



PREJUDICE AND HATE ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

REPAIRING HARMS THROUGH STUDENT-LED
RESTORATIVE DIALOGUE

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents the final stage evaluation of the project *Hate crime on university campuses: Repairing the harms of hate and prejudice through student-led dialogue*. This project was undertaken at the University of Sussex and the University of Brighton and funded by the Office for Students (formerly HEFCE) Catalyst Student Safeguarding Fund, which provided grants to higher education (HE) providers to improve and enhance safeguarding against hate crime and online harassment. The central aim of this project was the establishment of a new initiative called Restore Respect which addresses hate crime, hate incidents, and hate speech through restorative practices.

The purpose of Restore Respect is to empower universities and students alike to address both the causes and consequences of prejudice and hate. The initiative is based on restorative justice theory and practice, which aims to use an inclusive dialogical process that focuses on the harm and how these harms can best be repaired. Based on research¹ conducted by a criminologist at the University of Sussex on the use of restorative justice for hate crime, Restore Respect aims to provide students with a space in which they can have their voices heard, have their experiences of hate and prejudice listened to, feel supported by their university and their peers, and feel empowered in helping to determine the best resolution.

The programme is managed by fully trained restorative practitioners (also known as facilitators) across both Student Services and the Student Union (SU) at the University of Sussex, and via Student Operations and Support at the University of Brighton. The programme provides a reporting mechanism for hate incidents and hate crimes to either the University (Brighton and Sussex) or to the SU (Sussex). Practitioners respond to reports within 48 hours. The aim is to identify the needs of those who have been harmed by hate and prejudice and to explore ways in which these harms can be resolved restoratively (full information can be found on the University of Sussex Restore Respect website: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre/issues/restore_respect).

The project received funding for approximately one year, commencing in 2018 and ending in 2019. Over the course of this period, 107 staff members from both universities (42 at Brighton and 65 at Sussex) underwent training to respond to hate and prejudice restoratively. 11 staff members also undertook specially-designed advanced three-day training to become restorative practitioners. This training provided in-depth instruction on hate crime and its impacts, as well as the theory and practice of restorative justice. Trainees were required to participate in learning activities, complete tasks, and undertake role play, with the final day of training involving actors in the roles of students. After successfully completing training, practitioners received continued guidance and supervision from the project lead and project coordinator.

As the first initiative of its kind in the UK, a considerable amount of exploratory and preparatory work was required in order to understand the needs of students, the respective institutional structures, and how restorative practices could best be adapted to work within a university setting. At the conclusion of the project, the methods employed and the lessons gained from the project's

¹Walters, M.A. (2014) *Hate Crime and Restorative Justice: Repairing Harms, Exploring Causes*, Oxford: OUP.

implementation were developed into a toolkit to provide guidance to other HE providers on how to set up a restorative programme to address hate crime and hate incidents.

APPROACH OF THE EVALUATION

This report continues the evaluation that was begun earlier in the project and presented in a preliminary report.² Based on interviews and observations with 41 student participants, the preliminary report detailed the experiences and impacts of hate and prejudice on campus and identified barriers to reporting. The aim was to collate data that would help inform the establishment of the programme, thereby ensuring that it is “student-led” and student-informed.

Guided by the foci and intended outcomes outlined by the Catalyst Safeguarding Fund, evaluation of the Restore Respect project examined its perceived compatibility with and responsiveness to student needs, staff training and involvement, the cultural and organisational change it has helped to bring about, and its legacy and sustainability.

Given that the programme was launched in October 2018 and funding ended in February 2019, the intervening period was considered too short a time-frame of operation on which to credibly base an assessment of reported cases and student satisfaction. As such, research for this final stage of evaluation aimed to examine the project’s impact on the culture, processes, and approaches around safeguarding students at both universities, and involved the following methods:

- Completion of feedback and survey forms by participants of the various training sessions
- Eight semi-structured face-to-face or telephone interviews with staff members who were trained as restorative practitioners
- Ongoing desk research and review of the literature
- Thematic analysis of the findings of practitioner interviews

The findings from these activities were analysed together with the notes taken from continuous and ongoing meetings with staff and student representatives, as well as regular meetings with the programme’s advisory group.

TRAINING IN RESTORATIVE RESPONSES TO HATE

The training of university staff was completed in two stages. During the first stage, 107 staff members from both universities (42 at Brighton and 65 at Sussex) underwent training on responding to hate and prejudice restoratively. The training involved a two-hour workshop delivered by Bonita Holland (project coordinator and experienced restorative practitioner) and Mark Walters (project lead).³ Once this training programme was completed, student service managers and student union representatives were asked to put forward any staff members who wanted to complete the full three-day advanced training to become “restorative facilitators” and who would effectively go on to run Restore Respect. In total, 11 staff members were selected for this second stage of the training programme. The three-day training was led by Bonita Holland, with the assistance of an external

² See a full analysis in our accompanying report Kayali, L. and Walters, M. (2018) “Prejudice and Hate on University Campuses”, University of Sussex. Available at: <http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/81958/>.

