

# **Building Restorative Approaches in Gloucestershire**

with Children, Young People and Families

## **Proposal**

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# 1. Proposal Aims & Objectives

## Aim

This report sets out the proposed way in which Gloucestershire County Council will implement and sustain restorative approaches to working with children and families, with each other, and with partners.

## Objectives

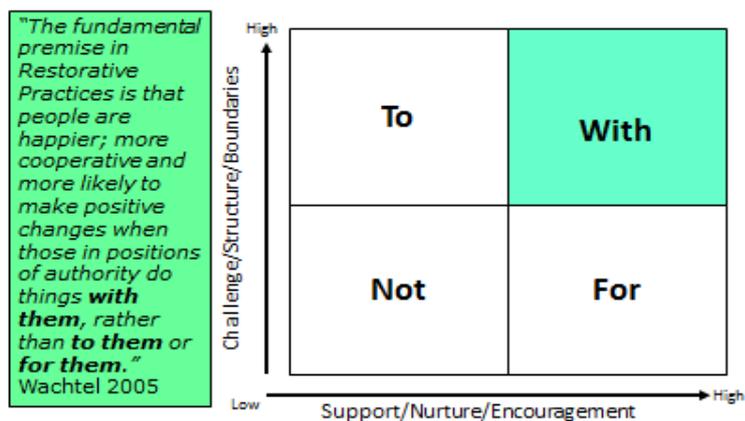
To set out the strategic intention, rationale and practical steps for adopting restorative approaches across the children's partnership, as

1. An explicit framework for practice
2. A cultural mind-set across organisations and
3. A range of practical applications within services.

The intended outcome of the proposed pilots is to secure better outcomes for children and families in Gloucestershire, by adopting restorative values and practices both strategically and in every day interactions.

## Context

### A Way of Being



In August 2015, the Vulnerable Children's Programme Board endorsed a scoping exercise to look at the potential practice models that could be helpfully applied across the piece, from Early Help through to Child Protection, across the children's partnership, to help us think and work together differently. The aim is to strengthen our common thread.

The diagram above encapsulates a 'way of being' at the heart of restorative approaches, which the Vulnerable Children's Programme Board (GCC) considered alongside 4 practice framework options in August 2015.

Restorative practice is about working 'with' others at every opportunity, in a way that sets clear boundaries and holds people to account (high challenge) as well as providing the support and encouragement for those challenges to be met (high support). In December 2015, the Vulnerable Children's Programme Board endorsed plans to engage and consult internal social care services and external organisations who work with children and families, about applying restorative practice in Gloucestershire.

## Engagement

The approach has been explored collaboratively with a range of staff and managers across organisations between April and September 2016 (Engagement Phase) through a range of meeting styles. This secured opportunities to discuss the appetite for a restorative practice framework; the links to what was already happening; and the learning from Introductory and 3 day training. We spoke with:

- Children's Social Care
- Youth Support
- Educational Psychologists
- Primary, secondary, special schools
- Young People
- Care Services, CCG – Public Health
- Child Protection Chairs
- Police
- Restorative Gloucestershire
- District Representatives
- Adult Social Care - Positive Risk Taking
- Human Resources (GCC)

## Leadership Commitment

Feedback was collated and analysed and informed the strategic lead workshops in June 2016 that were attended by most of those agencies listed above. Support from senior managers has enabled large numbers of people to be released for training and has endorsed the organic approach to building enthusiasm and emerging pilot proposals. This has meant that just through the Engagement Phase

- We have engaged with over 500 people from a wide variety of agencies
- 91 professionals have attended Introductory Days
- 57 professionals have attended Level 3 Training
- A facilitated workshop was held for GCC strategic leaders
- A facilitated workshop was held with multi agency strategic leads
- 367 people have been engaged through other events/meetings.

## Early Impact

Training has been delivered during the engagement phase of the proposal in September 2016. The overwhelming majority of staff accessing the training during the Engagement Phase became enthusiastic advocates of the approach and a willingness to implement the approach was evident;

- *Child Protection Chairs who went on the Level 3 training during the Engagement Phase, took back the learning to their team. As a result, several Chairs have begun to change their approach with a stronger emphasis on parental engagement and they asked if they could pilot the approach more extensively.*
- *The Chair of the GSCB introduced a Restorative Practice problem solving circle to the Executive Meeting. The impact was that a strategic lead for Early Help was able to set out a partnership problem and receive 16 suggested ways forward that he reflected he would not have secured through the usual format.*
- *The Head Teacher of a school for children with disabilities faced a difficult conversation with parents of a pupil who had displayed disruptive behaviour. She decided to use restorative questions from the Introductory Training. She reflected*

