



Restorative Gloucestershire

Bringing people together to put things right

How Restorative Justice worked for Jane and David

Jane:

Our son was involved in a car accident where one of his friends was driving and the other was killed. Our son consequently suffered brain damage from the accident.

We first heard about restorative justice when we got a telephone call from a volunteer, Paul.

Initially I said no. The incident was too raw and our son was still in and out of hospital. At the time we had a lot on our plate and things were hectic. Our family was falling to pieces and the last we wanted was to let outsiders in.

After another phone call from Paul, we talked it over and I agreed. Paul highlighted that the process was completely voluntary and we could withdraw at any time. I researched a little bit more about restorative justice and was keen to see how it could help with our case.

The first meeting with the volunteers, Paul and Charlotte was fantastic – it was the best thing we've ever done. Even if nothing else came out of it and it didn't progress to a conference. We hadn't spoken much about the incident as a family, and during the meeting we all just talked and talked and talked!

Paul and Charlotte put a lot of work into making sure the conference went ahead and was safe. They were always available on the phone if needed.

I didn't feel any anger towards the offender as he was a friend of my son, but I needed him to know what he had done to our family. This was why I wanted to progress with a conference.

The conference day was very nerve-wracking. It was the most frightening thing I had to do. I was very nervous to meet the person who caused the last 15 months of hell. However, when we walked into the room he was a shadow of his former self; he looked so pale and had lost a lot of weight. I felt sadness and pity - he looked so ill. It reminded us that he was human too.

The conference was so useful because we were able to ask what we needed to ask. We all live together in a small town and we needed to know what would happen if we see each other in the street. This was so important because it was inevitably going to happen. It was decided that our son wanted no further contact with the offender.

Until you have participated in restorative justice you can't explain how powerful it is. You see the offender in a different light. It has had such an impact on our lives. It really was a fabulous thing – it has made such a difference. We have come out of it the other side so much stronger. We are able to move on with our lives. It's the best thing we ever did.

I support it 100% and I think it should be available throughout the country.



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David:

I took part in the restorative justice conference just under 12 months ago. This was approximately 15 months after the accident occurred.

I was driving back from a night out where I was the designated driver. I was speeding as I came down a hill and overtook a car on double white lines. I turned my head to tell one of the passengers to put his belt on and lost control off the car. It span out and hit a barrier, snapping the B-pillar and forcing the car to roll into an underpass. As the car rolled, one of the passengers was thrown out the car and passed away at the scene.

The crime caused me to lose a lot of friends and it had a detrimental effect on my mental health; I had depression and started to drink and smoke.

Being sent to jail was a bad thing that happened but I turned it into a positive by gaining qualifications and sorting my life out. I am now back at college and have solid plans for my future and they are going well.

My experience of taking part in the restorative justice conference was good, but don't misunderstand me -it was the hardest thing I have ever had to do in my life. Although I am glad that I did -it gave me a chance to get my side of the story across to both sets off families instead of them just having the scientific evidence.

It also gave the opportunity to apologise to them. I would recommend the conference to other people but I think that they need to be strong enough mentally as it was an extremely hard thing to do; not just during the meeting, but afterwards as well. I think it would help to show people with less remorse what they are doing to their victims and maybe help to prevent them re-offending.

I think that the way my conference was dealt with was as good as it possibly could have been; both before the conference and the aftercare.

I felt I was in a room with people I could trust and that it was a safe environment.

If you would like to know more about us or are interested in volunteering as a restorative justice facilitator, then please contact Restorative Gloucestershire:

Email:
contactus@restorativegloucestershire.co.uk
Telephone:
01452 754542 (answer phone)

You can also visit our website:
www.restorativegloucestershire.co.uk
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