³ Full training slides can be accessed at: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre/issues/restore_respect

trainer from Brighton Council and Mark Walters. Key to the advanced training on using a restorative approach to addressing the harms of hate and prejudice on campus was, firstly, a more detailed understanding of “hate” and its impacts and, secondly, advanced knowledge on facilitating restorative dialogue that focuses on issues of identity and prejudice.

DEFINING HATE

Previous research has shown that many people are unclear about what the terms “hate crime”, “hate incidents” or “hate speech” encompass.⁴ The university sector appears to be no different in this regard. Similar to the students that were spoken to earlier in the project (whose views are detailed in the accompanying preliminary report), many of the staff members trained as part of the project were aware of what defines a “hate crime”, but fewer were clear on what constitutes a “hate incident” or “hate speech”. All training and communications associated with Restore Respect therefore aimed to enhance understanding around these concepts.

- **Hate crime** was defined as:

“Any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice.”⁵

- Criminal offences with an element of hate or prejudice that is directed towards the victim’s identity or personal characteristics

- **Hate incidents** were defined as:

“Any non-crime perceived by the victim or any other person as being motivated by prejudice or hate.”⁶

- Spoken words that are not deemed abusive or threatening
- Spoken words that are abusive but not said in public
- Mocking and humiliation
- Spreading rumours

- **Hate speech** was defined as:

Spoken or written words with an element of hate or prejudice that is directed towards someone’s identity or personal characteristics.

- Hate speech may or may not amount to a crime
- Hate speech is often spread via social media

⁴ Chakraborti, N., Garland, J. and Hardy, S-J. (2014) The Leicester Hate Crime Project: Findings and conclusions, University of Leicester. Available at: <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/criminology/hate/documents/fc-full-report>

⁵ College of Policing (2014) National Policing Hate Crime Operational Guidance. Available at: <http://www.college.police.uk/What-wedo/Support/Equality/Documents/Hate-Crime-Operational-Guidance.pdf>

⁶ Ibid.

Prejudice and hate are frequently (but not exclusively) directed against individuals based on the following identity characteristics:

- Race and ethnicity
- Religious beliefs
- Sexual orientation (e.g. being lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer)
- Gender (e.g. hostilities against women)
- Gender identity and expression (e.g. prejudice towards people for being trans, non-binary, queer)
- Disability (both physical and mental)
- Subcultural identities (e.g. Goths, Emos)
- Social class

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACTS OF HATE AND PREJUDICE

Throughout their training, staff were also made aware of the impacts of hate and prejudice on individuals in general and students in particular. Research has shown that hate crimes and hate incidents are likely to have greater impacts on victims than similar non-hate motivated incidents. These may include:

- An altered sense of safety making them feel more vulnerable and anxious
- Increased feelings of anger and injustice
- Increased suspicion and social withdrawal
- Feelings of shame
- Longer periods of depression
- An inclination to be more “proactive” in the community to fight hate
- Security consciousness
- Avoidance of certain places and locations
- Increased levels of suicidal ideation

Research has also shown that these impacts will likely affect other university students who share the same or similar characteristics as the victim directly targeted.⁷ The enhanced impacts of hate and prejudice are the result of victims feeling that their identity as an individual has been attacked, which can have significant implications for their sense of safety and security on campus. For many victims, their experience may also be compounded by the fact that they have experienced many past incidents of prejudice and hate.

Staff members were made aware that when working with victims of hate and prejudice the student may have needs that extend well beyond that of an isolated incident, as they will likely have had to deal with experiences of ongoing forms of victimisation (including microaggressions⁸) from others

⁷ Paterson, J., Walters, M., Brown, R. and Fearn, H. (2018) The Sussex Hate Crime Project. University of Sussex, Available at: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/psychology/sussexhatecrimeproject/>

⁸ Micro-aggressions are seemingly inconsequential conduct and comments that emphasise a person’s “difference” in a stereotypical or pejorative way. Examples might include: asking a gay person when they first decided/realised they were gay (the message could be construed that being gay is a choice); asking a British person of colour where they are “originally” from (the message could be construed as you are not British);

inside and outside the university. As such, practitioners were trained to understand that talking about these experiences in a restorative process may provide a more holistic response to the student's needs.

RESPONDING RESTORATIVELY TO HATE

A key aim of the initial research into students' experiences of prejudice and hate on campus was to ensure that any new programme helped to properly address these experiences and increase student confidence in the reporting process. The first step in this regard was to draw upon the theory and practice of restorative justice and Walters' work on the use of restorative practices for hate crimes.⁹ Restorative justice is "primarily concerned with the *engagement* of those affected by wrongdoing in a dialogic process which aims to achieve *reparation*—be it emotional, material, or to relationships."¹⁰ The theory of restorative justice is guided by several key principles, including "encounter", "repair", and "transformation".¹¹ There are now a wide number of practices that draw upon these principles and that are used to address conflict beyond criminal wrongdoing. Collectively, these practices are referred to as "restorative practices". The aim of restorative practices is to engage individuals affected by an incident in discussions about what has happened, why it happened, the harms that have resulted, and what should be done to repair those harms. Restorative practices should aim to empower people affected by an incident through inclusive forms of discussion that are guided by the principles of equality, respect, and non-domination. The person responsible for causing harm, having listened to the harms that they have caused, is asked to make amends. Emphasis is often placed not just on emotional or material reparation but on transforming relationships. Common forms of reparation include oral or written apologies, repairing or replacing damaged property, and community or charity-based work. Stigmatising perpetrators as "haters" and punitive sanctions are discouraged as these limit opportunities for healing and behavioural and relational transformations.

