

# BCU Evaluation Report (Summary)

## Purpose

This report outlines the key findings of the evaluation of conferences held as part of the Restorative Justice Project that is funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and managed by the Birmingham Social Housing Partnership.

The purpose of the evaluation was to support the shaping of an RJ model and service delivery of RJ which is:

- Accessible to all victims across Birmingham;
- Victim-centred in its approach;
- Efficient;
- Scoped to grow and develop across the West Midlands;
- Designed to develop the Specialist Team and invest in leadership.

The evaluation was divided into two phases: Phase 1 identified and compared the costs of restorative justice conferences to the agencies involved. Phase 2 explored the experiences and perceptions of participants in the restorative justice conferences.

## Findings

- The **highest total cost** for the restorative justice approach of **£147,666** is well below the estimated cost for the standard approach to ASB cases of **£434,386**: making a saving of **£286,720**.
- Taking the lowest cost for the restorative justice approach, **£68,895**, the saving is **£365,491**, which works out close to £200,000 per year over the 22 months of the study.
- Restorative justice conferences are **quicker and more effective** ways of resolving ASB cases. On average, standard **ASB cases took 117 days** whereas the **RJ cases took 27 days**.
- Restorative justice conferences have had **positive results for the participants** in this research.
- Restorative justice is an **effective way of establishing communication** between neighbours in situations where relationships have broken down.
- There is very little evidence that parties have been more able to address issues themselves without intervention from their housing officers and police officers.
- The **main barriers to holding conferences** are: 1) **logistical**, relating to organising a conference; 2) **interpersonal** issues of the parties concerned; 3) participants' **negative perceptions** of the restorative justice process.
- The **role of the facilitators is crucial** to the success of restorative justice cases. Facilitators must be passionate about the concept of restorative justice: this suggests that restorative justice cannot be implemented by all police officers or housing officers. This will have an impact on the scale of restorative justice.

- There was **some anxiety amongst participants** that restorative justice agreements are not legally binding and that the issue is not technically resolved.
- Participants were **very positive about the way the facilitators** had managed the conference. However, they were not always clear about what follow-up might be expected.
- Facilitators are **positive about the training** they have received but felt there was still development needed. However, the most important support is provided by others on the team and leadership given by the supervisors is regarded as pivotal.