

CASE STUDY

Brighton and Hove: developing a culture of doing ‘with’ as prevention rather than cure

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1. Origins of the project

Brighton & Hove Community Safety Partnership made a commitment to become a restorative city in 2015. This partnership is made up of representatives from agencies such as the local authority, police, housing providers, emergency services, mental health, social care and community organisations. Brighton & Hove is a metropolitan city in Sussex (UK) with a population of around 280,000 people. There is a diverse population of which 14 per cent are students; 16 per cent were born outside of the UK; 20 per cent are Black, Asian or some other ethnic minority; 15 per cent are lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender; 16 per cent are disabled or have a long-term health problem that limits their day-to-day activities; and while we have diverse faith communities 42 per cent of Brighton & Hove’s population state they have no religion.

There was already significant restorative justice provision with the city’s youth offending service. The Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex is a keen advocate for victims of crime and had invested in three restorative justice teams based in police stations throughout the county providing post-sentence restorative justice for adults through the Sussex restorative justice partnership.

The community safety partnership was inspired by the success rates of victim-offender meetings and made a successful bid to the Police and Crime Commissioner to fund a one-year development post to explore how restorative approaches may be able to improve early intervention and preventative work in non-criminal justice settings such as education, social care, health and community safety. The main financial output for this project has been the development officer’s salary of around £42,000 per year. In addition to this there has been investment of around £5,000 for accreditation of training and services.

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Brighton & Hove Restorative City: https://www.safeinthecity.info/sites/safeinthecity.info/files/sitc/Our%20Restorative%20City%20Revised%20Action%20Plan%202017-18_0.pdf.

2. Theoretical and conceptual basis

Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC), as part of the wider Sussex restorative justice partnership, began to develop Brighton & Hove as a restorative city using the principles of restorative practice as outlined by the Restorative Justice Council (RJC): restoration, voluntarism, neutrality, accessibility, safety and respect (Restorative Justice Council, 2015a). These principles informed the city's pledge that any person or community harmed by crime or conflict in the city will be offered an opportunity to repair the harm caused by communicating directly or indirectly with the person or people that caused this harm.

The key theoretical approaches underpinning this development included Wachtel's social discipline window (McCold & Wachtel, 2003); Nathanson's compass of shame (Nathanson, 1992); Braithwaite's reintegrative shaming (Braithwaite, 1989); Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1962); and restorative questions as part of a 'scripted' intervention. All of these approaches are embedded in the restorative justice facilitator training provided via the Sussex partnership for people facilitating within criminal justice settings. It was agreed that this would be replicated where appropriate for non-criminal settings such as housing providers, schools, mental health, social care, universities and community groups so there was a common offer across BHCC.

3. Operationalisation

The Community Safety Partnership identified key stakeholders from a range of agencies to form a strategic group to act as a critical friend and to help steer the direction of the project. This group was chaired by the council's Community Safety team via the development officer and community safety manager.

An initial assessment of current levels of knowledge and understanding was undertaken which led to the creation of a register of trained facilitators. The development officer then invited these facilitators and other interested parties to form a restorative champions' network. The champions were provided with additional training around the aims and aspirations of the project including guidance about how to monitor performance. BHCC monitored the number of referrals received that were appropriate for a restorative intervention, the number of offers made, and the number of interventions undertaken. This information was provided on a quarterly basis to the Sussex partnership via the development officer.

Due to the success of the first year's work, additional funding was identified to further fund the development officer role. The key objectives for the second phase were to develop a range of restorative practitioner training to meet the different levels of need and to get this training accredited by the RJC; to increase the frequency of champions' meetings as a form of peer supervision for people who have completed training; and to identify additional services or areas where a restorative approach could be provided. During this second phase, the develop-

ment officer extended the offer to adult social care, housing, mediation and the Travellers' team.

Around this same time the EU referendum took place which, sadly, led to a big increase in the number of reported hate incidents taking place in the city and particularly towards ethnic minorities and faith groups. The community safety team provided a number of direct and indirect interventions. This led to an increased understanding of how impactful restorative circles can be for people harmed by hate incidents or hate crime. The community safety team began to pilot the use of restorative circles for people who had been harmed by the same type of hate crime and discrimination but who did not wish to communicate directly with the harmer; or in situations where the harmer could not be identified. The circles were facilitated by skilled practitioners with significant experience of addressing harm caused by hate crime.