Research suggests that restorative justice is more likely to alleviate the emotional traumas caused by crime and anti-social behaviour than punitive processes.¹² Several studies have also reported that perpetrators are less likely to reoffend having participated in restorative justice.¹³ The *potential* of restorative justice for hate incidents, then, is that it may help to repair the harms of prejudice, while simultaneously reducing the likelihood of incidents (re)occurring. Walters' qualitative study on the use of restorative justice for hate crime in England found that restorative processes frequently improved participants' emotional well-being.¹⁴ For example, the majority of victims interviewed in that study stated that their feelings of anger, anxiety, and fear reduced significantly after the restorative process. Victims explained that this was because they had played an active role in the resolution of their case, during which they felt facilitators and other participants had *listened* to them. This was especially important to participants who felt that the agencies they had previously

explaining things on someone's behalf when they can clearly talk for themselves; purposefully excluding someone by making a meeting or event a space unwelcoming to certain identities.

⁹ Walters, M.A.. (2014) *Hate Crime and Restorative Justice*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹¹ Johnstone, G. & Van Ness, D.W. (eds.) (2007) *Handbook of Restorative Justice*, Devon: Willan Publishing.

¹² Strang, H. (2002) *Repair or Revenge: Victims and Restorative Justice*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

¹³ Shapland, J., et. al. (2008) *Does restorative justice affect reconviction? The fourth report from the evaluation of three schemes*, London: Ministry of Justice.

¹⁴ Walters, M.A. (2014) *Hate Crime and Restorative Justice*.

reported to had been apathetic towards them. It was also of utmost importance to victims that the perpetrator signed an agreement promising to desist from further hate incidents. In terms of desistance, 11 out of 19 separate cases of ongoing hate crime incidents researched at one practice in London ceased directly after the restorative process had taken place. In a further six cases incidents stopped after the facilitator included other local organisation representatives in meetings, including from schools, social services, and community police teams.

RESTORE RESPECT

The project team combined data from the preliminary evaluation with research and theories from the fields of hate crime studies and restorative justice to establish the new programme Restore Respect. Located in the Student Life Centre (student support service) and the Student Union at the University of Sussex, and Student Operations and Support at the University of Brighton, the project “offers support to anyone who has been involved in an incident on campus that is perceived to be motivated by identity-based prejudice.”¹⁵ Restore Respect is entirely voluntary and anyone who reports in can choose to engage as much or as little as they want. The programme is completely separate to both universities’ formal disciplinary processes. Students who wish to make a formal complaint are given information on how to do this. In order to report an incident, students can call directly at one of the services, or alternatively they can complete an online reporting form.

¹⁵ Restore Respect: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre/issues/restore_respect

Online reporting form
Restore Respect

Restore Respect reporting form

Full name

You can report an incident anonymously, but this may mean that support cannot be offered to you personally. Your report will be used to help monitor the nature and prevalence of incidents that take place

I would rather not give my name

Email address

Telephone number

Optional

Please describe in your own words what has happened

Did you perceive the incident/s to be motivated by prejudice or hate?

When did the incident/s occur?

If the issue is ongoing please give an indication of when it started.

Where would you like the report to go to? *

Student Life Centre

Student Union

How would you like to receive your response? *

Email

Telephone

Please tick here if you would like to report this incident only and DO NOT wish to be contacted by a member of the Student Life Centre or Student Union

I DO NOT wish to be contacted.

Submit

Once an incident/s is reported a trained restorative facilitator will respond within 48 hours to arrange an initial meeting to discuss the reported incident. Individuals can talk confidentially about what has happened to them and they are asked a set of restorative questions that provide them with an opportunity to talk about how they have been impacted. As we will see in the analysis below, often this initial process of what is called “restorative listening” is all that the individual wants from the process. However, the restorative facilitator will also explore the possibility of a Restore Respect supported intervention (including direct or indirect dialogue with the individual/s

responsible for harming). Alternatively, the facilitator can refer individuals to support services inside and outside the university.

In total, six cases were reported to Restore Respect by the time that our final evaluation was carried out.

ANALYSIS

In this section we summarise the findings from our evaluation of the Restore Respect programme that was established across both the University of Sussex and the University of Brighton. The analysis presented below is arranged around the following themes:

- Impacts and benefits
- Barriers and limitations
- Legacy and sustainability

IMPACTS AND BENEFITS

Safeguarding students

All the practitioners interviewed believed that a restorative programme represented an effective way for the university to address incidents involving hate and/or prejudice. This was partly premised upon the view that standard university responses were either inadequate or inappropriate, and carried the strong risk of re-victimising students who had experienced harm. Disciplinary and complaint procedures, in particular, were described by staff (in comments that echoed those of students) as potentially disempowering for students who retained little influence over their direction or their outcomes.

