



Restorative Gloucestershire

Bringing people together to put things right

How Restorative Justice worked for Louise and William

Louise:

I went home one day and the window was missing. I noticed the curtain was blowing. That's when I knew I'd been burgled. I went into my own bedroom and you could see all the drawers had been pulled out. I was more shocked than anything else.

When the police asked me what has happened, I had no idea what had gone. You forget things in your house but I pictured things missing over time. After the police left me, Victim Support rang and I talked to them on the phone. Soon after Sarah, a restorative justice volunteer facilitator contacted me.

Knowing that someone had been in my house made it feel dirty. He'd been through my belongings. The impact on my daughter was bad; afterwards, she woke up in the night, worried about him coming back.

Sarah (a restorative justice volunteer facilitator) helped me a lot. When I said I wanted to meet the offender,

Sarah told me what the room for the restorative justice 'conference' was going to look like, and what to expect.

He came in and apologised and I asked my questions. He offered to pay back the cost of the things he took. I wanted to know if he would still be around my area.

It was a useful experience. I didn't know what he looked like but he knew what I looked like from the photographs in my flat.

William, the offender, wrote my daughter a letter saying he was not coming back. That helped her. She used to wake up and after she got the letter, she got over it. I've got used to it too now; I used to double-check all the windows and doors all the time. The timing of the 'conference' was just right. Not too close to the burglary. I had time to think about it.

I would say definitely go for it. You can ask the offender what you want until you get answers. You can tell if they are genuinely sorry or just saying it.

It changed my opinion of him.

William:

I was always thought I was going to be in trouble. I was inquisitive and naughty which led on to me being angry and malicious. I was in and out of prison and bail hostels. Another prisoner called Lewis told me about restorative justice. I was ready to change but not sure how to.

A leopard can't change its spots overnight. It is a long process but I knew I could change. I needed something to trigger it, and it was the restorative justice conference for me.

The fact that there was a little girl involved who was traumatised was even worse. That made me think of my partner's little girl. I spent time thinking about questions I wanted to ask. I thought I was ready but I was absolutely petrified. I got to the door and I didn't want to go in. Sarah, the volunteer, encouraged me.



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I couldn't look at Louise but got asked to look at her when I told her what happened. That was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. I tried to explain everything to her.

She told me about her day and why she was not at home. Louise said her elderly parents had been burnt in a house fire and both were hurt. She was at their house when she got back with her daughter. She had nightmares and refused to go back to live in the house. That really got to me. To wreck that little girls' life...I really understood it because of what had happened to me.

I made Louise aware that I was sincere when I asked questions.

'Do you want to know where I live, if I drink?'

'What if you see me in the street?'

'Do you want me to cross the road or acknowledge you?'

'Can I pay back the damage?'

She needed to know who the other person was. She didn't know who they were and wanted to know if she could end up sitting next to them on the bus.

The shame I felt in that room that day was nothing compared to court.

Louise asked me to write a letter to her daughter – from the 'bad man'. That had a big impact on me to be called 'bad man'. It took me 2-3 weeks to write. I found that really hard because I had always thought of myself as loveable rogue but I realised I was not – I was a bad man!

I came out of prison 11 months ago and my licence has finished. It is the longest time I have been out and not committed a crime. I have also had restorative justice training and am now a volunteer. I've had the support of a Police Sergeant in Cheltenham too; including help finding employment.

The more things you do wrong the more you suppress your conscience.

Restorative Justice has given me back my conscience.

Now I can't do anything without thinking of what it will do to someone else. For instance, when I was walking back from the dole office with some lads, I stopped one lad from taking a pint of milk.

I would recommend restorative justice to anyone; it's life changing.

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

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01452 754542 (answer phone)

You can also visit our website:
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