*that the impact was a very productive conversation with the parents in which shared ownership of the problem and constructive solutions were brought.*

- *The Manager of the Participation Team noticed tensions building between some of our 15 Ambassadors for Vulnerable Young People. Some of the young people felt that one Ambassador was unprofessional because she used her phone in meetings. The Manager used a Restorative Circle with a facilitator. The impact was a frank discussion in which all the young people felt safe to say how they felt affected, and the behaviour of concern has stopped.*

## 2. The Research

In the preparation of this proposal, research was considered in relation to similar work carried out internationally, nationally and outside Gloucester. This included

- Research from the International Institute of Restorative Approaches;
- Restorative Practice in Scottish Councils, University of Glasgow 2006;
- Restorative Practice in Schools, CfBT Education Trust 2009;
- Impact in/visit to **Leeds**, 2016 - reduced CP plans by 50%; 'good' Ofsted outcome for the LA; improved CYP outcomes across the city;
- Impact in **Hull**- schools reporting reduced exclusions, increased attainment, improved community cohesion. Schools rated 'outstanding';
- Impact in **Wokingham** – increased attendance, attainment, reduced exclusions, reduction in offending; over 40% of adults entering employment (many for the first time in 3 generations);
- Impact in **West Berkshire** - Increased community resilience, tier 4 mental health placements avoided, reduction in children on CP Plans.

## 3. The Strategic Landscape

The Engagement Phase has established that restorative approaches are not new to Gloucestershire. Its principles and practices have gained momentum since the establishment of **Restorative Gloucestershire**. This is a multi agency partnership whose roots began in Restorative Justice and who are now increasingly developing the use of wider restorative practices across services operating throughout Gloucestershire.

A key point that the research returns to time and again, is the nature of 'Restorative Justice' as a *subset* of broader restorative practice. The latter refers to relationship-building and pre-emptive interventions as well as positive, respectful ways of interacting with one another in everyday situations. This is recognised by Restorative Gloucestershire, whose focus started in reparation and is moving towards prevention.



The proposal supports several strategic intentions including

- A strength based problem solving approach to reducing demand
- Increased child, family and community resilience
- Strengthening positive relationships with local people
- Increasing social connectedness to better safeguard vulnerable people.

The wide field of approaches included in restorative practice therefore fit well with the vision and aims set out in a range of strategic plans, including:

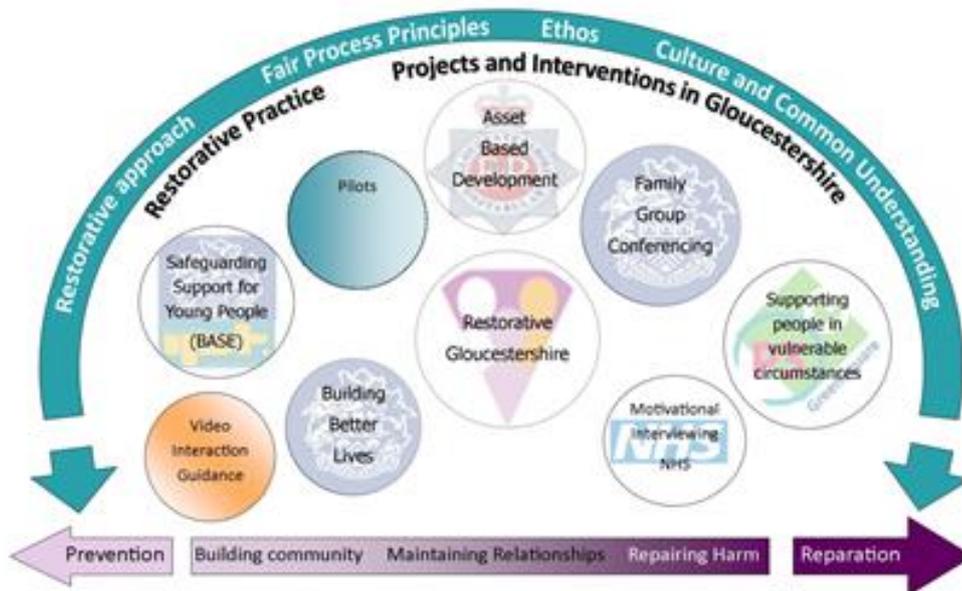
- The Children and Young People’s Partnership Plan
- Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board Business Plan
- The Asset Based Community Development and the Restorative Gloucestershire Partnership Plan (embedded in the Police & Crime Plan)
- Building Better Lives (all age disability support, inclusion and empowerment)
- The Supporting People Strategy

A key consideration is **BASE (Innovations Programme)**: a locally designed model being piloted to work with young people and their families, using attachment theory and relationship based practice to build a secure base and focus on engagement, motivation and capacity to change. The Engagement Phase established that not only is there a clear fit, but it is agreed that BASE is, in itself, a restorative approach, with the same underpinning principles and the aim to empower young people and their families through co-produced exploration of risk and resilience: *“Things inside me and around me that help me to get through tough times, and sometimes make me even stronger”*.