The process as it is now is very top-down, and it's often not what the person wants. It's not like going through court, but it's quite a formal process and they often don't want to do that. Whereas this [restorative programme] would be – although it seems quite scary, initially, it might actually be something they want and they could get something out of. I've had disciplinary cases where the students have said, "I found this process really difficult to go through", and it hasn't really gotten them where they wanted to be at all. [...] The university regards it as their process, so the victim – for want of a better word – is kind of a witness, and is very outside the process.¹⁶

It means that you're going to lose everyone, because they don't want to go down that conventional path of putting in a complaint or [going through] that formal process where they lose all their agency, and where they don't feel particularly heard because everything is taken away from them and someone else is validating their experience. And restorative justice could very easily be an answer to that. [...] I've learnt a great deal about how [restorative justice] works in practice [through the Restore Respect programme]. I knew vaguely what restorative justice meant [...] but I didn't appreciate why it's effective, and the

¹⁶ Practitioner 2.

fact that it's effective because of agency. I didn't get that the current systems, the way they are, take that away from people, and that's why they feel re-victimised. So that's a huge, huge thing.¹⁷

Some students [that I've spoken to] felt that they didn't have a voice and they felt that initiatives could be tokenistic. And they felt that they don't want to go to discipline because they're not sure what they're necessarily gaining out of that. And they want their feelings to be heard. So the benefits for me of this process is that it addresses all of those points. And I think it can really help to create a more inclusive university.¹⁸

Challenging hate through restorative dialogue

Restorative approaches were also seen to be of potentially greater benefit to students alleged to be responsible for causing harm. Aside from placing the responsibility to try and repair any emotional, physical, material, or financial harm with the student who caused it, restorative practices were believed by many staff members to offer learning opportunities for all involved.

The restorative response enables some responsibility to be taken by people who may have committed those hate acts. It provides an opportunity for listening and for the person, the perpetrator, to hear what it was like, but also actually for other people to hear what is going on with the perpetrator.[...] So it's not just about punitive reactions; it's a response rather than a reaction. Because I think we usually fall into this habit of "black and whiteness", "good/bad". And we're interested in someone being brought to book for this horrible thing. But it doesn't necessarily nourish a sense of community maturity.¹⁹

Echoing the comments made by students in the preliminary report, staff members in student support roles believed that challenging hate and prejudice requires the kind of dialogue that enables greater understanding and empathy. For the most part, this was not considered to be a common aspect of standard university responses.

I think it's very very important that [restorative programmes are] set up, because I have a fear that society is so polarised at the moment. [...]The thing is, unless you're making people understand and creating empathy, you've got to be really really careful that you're not just preaching at people. People have got to have that response from their heart in order to be able to change their way, I feel. And I feel that with restorative justice you could hear about the harm that you'd done to that person, and I think that in some ways it's kind of the only solution, really, in order to make people change their opinions.²⁰

It was also stated that the establishment of a university programme to specifically address hate crime and hate incidents was an important indication to students and staff of the universities' commitment to safeguarding students.

I really believe that just actually having that programme there is an acknowledgment of how important it is that we address hate speech and hate crime – the fact that a programme's

¹⁷ Practitioner 8.

¹⁸ Practitioner 4.

¹⁹ Practitioner 3.

²⁰ Practitioner 5.

there and the fact that it's kind of filtering through. [...] I think that the fact that that option is there is good for the university. It's prestige for the university to show that they're quite innovative in their techniques. [...] I'm really passionate that restorative justice needs to be kept as a solution within Brighton University.²¹

Changing institutional responses to hate

Further, participants all anticipated positive impacts on organisational and reporting processes, as demonstrated in the following comments:

I think if it works on an individual case, [the university] could get something out of it, like it not becoming a pattern of behaviour and it not happening again, and not having to have repeat disciplinary processes. They can go on for months and it can be quite a lot of hard work. And just getting the panels together can be a headache for the university. So I think that they would want to try and reduce them where they can.²²

I: Do you think that the Restore Respect programme has changed the way the university deals with these cases and with hate and prejudice?

Yeah, because the disciplinary process at university is really ineffective and long. And the outcomes are often ineffective. [...] We're good at resolving issues informally and at a low level. It's once they start to reach a high level ... there's no clear procedures for staff.²³

None of the staff members who were interviewed identified any potential negative effects of restorative practices for students, particularly given their voluntary nature as well as the fact that they would be complementing and enhancing, rather replacing, existing support services. As noted by one practitioner:

I'm not sure I can think of any [limitations], because if [students] want to they can then go on to discipline. So, you know, if they don't feel satisfied with what's happened with Restore Respect then they can just go on to discipline – if they want to make it more formal. [...] So as long as that option is there and it's not like one or the other, then I can't see [any issues].²⁴

Organisational impacts and impacts on staff

The majority of staff who participated in advanced practitioner training, first responder training, information sessions, or meetings with team members claimed a greater awareness of hate crime and restorative justice and a belief in the importance of the project.

I hadn't actually realised what restorative justice was beforehand, and I just felt it was such a good way of mediating a dispute and also to be able to ensure that you create long-lasting solutions and enable people to broaden their thinking, rather than just seeing someone as "other".²⁵

²¹ Practitioner 5.

