012). Cases may be complex and sensitive and offenders may be prolific, monitored by integrated offender management teams, and deemed at risk of continued offending. Level 3 RJ allows the victim to get questions answered, to tell the offender how their actions have impacted them, and to give them a chance to get an apology or anything they may need to help to move on from what happened (Cleveland Police, 2018).

Research conducted by several of Her Majesty's Inspectorates (Her Majesty's Inspectorates of Constabulary, Probation, Prosecution, and Prisons) in 2012 examined RJ interventions among six police forces in the United Kingdom. These were Norfolk, Greater Manchester Police, Merseyside, North Wales Police, Sussex Police, and West Midlands. It surveyed 630 police officers and staff who have used RJ and it held focus groups with 54 members of the public, 33 offenders, and 52 victims. It found that of the 52 victims, 44 (85%) were happy or very happy with their experience; 39 (75%) said it had achieved complete or a lot of reparation. However, only 24 (46%) received follow-up contact after the event to give an update or check on compliance. Of the 33 offenders, it found that 30 (91%) said that the process had been fair, including all 16 who had participated in a RJ conference. A total of 23 (70%) said that their experience had positively influenced their views on their offending. This figure was higher for conferences. Twenty (61%) said that their experience had not been an easy option.

Of the 630 police officers and staff, 458 (73%) said they thought RJ was more effective at improving victim satisfaction than simple cautions. A total of 336 (53%) said they thought RJ was more effective at reducing reoffending than simple cautions; 247 (39%) thought that charging offenders was more effective than RJ at reducing reoffending. Of the 54 members of the public, there was universal acceptance that RJ has a place in the criminal justice system. About three quarters of participants supported RJ as a stand-alone resolution for young, first-time

offenders. There was great support for street resolution yet little understanding of what RJ was until examples of its use were given, whereupon about a quarter of participants were able to recall some media coverage on the topic. Intuitively, RJ was not seen as an adequate stand-alone resolution for adult or repeat offenders. There was an overwhelming desire to see that offenders are punished, as well as the harm being repaired. RJ conferences were not widely supported as a police-led initiative and there was a belief that police should be on visible patrol duties and not in protracted closed-door meetings. The research also highlighted the variation in the application of informal resolutions. For example, in Norfolk, Merseyside, North Wales, and West Midlands, certain offenses (sexual, knife crime, and domestic violence) are excluded from such interventions. Also, in these police areas offenders are precluded from participating by reason of previous offending. This means that these police forces are only using such resolutions with first-time offenders and such actions may result in net widening, whereby minor offenders are unnecessarily drawn further into the criminal justice system (O'Mahony & Doak, 2004, 2017).

The reality of police-led RJ should also be considered, as reality is often different from theory. Several areas of such divergence were highlighted by Marder (2018). For example, research suggests that RJ is most effective when victims and offenders are brought together and facilitated to engage in dialogue and collective decision-making (Crawford, 2010). Marder (2018), however, noted that “given the discretionary environment in which restorative policing takes place, there is a risk that police-led RJ being shaped by the police's working rules, or being used to achieve police defined goals” (p. 59). Marder further notes the conflict between restorative principles and processes and a police culture of coercion and prejudice. One of the most important aspects of RJ is that it should give the victim the opportunity to explain how the offense has impacted them. The process should empower the victim to “face the offender and highlight the hurt and injury the offender's behavior has caused” (National Commission on Restorative Justice, 2009, p. 35). At the same time, it is important that RJ processes operate “to accepted standards to ensure that offenders contribute productively while protecting their rights to fair procedures” (National Commission on Restorative Justice, 2009, p. 36). Marder (2018) highlights evidence (Hoyle et al., 2002; Moore & O'Connell, 1994; O'Mahony & Doak, 2013), which suggests that police-led RJ “seldom enables victims and offenders to communicate” (Marder, 2018, p. 65). He

cites further evidence on the use of Level 1 RJ and its failure to allow victims to have their voices heard:

**Research suggests that the police remain much more likely to use quick, informal and non-dialogic resolutions under the guise of RJ. In one study, only one of 14 cases involved direct dialogue (Walters, 2014). Other studies have also found that street RJ made up the overwhelming majority of police-led RJ, and that the parties were usually not enabled to speak (Cutress, 2015; Meadows, Albertson, Ellingworth, & Senior, 2012; Shapland, Crawford, Gray, & Burn, 2017a, 2017b). From a sample of almost 1,200 records of community resolution-level RJ from 12 forces, Westmarland et al. (2017) found that around 76% were at Level 1, and that even some cases which were recorded as Level 2 did not involve dialogue. (Marder, 2018, p. 66)**

RJ should be an entirely voluntary process on the part of both the victim and the offender (National Commission on Restorative Justice, 2009) and the voluntary nature of the process should be promoted throughout, with all parties being afforded the opportunity to withdraw at any point. Again, Marder (2018) aptly critiques this position in the context of police-led RJ. He states:

**In practice, however, voluntariness may be difficult—or even impossible—to achieve ... police officers might have a cultural disposition towards (and a vested interest in) applying pressure on one or both parties to participate or to accept certain outcomes.(Marder, 2018, p. 59)**

## THIS STUDY

The research and data collection was conducted over a 4-month period, commencing on March 6, 2017, and concluding on July 14, 2017. Data and information was captured using an online survey instrument which allowed for qualitative and quantitative input from participants. It must be noted that while 36 police officers and staff who had completed Level 1 training were contacted directly by the research team, a further sample was contacted on behalf of the research team by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and 17 responses were received. A small amount of qualitative information was gathered through the online survey. Furthermore, during a training session one of the

research teams obtained permission and approval to record reflective comments immediately after the training had been completed. This involved seven police officers and staff. Due to the small sample size it is difficult to draw any solid conclusions from this research. As well as the online questionnaire, 20 police officers and staff that had completed Level 1 training were contacted via email with an invitation to participate in a focus group. The focus groups were to explore further the findings from the online questionnaire. Three police officers and staff responded negatively. Only one respondent agreed to participate but contacted the research team on the morning of the scheduled focus group, signaling their intention to withdraw. At this point it should be noted that the small sample size makes any real quantitative deductions impossible, as it is not likely to be representative of the entire Wiltshire Police Force of which there were 966 police officers in March 2017 (Allen & Jackson, 2018).

Prior to the commencement of the research, ethical approval was sought and obtained from the relevant ethics committees. It should be noted at this point that at the time the primary research for this paper was being undertaken, unbeknownst to the authors, a larger study, examining similar aspects of RJ training and police perceptions, was being undertaken (Shapland et al., 2017a, 2017b). This has proved to be an invaluable source of information and insight, and its importance to this study cannot be overstated.

The questionnaire was administered utilizing Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey is an online cloud-based program that enables customized surveys, data analysis, sample selection, bias elimination, and data representation tools. It is a commonly used tool for collection of quantitative data and enables participants to include relevant and appropriate comments after each question. These comments inform and contribute to the analysis. The questionnaire utilized for the research was structured using a Likert scale. Likert scales are a common ratings format for surveys “where respondents rank quality from high to low or best to worst using five or seven levels” (Allen & Seaman, 2007, p. 64). The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions with five levels of responses. The reason for only asking 10 questions was due to the fact that Survey Monkey charges a fee for creating questionnaires of more than 10 questions. It was felt that with a significant response rate 10 questions would be adequate. However, it should be noted that more questions would have yielded much richer findings. As the survey was limited to 10 questions there was no space to obtain demographic data such as age range, gender, or

police rank. Again this must be acknowledged as a limitation on the study. The questions asked reflected the following: participants' knowledge of RJ prior to and post training; usefulness of training; development of knowledge about RJ; the opportunity of applying training knowledge into practice; confidence about implementing RJ; that implementation of RJ will contribute to the existing workload; and that more information and training is required (see Appendix A). It must be noted that there was no obligation for participants to answer all questions, although the format of the questions did encourage engagement.