The diagram below was made with Alice, an Ambassador for Vulnerable Children and Young People. Alice saw how the pilots we were discussing sat alongside an existing range of restorative approaches in Gloucestershire, with different governance arrangements but all sitting under one overarching ‘way of being’. This includes asset based development (police-led, community based) and Family Group Conferencing (a practice that is at the heart of the restorative approach). The diagram shows the strategic landscape in which we consider the pilots proposed.

## Developing, Implementing and Sustaining Restorative Practice in Gloucestershire.

*"Working WITH, not doing TO or FOR"*



In summary, the national and local research highlighted just how applicable restorative approaches are across a range of settings and professional disciplines, bringing a shared sense of direction and a common language.

There is an emphasis on people in strategic leadership positions owning and modelling it at all levels; whether through *formal* ways of applying restorative practice, such as the use of Family Group Conferences, or through the *informal* restorative processes used proactively to prevent harm, to make sure these are integrated into everyday work and used on-the-spot to deal with issues that arise.

The proposal also fits with workforce development aims across organisations, providing a significant development opportunity for staff in the skills of relationship based, accountable and professional practice.

### 4. Proposal Part A – An Explicit Culture

**The intention** during the pilots is to support a common culture, across all organisations working with children and families, explicitly adopting restorative practices to build and maintain interpersonal relationships, resolve conflict and repair damaged relationships. We hope to establish a common set of restorative principles, underpinned by a clear set of skills and techniques.

*"If restorative practices are to reach their full potential then they need to be integrated into our everyday life, including the workplace. When restorative practices and language are embedded into the way we deal with all conflict and inappropriate behaviour, we are most likely to make a difference in the lives of those harmed and affected. An organisation which fully embraces restorative practices has the potential to create a safer, happier, healthier, fairer and more effective workplace for everyone. (Les Davey 2008)*

## 5. Proposal Part B - Putting it in Practice

The following proposal is a product of a sustained period of engagement and partnership work between January and September 2016. Acknowledgement and thanks are given to those involved in exploring the model and/or shaping the proposal, including the Restorative Gloucestershire partnership, the Restorative Practice Reference Group, Andrea King (Head of Service, Prevention and Community Resilience, West Berkshire) and Mark Finnis (Restorative Practice Trainer).

### Approach to Pilots

By proposing a small number of pilot sites, the intent is to

- a) Support what we already have.
- b) Think big, start small (and sustainably)

### **Supporting what we already have**

There is already a well established and Nationally Accredited Family Group Conference Team (FGC) who work restoratively with families to support them to develop their own solutions to the difficulties they are facing. The FGC brings together a child's wider family to talk about concerns and make a plan for the future care of the child. FGCs are internationally recognised as an evidence-based method of working with families. Current staffing levels within the team mean that they only have capacity to support those families who are referred as part of the statutory requirement. However, there is currently a 12 month pilot running in Cheltenham in the Early Help Partnership to test the use of FGC at an early help level, the first evaluation is due in October 2016.



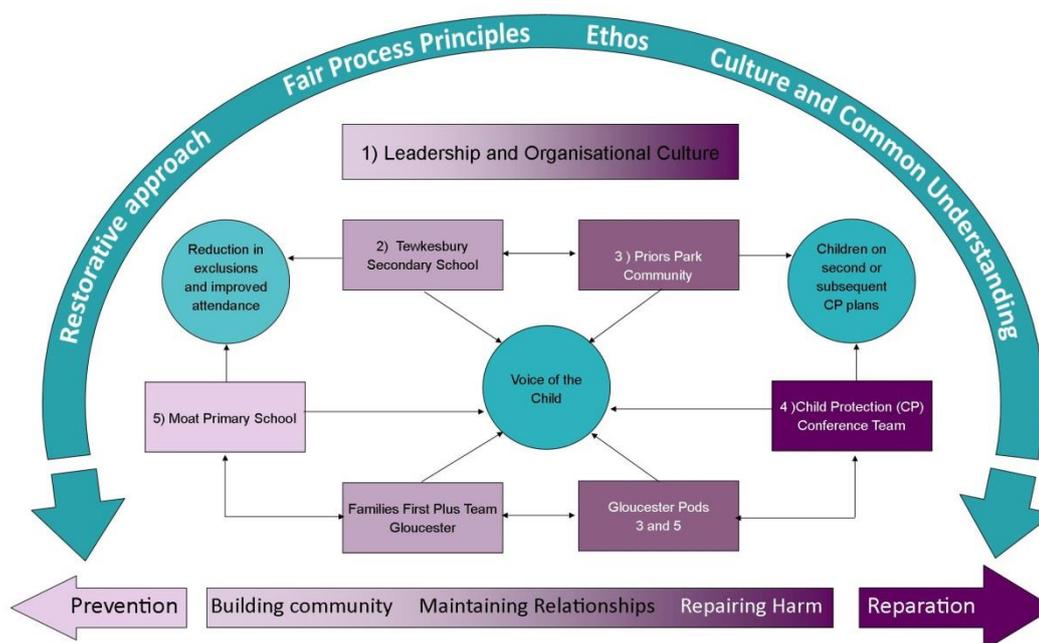
**“All the comments were listened to  
and everyone else listened to each  
others opinions”**