²² Practitioner 2.

²³ Practitioner 1.

²⁴ Practitioner 4.

²⁵ Practitioner 5.

I'm really, really into it. I know it works. I believe, totally, really – I'm 100% behind it. And as soon as Bonny [the project coordinator] came in, I thought, "That's fantastic. I want that." Because I'd been waiting for something like that. So I'm 100% behind it. I totally want it to work.²⁶

Having the programme grounded in and informed by the research of Walters, who also led the project, was considered particularly effective in demonstrating both the value and viability of restorative responses to hate crime:

Having that background was really valuable: the research and the evidence and examples from other areas and the criminal system - showing how it's effective. Yeah, it just seemed to give the project a lot more weight and credibility.²⁷

Incidents reported to Restore Respect

At the conclusion of the project, a small number of cases (six) had been referred to the programme through the online reporting form, Restore Respect email, the relevant triage administrator, or directly by way of a restorative practitioner. Most cases did not progress beyond initial contact with an administrator or practitioner, but those that did are either still in progress at the time of writing, or have concluded with positive outcomes. One practitioner described the difference that restorative practices had made in her approach to such a case:

From the conversation I had with the student it seemed to me that using the restorative justice tools meant that they felt heard and that they felt like someone cared. And from my perspective it was very empowering for me, because I felt like I had something worthwhile to offer as far as these tools. [...] You know, normally, you're sort of only half listening, because you're trying to think, "Ok, well, what do I need to do? How can I help this student?" Whereas actually I was fully engaged in the conversation, and I wasn't planning ten steps ahead; I was just listening to the student. And I knew that that was what you're supposed to do. Yeah, I found it very empowering. [...] It's changed the way I interact with students more generally, in a positive way.²⁸

At this early stage of the project's evaluation, some practitioners had not yet had any experience with a case, or were not regularly involved in supporting students as part of their role. For these practitioners, while they were unable to clearly identify a way that the Restore Respect programme had changed their approach to their respective roles, training in restorative practice had nonetheless provided "another tool in the toolbox":

Having those kinds of different options, in terms of resolutions or potential resolutions, has been – although I haven't actually had a chance to practise any of those yet – I think is really important. From a personal perspective, there are a lot of barriers from what I've witnessed

²⁶ Practitioner 6.

²⁷ Practitioner 1.

²⁸ Practitioner 8.

*with students, in that they don't want to go straight to the really formal disciplinary route. So having something else where it can be acknowledged more and a dialogue, I think, is great.*²⁹

BARRIERS AND LIMITATIONS

Time and resource constraints

As many other Catalyst Safeguarding project teams experienced,³⁰ the project's funding period was considered too short for the optimal completion of activities encompassing preparatory research, implementation, marketing, and impact evaluation. Among the aspects of the project most commonly identified as suffering from the limited time-frame was the marketing of the programme to staff and students.

*I just think that it should have been a longer period of time [...] and maybe a bit of a lead-up to it, and perhaps more advertising, because it was quite disjointed in Brighton. I mean, I'm not saying it's anyone's fault, but it just didn't come. [...] It would have been wonderful if we could have done a big launch event for it. You know, because we should be singing – we should be proud of what we're doing. And if we'd had a big launch event with [the project coordinator] and showing a film, and people talking about their own experiences ... I think that we kind of missed a trick there. That's the thing: it's such an amazing idea - it's so simple but so amazing. Just a little bit more publicity around it I think would be better.*³¹

The one year time-frame to fully establish the programme also made it difficult to synchronise the project's schedule with the university calendar. This affected student recruitment in research activities, staff recruitment in training, the scheduling of meetings, meeting attendance, training dates, and launch dates.

*One of the things which was a little frustrating was the time of year that it came about, in that it didn't really fit with the calendar of unions and universities. So the training came at a time when – I mean I'm guessing it would be the same for universities as well, but particularly for the union, it was a time when they're at their most stretched, so it limited who could actually participate. Because you [the project team] had your time constraints and things had to be done at a certain time otherwise it wouldn't get done.*³²

In addition, because the project coordinator/restorative justice trainer was only employed in the role for the course of the funded phase of the project, the newly trained restorative practitioners expressed some trepidation about the possibility of handling cases without her guidance or supervision.

I felt a little bit left stranded. [...] Although, you know, [the coordinator] said "You can email me with questions" and that kind of thing, it's quite a big responsibility. If someone's coming

²⁹ Practitioner 4.

³⁰ AdvanceHE, (2018), *Report to the Office for Students by AdvanceHE: Evaluation of Safeguarding Students Catalyst Fund Projects*, pp. 8; 36. Available at: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/bd771e1c-b650-49d1-bd60-a6188d084506/ofs2018_safeeval.pdf

³¹ Practitioner 5.

