



# One minute guide

## Restorative Practice

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### What is Restorative Practice?

Restorative practice is a term used to describe behaviours, interactions and approaches which help to build and maintain positive, healthy relationships, resolve difficulties and repair harm where there has been conflict.

When we work with and alongside people, there is strong evidence to say that outcomes for children and their families are improved.

Restorative practices enable those who work with children and families to focus upon building relationships that create and inspire positive change. Creating change sometimes requires challenge as well as support.

Restorative practices range from formal to informal processes that enable workers, managers, children, young people and their families to communicate effectively. The processes used focus upon removing barriers, proactively promoting a sense of community, understanding, social responsibility and shared accountability.

### Why are we doing it?

Using restorative approaches is a key element of Leeds' ambition to become a child friendly city. These approaches provide staff with a range of language, behaviours and tools that strengthen their relationships with children, young people and families, empowering them to share responsibility by using a solution-focused approach, which supports positive change.

Everyone working with children and young people has a duty to keep them safe from harm. We want to improve the life outcomes for all children and young people, especially those in our direct care and to reduce the need for children and young people to be looked after.

Restorative approaches are widely established and accepted both nationally and internationally as a highly effective way of achieving better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Given its focus on relationships, restorative practice has broad applications across the range of agencies working with people. The local authority and partners use restorative principles and behaviours with colleagues as well as children and families, to develop positive working relationships. For example, we use 'check-in' circles at the beginning of meetings, where everybody is invited to participate in a conversation, which does not have to be work related. This encourages wider contributions during the meeting.

## How are we doing it?

Restorative practices are an important part of the way in which we support families to become better equipped to solve their difficulties and address challenges.

One of the ways we do this is through a Family Group Conference (FGC). Extended families and staff meet together in a decision making circle to consider risks and concerns about their children. The family have private family time to create a plan that fits in with their individual dynamics, and enables family leadership in what would otherwise be a professionalised planning process.

Restorative practices are used for a range of meetings, both formal and informal. These are held in circles, rather than around tables, to remove physical and psychological barriers between people. Meetings may be facilitated by skilled staff to create an environment where those attending can share their thoughts and feelings in a way which is constructive. The focus of these meetings may be to build relationships, solve specific problems or repair harm where there has been conflict.

A number of schools in Leeds are now using restorative practices to structure their day and shape how staff and children communicate with each other. Circle and group discussions help students to share their feelings, build relationships, problem solve and play an active role in challenging and supporting one another.

Leeds has launched a comprehensive training programme for all staff in children's services and there are a number of opportunities available for more advanced training.

## Who are the key contacts?

For more information about how we are using restorative approaches in Leeds you can contact:

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