4. Ongoing processes

The BHCC 'Restorative Pledge' places restorative justice in a citywide context and reinforces its importance. This is further expanded upon in the strategic plan for this work. This plan expands on strategic and operational objectives and has clear measures to assess and evaluate outcomes – restorative working at its heart. BHCC believes that it is important that the restorative city concept is grounded in planning that has clear outcomes and also reflects the needs of citizens. It also, through cross-agency working groups, tries to ensure that all parts of the city are talking to each other and sharing values and behaviours. This is demonstrated by the ongoing multi-agency work to embed restorative circles as a space for LGBT+ people harmed by discrimination, or to support the integration of unaccompanied asylum seekers, by building trusted relationships. This is further supported through the provision of free BHCC restorative practices training to groups and individuals, and the peer support available via the city's champions' network. The champions' network is co-chaired by the youth offending service and the local independent mediation service – so integration is at the heart of the activity.

5. Findings, challenges and further perspectives

Throughout the time BHCC have been developing this restorative city approach the council also committed to achieving the RJC's service quality mark. This allowed the council to use an external assessment of their restorative services to try to ensure they delivered safe and effective practice. Brighton & Hove has achieved the Restorative Service Quality Mark (RSQM) for youth offending, community safety and community mediation. This quality mark is an external recognition of quality restorative practice awarded by the Restorative Justice Council (2015b).

BHCC has used the standards of the RSQM as one of the lenses through which to evaluate and plan their work. Services and organisations that achieve the RSQM are assessed against six standards: leadership, strategic and opera-

tional planning, collaborative working, supporting and developing people, service delivery, and evaluating and improving. An assessor looks at written evidence interviewing staff at all levels as well as meeting with partners, stakeholders and clients. An assessment of the organisation is then made. There is an emphasis in the assessment on exploring, both the way a service delivers restorative services, and also the way that it works within individual services and across services. This positions the concept of the restorative city as more than just a way of 'doing' and looks for it to also be a way of 'being' guided by restorative principles and practice.

BHCC's focus to become a restorative city has shown a deliberate and explicit attention to joining together different elements of the council to meet the complex needs of its citizenry.

Some findings from the RJC's (unpublished) reports written on the RSQM services within BHCC, which we have been given permission to use, showed that all leaders, from the highest level of the council, who were interviewed, were clear about their commitment to restorative practice and its role in wider city strategies and objectives. This included using restorative approaches in strategic meetings at all levels across the city. This was further demonstrated by the way all staff interviewed at every level could describe the integrated use of restorative practice.

Restorative working is also embedded in BHCC documents, from strategic to operational, across a wide range of agencies that form the formal and informal partnerships within the city. The Executive Director responsible for neighbourhoods, communities and housing on behalf of BHCC described restorative practice as the 'thread' across the city and at the highest level. BHCC's 'Restorative City Strategy: Phase Three' describes the overarching activity currently being undertaken in the city to embed restorative practices at a wider range of access points in the city (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2017). This is further supported by the Restorative Champions Network designed to bring together agencies as described above.

Interviews, during the assessments, allowed a wide range of staff to outline how organisational leaders communicated the value of restorative practices and encouraged staff to deliver high quality service. The development of restorative approaches in team meetings and the supervision structure was cited as examples of the way leaders motivate and empower staff within a restorative culture.

6. Conclusion

BHCC is aware that it is in the early stages of developing its own restorative city model. It has though chosen a route that deliberately looks to 'test' itself against external standards in partnership with a wide range of agencies, both inside and outside the criminal justice system. The actions within BHCC will continue to develop and will do so with explicit reflection on principles and practice and the increasing need to engage the citizens of Brighton and Hove much more in their own solutions to the problems they face. Brighton does not see the restorative

city as only being about enabling professionals and practitioners to become skilled in restorative practices. It is looking to become a place that citizens are also given the skills, within a citywide context of restorative services and behaviours, to also play an important role. The community safety partnership is committed to taking this approach forward as much as it is able to do to improve the lives of all of the people and communities living and working in the city.

References

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