³² Practitioner 8.

to Restore Respect, that is a massive step, probably, for the student, and I didn't feel 100% comfortable with how I would handle that situation. I felt more comfortable because of my [previous] training, I'll be honest, but a lot of people probably wouldn't feel like that if they don't have additional training on how to handle difficult situations.³³

It's unfortunate that [the project coordinator] was only here for a year. For example, if we had to go in and we needed some advice or some support - which will be the case, even with the case [I'm facilitating] this afternoon - I feel very nervous doing it. I need that extra advice. [...] I think [it's the same] for all staff. Just going into their first case they'll probably need that little bit of extra support, and I'm not sure where that's going to come from.³⁴

This issue again highlighted the complexities involved in customising restorative practice for universities as distinct from other contexts. Although, as noted, a considerable amount of exploratory and preparatory work went into the design of the training and implementation of the programme, certain questions and challenges could only reasonably be expected to arise once the programme had been allowed some time to operate. Knowing that the funded part of the project was nearing its end, one practitioner expressed a sense of responsibility going forward as a member of the first practitioner cohort, particularly to troubleshoot the new programme:

You know, you have your training – it's quite intense. You come away and you think, "That was great", and then the questions start. You know, it's like, "How does that work then?", "How does this work?" So I've had quite a few conversations over email with [the project lead and the project coordinator], like, "What would we do in this situation?" and then they've had to go and find that out. But I felt like that's quite a lot of responsibility that we've had as practitioners - because it's a new thing - in terms of identifying where things might not have been thought through. You can't do everything before a programme starts – it's going to happen. But [I felt] a little bit unsafe, I think.³⁵

Added to the limited amount of time that could be spent on each stage of the project was the challenge of stretching resources and tasks across the two universities, both with their different structures, cultures, policies, and procedures. At the same time, however, the opportunity for knowledge sharing and communication between university teams was mentioned as a positive and useful aspect of joint training and peer-support forums. Further, from the perspective of the project team (and in view of the intended outcomes of the Safeguarding funding), coordinating the project across two institutions provided the project team with a deeper understanding of some of the differences that may exist between HE providers – something that instructed and improved the creation of the toolkit.

Among these differences were the varying resource constraints of each university and each student union. For example, the project team was keen to ensure the active input and participation of each university's student union in the programme and to involve student union staff and/or officers as restorative practitioners. However, Brighton University's student union lacked the capacity to take

³³ Practitioner 4.

³⁴ Practitioner 1.

³⁵ Practitioner 4.

on cases, which meant that its role would primarily be restricted to providing a pathway into the programme.

Lack of practitioner diversity

Given the limited capacity of the project, as well as an emphasis on the sustainability of the programme, it was considered most feasible to only train officers and staff from the universities and student unions, and not students. This, however, meant that the level of diversity among the practitioner cohort was limited to the level of diversity demonstrated among staff, as noted by one participant:

There's not a lot of diversity in their workforce, unfortunately. And, well, the student body is a lot more diverse than the staff at the university, and it would be wonderful to see members of the communities affected be trained. Because I think that would be a huge thing in building trust - if they can see facilitators who reflect their own identity.³⁶

Engaging students responsible for harm and facilitating restorative solutions

As noted above, restorative approaches are predicated on a high degree of voluntarism on the part of all participants. Practitioners therefore anticipated challenges around finding ways to engage a student named responsible for causing harm in cases where restorative conferencing is identified as an appropriate course of action. While restorative practices are not wholly contingent on the involvement of the “harmer”, or person responsible, it was recognised that encouraging the engagement of all parties involved in a hate incident would likely produce the most positive outcomes.

I must admit, the thing that I still can't really get my head around is how to get people to participate in it. Like, I get why the victim might want to participate in it, but I don't really understand what the alleged perpetrator would necessarily ... Unless it was, “Ok, well this is an alternative to going through the formal discipline process.” And that would be your carrot.³⁷

I: Do you see any limitations to the programme?

[...] I think if the harmer doesn't want to meet or anything like that, I think, is the only thing. I think you just have to make sure that when you meet the person [harmed] that you'll just be able to give them enough support and manage their expectations as well. Because you don't want to do a double harm, do you?³⁸

Such questions pointed to a lack of clarity about precisely how the programme functioned alongside, and in concert with, existing policies and procedures (such as those associated with discipline), and therefore the need for greater embedding in governance structures. Several practitioners believed the involvement of more concrete incentives (like, for example, the prospect of a more formal

³⁶ Practitioner 8.

³⁷ Practitioner 2.

³⁸ Practitioner 5.

complaint being made should a restorative process be declined), for instance, would encourage greater take-up.

Similarly, without well-defined support from central university structures and divisions, certain practitioners were unsure about the sort of practical support and latitude they would be given in arranging restorative processes and outcomes:

I don't know what the pool of resources is like. Say, for example, with listening circles, if we had a student who said, "I'd like to have a listening circle and for it to be all BME students", I don't know whether that's actually something that we could offer. And that's where I think, in terms of being a practitioner, I don't really know what I can offer, because I don't know what we have. I don't know what's really practical.³⁹

Encouraging engagement

While evidence of increased reporting of hate incidents was certainly apparent from the number of cases that had begun to be referred to the programme, the question of how to encourage greater student engagement – particularly on the part of minority students who are most likely to be harmed by hate and prejudice – remained a persistent one. As identified in the research we conducted with students, a lack of trust in institutions, in general, and university initiatives, in particular, was recognised as presenting a formidable barrier to engagement. As two practitioners explained:

I saw a student today who I spoke to about [a restorative approach], and she was absolutely terrified. She said that she doesn't like confrontation. I tried to explain that confrontation would not be part of the process whatsoever, but she - as I'm sure many students would - just wanted it to go away, and just wanted to remove herself from the situation, because that was easier. They're already under so much pressure and already in such distress that the thought of having enough energy to go through a process by which you're having to really engage just felt too much. [...] So yeah I think there are some problems with trust in the idea of it. So maybe there's some work to do about increasing awareness of restorative practice more generally around the university. Knowing that it's there is good, but just understanding what it is and the positive outcomes of it might be useful.⁴⁰

I think that there's something missing in terms of how students who - there's a fear of even getting to that point. So that might be what's stopping them from ... You know, because it's not exactly clear how would it work, with ... if I was going to meet the person. I would be quite nervous about that, even if I felt persecuted and I wanted to talk about it - I think I'd still feel frightened about it.⁴¹

Certainly, staff recognised that building trust and awareness of the programme among students would be difficult until students who had participated in the programme had had the chance to provide testimonials or foster word-of-mouth. As such, trust-building was seen by many to be a necessarily slow process that would take place through a “drip-drip” effect.

³⁹ Practitioner 4.

⁴⁰ Practitioner 6.

⁴¹ Practitioner 4.

Rather than aiming to increase student engagement by directly targeting students in marketing and publicity, however, certain practitioners and staff members believed that greater emphasis should be placed on raising awareness among staff and faculty:

I think with something new like Restore Respect, you've got to get out there to a lot of faculty – because they often refer students [to student support services]. So for them to be really conversant and interested and all that to say to a student who might be talking to them, "Have you thought of trying that?" That would be one really good way, because obviously what they say is important to the students and they'll listen to them. [...] But it takes a while, and it takes a big push.⁴²

However, particularly at the University of Sussex, interviewees believed that such an effort would likely be somewhat hampered by a complex and fragmented structure that may impede communication and coordination between different schools, departments, faculties, and service divisions. As one staff member noted, this had been seen with various other initiatives that had previously been launched:

I think there's the same thing with [...] the "Mind the Gap" attainment gap sort of initiative. And, again, I think a lot of schools don't even know about that. It's like, well, those are things that need to be raised higher, you know, within the view of the university.⁴³

Again, the need for greater embedding in governance and as a university priority was identified as a crucial factor in encouraging engagement in and, moreover, ensuring the sustainability of the restorative programme.

I would anticipate that what would work is if it was known about as much as the disciplinary process was known about. [...] What I really mean is that in order for it to have an impact and for it to change, it needs to be something that is given as much, sort of, for want of a better word, status as some of these other processes that the university has. And that this is something that is a real thing that we are doing. Rather than – at the moment for me, in my head, it kind of feels like an additional thing that's kind of ... not tucked away, but it's not as prominent as some of the other processes we have. [...] It feels like a kind of additional thing that [each support service] are doing. So it's kind of ... It's made smaller in that way.⁴⁴

LEGACY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Embeddedness

Locating the most appropriate respective "homes" for the programme in Student Operations and Support at Brighton, and in both the Student Life Centre and Students' Union at Sussex, provided central points for the future management of restorative practices at both universities. However, as discussed above, opportunity still appeared to exist for integration with university policies and procedures, as well as training in these areas to enable practitioners to understand the extent of

⁴² Practitioner 7.

⁴³ Practitioner 4.

⁴⁴ Practitioner 4.

their remit. As stated by practitioner 4, above, without such firm anchorage and support, the programme risked being perceived as merely an “add-on” or temporary initiative.

It needs to be integrated into the disciplinary system. I mean, for example, with [a current case]: It's going to be helpful for staff and students just to know whether it's going down a disciplinary route or a restorative justice approach. I wasn't sure if I was doing the right thing or if I was standing in the way of other procedures or policies [...] I mean, I don't think our disciplinary process has been repealed at all since this restorative justice approach has been introduced. It hasn't been updated in any way or had this taken into account.⁴⁵

The training was great, the people were great – you know, all of that stuff – and it's a great idea. I don't have any criticisms of that, I just think all it needs is to be embedded more in a structure.⁴⁶

Further, while locating the programme in particular areas did provide a focal point for practitioners, the absence of a “restorative practices” manager to coordinate the programme and provide impetus for its continued progress prompted fears that the programme would either disperse or be absorbed into the existing practices of the division in which a practitioner was located.

