

# Transforming Conflict

National Centre for Restorative Approaches in Youth Settings



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Newsletter

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## Editorial

Welcome to our Summer newsletter. We are so busy here that the time for quiet reflection and inspiration to write are both at a premium. I hope you are all able to at least take time out of your own busy schedules to read our news – we have lots!

Already this year we have had our annual conference. We have almost finished filming our brand new film. We have begun several very significant pilot projects in different locations and for different sectors. And the new book – about what it means to be a 'restorative classroom teacher' – is progressing slowly. It will make a significant contribution to the growing field of literature about restorative approaches and practices in educational settings.

So there is much to tell you all about – and all this against a backdrop of political upheaval, with question marks still hanging about the new coalition government's support for all we do. There is mention of 'new powers to discipline' for teachers and yet no recognition – yet – that it is not greater power that teachers need, but enhanced skills to address conflict and challenge. Giving a stable hand a bigger stick to beat the horse once it has bolted seems a poor substitute for sound training in how to care for and manage horses so they prefer to stay in the stable and flourish!!

And as for talk of developing community involvement – of course that is exactly what a restorative approach does – in every classroom and staffroom – so that everyone shared the responsibility for meeting each others' needs, and work to put things right when they go wrong.

## Our 6th Annual Conference in York

This year's conference was one of the best yet. We grasped the nettle of rewards and sanctions' and invited speakers to share their experiences of substituting the 'sticks and carrot approach' for a restorative approach that helps to develop an inner focus of control in young people so they become autonomous considerate and responsible human beings.

We had keynote speeches from senior managers from primary, secondary and special schools and also from residential care settings and many of them also ran workshops so that people could continue the conversations. The feedback from delegates about these sessions has been very positive and we are grateful to

everyone who agreed to take part and share their practice. As usual we put thought into seating arrangements so that everyone had opportunities to talk to others on their small round table, and we built in our renowned 'World Cafe' sessions on both days, challenging people to take the discussion to deeper and more challenging levels.

The conference was special for us in several ways – apart from the quality of the speakers, we used our own in-house Graphic Recorder team for the first time. Sue Lee and Sue Fraser were able to create the 4' X 15' poster recording the two days' highlights and this will be available on our website and sent to delegates. They did a wonderful job and their poster is beautiful and informative. Apologies for the delay in making this available.

Without the professional expertise of our inspirational guide and graphics coach [Vanessa Randle](#) (who has trained our team in graphics) we have taken a while to obtain a good quality photograph of the poster but we are nearly there.

The other innovation was the use of drama – we had our colleagues from [Make Believe Arts](#) on the morning of Day 2, convincing us that their team had fallen out before our very eyes. They then showed us how a restorative intervention saved the day – but also invited us to reflect on how the misunderstanding could have been dealt with using 'I' messages. It was a salutary reminder of how important it is for us as colleagues to model our own practice at all times – and of the challenges this presents.

## Restorative Approaches – The movie!

We are very excited about our new film. Made in partnership with [Resolution TV](#), this 20 minute film will give an overview of a whole school restorative approach. It will show how regular circle work develops good strong caring and respectful classroom relationships, and how this then impacts on the way young people engage with their learning and with each other. The film then illustrates the various levels at which a restorative conversation can be had – from informal classroom and corridor exchanges to a formal conference when something serious has happened.

The last day of filming is pending (there have been unavoidable hiccups to arranging this – hence the delay) and we are hoping that the final edit can be done in time to provide a draft version that can be shown before the summer holidays to all those schools who generously gave up their time to take part. We are aware that some of our stars will be leaving their schools in July and that it will be easier for them to see the film before they leave.

The film will have a series of launches around the country – first with the participating schools in County Durham, London and Oxfordshire – and then elsewhere. We will keep you informed – and of course we will start to use the film as part of our awareness raising and training – although we have so much valuable footage that more specific training films are likely to follow, together with clips for the website and maybe a training DVD for trainees.



## National Centre for Restorative Approaches in Youth Settings

Transforming Conflict

Mortimer Hill

Mortimer

Berkshire

RG7 3PW

E [info@transformingconflict.org](mailto:info@transformingconflict.org)

W [www.transformingconflict.org](http://www.transformingconflict.org)

T 0118 9331520

### Restorative Classrooms – the book

Following the success of [Just Schools](#) and [Just Care](#) Belinda has wanted to write more about how restorative approaches impacts on day to day classroom practice – and how good strong caring relationships between students is the pre-requisite for effective teaching and learning – ensuring that everyone is engaged and receptive. The book draws on research into effective teaching and learning, emotional intelligence and brain function and on the experiences of teachers trained in restorative approaches. It will be a practical handbook to enable teachers of all sectors and all subjects to ensure that how they teach, how they manage classroom logistics and how they respond if and when there are challenges, are underpinned by the same values and principles.

The book will contain some underpinning theory but will mostly be a practical manual with lots of useful ideas for circle work of various kinds, including ways of integrating 'circle principles' into curriculum delivery. It is much more than a book on circles however – it will be the first book to link restorative practice and pedagogy. It will also add to the literature on how social and emotional literacy (SEAL) can and should be developed through curriculum delivery and not as a stand-alone subject, divorced from the day to day relationships and interactions in every classroom.

As many of you will be aware we now offer one day INSET to schools of all sectors on the various [uses of circles](#) and judging from feedback this book will be a timely addition to the literature and a much-needed resource.

So – the deadline for the manuscript is November 2010 – we will let you know when it will be published as part of the [Teach to Inspire](#) series, for whom George Robinson and Barbara Maines (inspiring developers of Circle Time materials and the No-Blame/Group Support approach to bullying) are the commissioning editors.

### Restorative Approaches in Pupil Referral Units (PRU)

Earlier this year we began working on an exciting pilot project funded by [London Back on Track](#) to explore how restorative approaches can enhance the work that staff in PRU's are already doing working with young people who find themselves referred to a PRU – or 'short stay

school' as they are now often called. The project is being lead by Caroline Newton, our Director of Training who also holds the post of Restorative Approaches Co-ordinator for Lewisham. We are working in Camden, Sutton and Brent. Feedback has been very positive so far. Staff are reporting success using what

they have learnt with even their more challenging students, and we are all learning more and more about the particular needs of young people who have found it difficult to make progress in mainstream schools. The project is being evaluated with a view to spreading restorative practice more widely in PRU's across London.

### Accreditation

The development of practice standards for restorative approaches and practices has taken a leap forward with the publishing of the National Occupational Standards for Restorative Justice (sic). Skills for Justice have worked with stake holders, including the national umbrella organisation for restorative practitioners -the [Restorative Justice Consortium](#) or RJC (soon to be the Restorative Justice Council).

However we believe there is still work to be done to ensure that these practice standards and any awards associated with them are relevant for day to day restorative practice in educational and residential establishments. Transforming Conflict's director Dr Belinda Hopkins is closely involved in national developments on accreditation through her association with the RJC and with Reading University and will keep readers informed.

### Residential Course – an introduction to restorative approaches in youth settings Autumn dates now released

Our ever popular entry level course on restorative approaches is running at the Holiday Inn West Reading again at the end of June is now fully booked.

So why not be an early bird and book your place on our Autumn course now? Your trainer will be Caroline Newton, week commencing 8th November 2010 with venue soon to be confirmed. For more information contact [Tracy Parsons](#)

All participants will receive a copy of either Belinda Hopkins' classic text 'Just Schools' or , for those working in the care sector, a copy of 'Just Care'.