## SELECTED FINDINGS

This section considers some of the selected findings from both the online questionnaire and the recorded training session. It should be noted that references to percentage findings (%) relate to the online questionnaire only (n = 17). The online questionnaire began by asking participants about their knowledge of RJ. Over 60% felt that they had a basic or good knowledge of RJ prior to Level 1 training. A total of 33% of participants acknowledged that their knowledge of RJ prior to the training was poor.

Participants who were present at the training session also spoke about their level of familiarity with RJ and about their knowledge over what it involves. One stated:

**I did RJ training about 7 years ago when I was a PCSO so I have a little knowledge.**

One participant was able to articulate a very good understanding of what it involved:

**It's showing the impact a crime has had on the victim. It shows that impact on the offender and in doing so modifies their views as to how they act in the future. So it can help all parties. The victim can offload and share issues they may have had and maybe help the offender stop reoffending by having the victim bringing it home and explaining the impact it's had on them.**

The training was found to have had a positive impact on improving participants' knowledge and understanding of RJ. The number of participants who claimed to

have a good knowledge of RJ after the training was completed increased 250%, from 4 to 14 participants, and 18% (n = 3) felt that they had a very good understanding of what RJ entailed. Participants at the training session were also of the view that their knowledge of RJ had improved:

**I'm much clearer about the different levels of RJ.**

**It's solidified my views. It's good to see that this thing is more acceptable now than it was in the past.**

Seventy-five percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the training session was useful. One participant who responded to the online questionnaire felt that they could not identify how useful the training would be until they were able to engage in RJ as part of their day-to-day policing role:

**Not sure how I can use it in my day to day role as the opportunity has not presented itself.**

Over 60% of participants felt that they would have the opportunity to use Level 1 RJ on a regular basis in their role as a police officer or police staff. One participant to the online questionnaire stated that:

**I might use it now and again—maybe once or twice a year,**

while another noted:

**At the moment I have not had the chance.**

All participants in the online questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed that they could confidently apply Level 1 RJ posttraining. This concurs with the findings that training has improved participant knowledge and understanding of RJ. Participants at the recorded training session were also more confident of using Level 1 RJ after completing the training:

**Every incident is different so you have to evaluate there and then at the time, but yeah, I think I would feel more confident in using it.**

**Once we start using it, it will fall into place easier.**

Participants were asked about the perceived usefulness of RJ on a day-to-day basis. While 60% agreed or strongly agreed that Level 1 RJ could be useful in their role,



over 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Unfortunately there were no comments provided from participants to expand on these findings. Some felt that RJ could help to reduce their daily workload, while others felt it could add to it. One participant at the recorded training session commented that:

**Restorative justice could reduce workload by removing repeat visits that may occur if an issue is dealt with in the traditional police response manner. Taking some more time could end neighbor disputes that rumble on for years using lots of police time/money in the process.**

One participant at the recorded training session was certain that the use of RJ would add to their workload, but this did not discourage them from wanting to use it as there was the possibility of achieving “a good result”:

**There's definitely more work involved. Where you would usually just deal with a disposal with custody, now you have to go to the victim and see if they would be happy to do this. Then get the offender and there's all that chasing up of people. So there's definitely more work involved but if that's what it takes to get a good result.**

One participant at the recorded training session stated:

**For it to work you have to have an offender who put their hands up and if we're dealing with an offender who may deny doing it and a victim, it has to go through the whole court process and we're sort of done at that stage. So then do we have to revisit the issue?**

Another noted that while there may be more work involved, RJ has the potential to:

**save the police a fair bit of time in the long run as it may have an impact on reoffending.**

Over 80% of participants in this study either agreed or strongly agreed that the police should be involved in Level 1 RJ. However, one participant in the online questionnaire stated that they felt it was:

**more of an external agency role,**

while a participant at the recorded training session stated:

**I feel it should be more external personally. The way we deal with some people, how they engage with us, it's not positive sometimes.**

Another participant at the recorded training session felt that the police should be involved in Level 1 RJ, especially for offenses at the lower end of the scale:

**I think for low level stuff, absolutely it has a place.**

Forty-five percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to learn more about RJ, while 25% remained unsure after training. There were two comments that expressed the views of participants who wished to learn more about RJ. Two participants who left comments in the online questionnaire expressed an interest in learning about the impact RJ would have on reoffending and prevention of crime. One of them stated:

**I am definitely a huge supporter of restorative justice and I find myself reanalyzing my work in such a way of how I can incorporate it into my jobs,**

while the other said:

**I want to learn more about the mechanics of how we go about it I want to learn more about how it fits into our current system.**

## ANALYSIS

Training was found to be of vital importance by Shapland et al. (2017b) who reported that officers who were trained in RJ were either confident in undertaking RJ or referring a case to a RJ service. Furthermore, they found that training was considered to be useful only if “repeated on an on-going basis to successfully infiltrate police practice” (p. 32). On the importance of training, Paterson and Clamp (2012) noted that Shapland et al.’s (2007) research demonstrated that “the two key factors of success are the selection of police officers with the relevant skill sets, not least the ability to empathize with a multitude of viewpoints, and the provision of relevant and operationally useful training that links restorative justice to other proactive, problem oriented policing strategies” (p. 21). They also point to Holland's (2007) study, which found that there is a central role played by trainers and leaders, in enacting policy and systemic reform.

The assumption that Level 1 RJ will add to the workload is challenged from research published by the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection (2012), which found North Wales Police saved an estimated 3,336 hr (which was the equivalent of £94,602) over a 12-month period. In Greater Manchester Police, the use of Level 1 RJ saved 7 hr and 45 min of police time per case and this resulted in time savings of £21,861. At a full force level in Greater Manchester Police it was estimated that this would equate to £850,000 or 19 full-time police posts. Greater Manchester Police has been using RJ since 2010, and over 90% of its officers and PCSOs are trained in an accredited standard of a RJ delivery. It deals with 9,000 RJ cases per year and it is the most common form of disposal outside of court (Manchester City Council's Communities Scrutiny Committee, 2013). The Criminal Justice Joint Inspection (2012) also found that such informal resolutions now play a significant role in managing volume crime in the six forces examined. The use of on the spot informal resolutions was found to reduce bureaucracy and save a great deal of time for police. Such resolutions were also found to be highly cost effective.

Muir (2014) noted several implications associated with police-led RJ. The first was that dealing with more low-level first-time cases through an informal resolution system would save the police time and money. This was also highlighted by the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection (2012) report. This saving of both time and money is noteworthy, as Muir (2014) stated that offering reparation where a caution is deployed would require extra resources. He highlighted the training that officers must go through, as well as the need for a stronger and more systematic victim liaison service and a proper system of quality assurance. Cutress (2015) found that Level 1 RJ helped to free up police officers' time and allowed them to get back to their job much faster than traditional police disposals. Muir (2014) noted that a greater use of RJ will require increased capacity. Essentially this might mean that police will have more work to do in what may be an already overworked job. Such a situation could result in what MacCold and Wachtel (1998) described as insensitivity to victims' needs. Paterson and Clamp (2012) have claimed that "the potential resource saving from restorative justice for the police is often simplified. Restorative policing requires a substantial investment of resources, particularly where this relates to higher risk offenders" (p. 31).