Leadership and governance

While the programme received positive buy-in from senior management on the whole, restructuring taking place simultaneously at both universities resulted in this manifesting unevenly and changeably. As with all staff and student stakeholders, levels of involvement were often determined by the extent to which individuals were personally interested in the project. This mostly affected the publicity around the programme, with little time afforded to collaborate on mutually agreeable messaging. While this was not the only factor hindering more large-scale publicity, certain practitioners expressed frustration at their perception that reputational concerns had played a part:

I think there's a definite worry [on the part of the university] that you don't want to put negative messages out there. [...] [But] I'm not sure that it's fair, because I don't think that it is a negative message. I think that [it depends on] the way we phrase what we're doing. [...] If you look at [the roles of Student Support and Guidance Tutors], they're very well publicised. Very well publicised. Like, “we can support you with ...”, and then we list the problems. So if we can do that, then why can't we do a restorative ...? – There's no difference. You know: “These are the problems that you might have, this is something that you can do to help.” It's not negative – it's positive. [...] “[Restorative practice] has had so much success in this and this and this, and we're bringing it to Brighton to help our students; to enhance our support even further than we already do.” You know, it can be really positively spun.⁴⁷

I'm so wanting it to work [...] I think that really now, it's crux time that we take a stand [...] and with restorative justice this is what we're saying: that it's not acceptable for people to

⁴⁵ Practitioner 1.

⁴⁶ Practitioner 7.

⁴⁷ Practitioner 6.

*say those views to people and everything. So I think that it's really really important that we keep this project [going], but I just don't know how much Brighton is going to promote it.*⁴⁸

Peer networks

In advance of her departure, the project coordinator – who until that point had directed the training and supervision of the practitioners – provided linkages with local restorative justice practitioner networks as well as guidance on how to access appropriate supervision and continued professional development. Beyond these measures, practitioners were also advised to establish an inter- university peer support network which would allow facilitators to meet regularly. However, given that it was not a formalised network, and no one practitioner or manager was officially responsible for establishing and continuing communication between the practitioners, it was not clear how contact would be maintained.

*I think it will be useful for the group that was trained to stay together in some way, even if that's – it has been suggested maybe even just twice a year to share cases. So, for me to talk about my case and how that went. I think other people might find that valuable. [...] I think probably the key thing is there needs to be a push from management – senior management – to instill the programme. Encouraging staff to attend these forums and meet a few times a year. Just a push from management I think to ensure that momentum's kept up. Otherwise it's going to get lost, I think.*⁴⁹

Staff turnover

An additional concern on the part of practitioners and staff members was the issue of how to ensure sustainability when only a limited number of staff had been trained and future staff changes were likely. This issue particularly pertained to the Student Union, where officers are restricted to set term limits:

I think more so with the Students' Unions, there's an issue of turnover. So permanent staff tend to stick around a little bit longer, but officers are there for one, maybe two years. So I think there needs to be something in the structure that someone has it within their job description, so they're kind of overseeing and making sure that as people move on and move away that new practitioners are trained, so that it doesn't end up at some stage in the future where there's only one person left who is actually trained to be a restorative justice practitioner.

Given that restorative practitioners are not eligible for train-the-trainer training without considerable experience, it would not be possible to establish in-house training in the immediate future. Instead, continued training could be carried out through collaboration with external partners. Consistency in the form of training delivery would be ensured if undertaken with the guidance of the toolkit produced by the project team.

⁴⁸ Practitioner 5.

⁴⁹ Practitioner 1.

CONCLUSION

While it is still too early a stage at which to be able to demonstrate the legacy and full impact of the project, there is significant evidence to show that it has produced overall positive outcomes in driving changes around student safeguarding. While raising awareness around hate crime on campus, the project succeeded in producing a group of trained facilitators from both Brighton and Sussex universities and the University of Sussex Students' Union who now have a deeper understanding of the impacts of hate, and are equipped with a set of skills to be able to respond restoratively to address the harms that have been caused to individual students and the wider student community. The project also achieved significant success in incorporating student voices in the design and implementation of the programme, and ensuring the collaboration and/or support of student unions.

However, certain issues raised in the evaluation reinforced the importance of maintaining support around the programme's progress. For example, a lack of clarity about the extent to which each university was formally incorporating restorative processes into their policies and procedures prompted concerns about sustainability. To address this, practitioners will be kept informed about developments involving procedural or structural changes relating to the programme. Further, interviews with practitioners revealed a number of misconceptions about the future status of the project, which indicated the need to reassure staff that the programme will continue to be supported by both universities and spearheaded by Professor Walters after the funding period ends.

NEXT STEPS

The following goals and activities are planned for Restore Respect going forward:

- **Determining ways to further embed restorative practices in university governance structures.** Upcoming meetings with the disciplinary teams of both universities are set to explore how Restore Respect can more officially work alongside disciplinary procedures.
- **The provision of continued support to Restore Respect facilitators.** Professor Walters will maintain regular communication with these staff members. In addition, facilitators have been invited by the local police, youth justice and community Restorative Justice Champions Network to attend their monthly peer supervision and development events. As a Restorative City, Brighton and Hove has an active network of restorative practitioners, and many have been made aware of the Restore Respect initiative through the project team's involvement in various fora and networking events. Links between university facilitators and the local restorative community will be encouraged as much as possible to enable the sharing of best practice and continued professional development.
- **Further training.** An application for internal university funding will be made in order to allow for refresher training for the practitioners, as well as further training where required.
- **Additional promotion.** Plans are underway for a more large-scale event to promote awareness around the project. This will include the production of short films and the involvement of ex-rugby player Gareth Thomas (who in 2018 sought a restorative resolution after being subjected to a homophobic assault) in a restorative circle with students.