The concern of participants in this research with the possibility of having to do more work is not unjustified, and such concerns, unless properly dealt with through effective leadership, may have the potential to derail the implementation

of police-led RJ. This is closely related to what Alarid and Montemayor (2012) referred to in their work on implementing RJ in police departments. They found that boundary erosion “or the possibility that police will be asked to assume more responsibility than they already have, may often result in police officers becoming resistant to change, especially when associated with changing from what they perceive as ‘real’ police work. When the change to new philosophies is not fully understood, change became more difficult” (p. 459). This was highlighted by Shapland et al. (2017b) who noted that RJ is seen by many police officers as “a significant cultural shift away from core police business” (p. 87). Young (2001) (cited in Paterson & Clamp, 2012) “explains this by arguing that at the core of police culture is authority and power over individuals. This runs the risk that offenders will not feel empowered, but rather frustrated and resentful of a process where accounts of the incident are evaluated on the basis of knowledge derived from police statements, previous criminal records are used in an assessment of the offender’s character, and that the police officer/facilitator will exert too much control over the outcomes of the process” (p. 21).

However, some may not have any concerns over such a shift in attitudes. It is interesting to note that two participants in the online questionnaire commented that they wanted to learn more about RJ and about how they could incorporate it into their daily working lives. This is related to what has been referred to as a transformation (Hines & Bazemore, 2003) and a conversion experience (Bazemore & Griffiths, 2003). Such a conversion or transformation typically involves a “commitment to a more holistic version of policing that prioritizes certain principled goals, for example, resolving conflict by repairing harm in a way that maximizes stakeholder involvement and builds community” (Bazemore & Griffiths, 2003, p. 343). Such a change in values is a welcome respite from the traditional view of police culture, characteristics of which have been found to include cynicism, pessimism, suspicion, isolation conservatism, machismo, and racism (Bowling & Foster, 2003).

## CONCLUSION

This paper has provided an insight into the views and perceptions of police officers and staff on the subject of RJ and there are a number of findings that are worth highlighting. Over 60% of participants felt they would use RJ on a regular basis and

all participants agreed that they could now confidently apply Level 1 RJ within their role. Although almost 50% felt RJ would add to their workload, several participants felt that RJ was a positive policing tool, and this addition to their workload would produce positive outcomes. Almost 60% of participants felt that Level 1 RJ would be useful in their role as police officer or police staff. Despite being small in scale, this study mirrors findings from studies with other police forces in England and Wales. For example, Shapland et al. (2017b) emphasized the importance of training for police officers to implement RJ. Training is also important to educate police officers and staff as to the potential savings that may arise from the use of RJ. Many in this research were of the view that RJ would add to their workload, but research by Muir (2014) noted that its use could save police time and money. The role of the police in the RJ process was also questioned by participants and this links closely with Shapland et al.'s (2017b) description of police culture and how a change in this area will be required before police fully embrace RJ. This in turn links back to more detailed and comprehensive training, which needs to be embedded in police training and then refreshed on an annual basis. Overall, however, the small sample size means that it is very difficult to draw any solid conclusions from this research and it is important to note that this sample cannot be considered as representative of all the views of police officers and staff. In order to draw any solid conclusions on the views of Wiltshire police officers and staff on the subject of RJ, further research with a bigger sample is required.

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## APPENDIX A

	Very good	Good	Basic	Poor	None of these
1. Prior to this training session I would consider my knowledge of restorative justice to have been					
2. After this training session I would consider my knowledge of restorative justice to be					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	None of these
3. I found the training to be useful					
4. I feel my knowledge about restorative justice has improved					
5. I feel that I would have the opportunity use Level 1 restorative justice on a regular basis					
6. I feel confident that I could apply Level 1 restorative justice					
7. I feel that level restorative justice could be useful in my day to day role as a police officer					
8. I feel that using Level 1 restorative justice will add to my workload					
9. I feel that police should be involved in Level 1 restorative justice					
10. I feel that I would like to learn more about restorative justice					

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<sup>i</sup> A PCSO is a Police and Community Support Officer. This is a paid, usually full-time position that can lead to a long career with the police. Although PCSOs do not have the same powers as regular police officers, they still carry a lot of responsibility, and are a critical part of the police service (College of Policing, 2018).