**“Communication is very good.  
Information is very open and shared  
well”**

The diagram overleaf comes from a Reference Group meeting which discussed where restorative approaches would have a big impact in year one, based on what the data shows and where the interest lies. The pilots will test the use of restorative approaches at various points from Early Help to Child Protection.

## Restorative Practice Pilots in Gloucestershire

*'Using Restorative approaches to work WITH, not TO or FOR'*



### Pilot 1 – Leadership and Organisational Culture

**Summary:** This pilot will support all pilots mentioned below in the restorative ‘way of being’. The use of a restorative mind-set and methodologies in meetings and in daily interactions will promote shared problem solving and accountability. A range of tailored training, workshops and learning circles between October 2016 and March 2017 to support strategic leaders and frontline managers in the use of a range of meeting styles, chairing approaches, affective questions and problem solving circles. Qualitative evaluation speaking with staff, partners and service users.

**Links:** This pilot is about culture and so it underpins all location based pilots listed below.

**Training and Consultancy:** Mark Finnis with ongoing practice and learning support from the RP Team

**RP Leads:** Cathy Griffiths (Head of Quality), Rebecca Jelf (Comm. Officer)

**Supporting Resources:** RP Reference Group activity.

### Pilot 2 - Restorative Practice in a Secondary School

**Summary:** We will introduce restorative approaches in a Secondary School, to evidence how it strengthens a sense of community and accountability, develops skills for learning, reduces disruptive behaviours, increases attendance and reduces exclusions. The pilot secondary school will be Tewkesbury school. The Senior Leadership Team and groups of young people will be trained in restorative practice. Pilot evaluation will be through performance data monitoring and through qualitative indicators to be negotiated with the school and pupils.

**Links:** Priors Park is a catchment area for Tewkesbury School

**Training:** Mark Finnis with ongoing practice and learning support from the RP Team

**RP Leads:** Molly Macleod

**Supporting Resources:** Tewkesbury School, Tewkesbury Partnership, RP Reference Group

### **Pilot 3 – Restorative Practice in a Community**

Summary: We will work with the local community, pupils and their families who live in Priors Park. Local schools and Tewkesbury Borough Council Partnership have identified that this is a locality that would benefit from developing a restorative ethos to build on community strengths and promote wellbeing across and between generations.

Links: Tewkesbury School. Aston Project in Priors Park.

Training: Mark Finnis with ongoing practice and learning support from the RP Team and Restorative Gloucestershire

RP Leads: Becky Beard

Supporting Resources: Tewkesbury Partnership, RP Reference Group

### **Pilot 4 – Restorative Practice in Child Protection Conferences**

Summary: Parents attending a Child Protection Conference will feel less 'done to' rather than 'worked with' as this is in the best interests of the child and secures sustained change. **Gloucester Pods 3 & 5** (Assistant Pods Managers, Team Managers for all Pods plus staff from Pods 3 & 5, totalling 18 staff) who cover the Barton & Tredworth and Westgate wards of Gloucester will pilot new ways of supporting and preparing children and their parents before the conference. All Pod Leads will be trained at the same time to support RP across the city. Professionals in the Families First Plus team will also be trained in order to keep the link back to early help.

Links: Police Community Resilience initiative (ABCD) Barton & Tredworth and Westgate

Training: Mark Finnis with ongoing practice and learning support from the RP Team

RP Leads: Sarah Cairns, Cathy Griffiths

Supporting Resources: CPC team, Pods, Families First Plus Team Gloucester, Reference Group, affiliated input and evaluation from Forest of Dean R&A, C&F Teams.

### **Pilot 5 – Restorative Practice in a Primary School**

Summary: We will introduce restorative approaches in a Primary School, to evidence how it strengthens a sense of community and accountability, develops skills for learning, reduces disruptive behaviours, increases attendance and reduces exclusions. The pilot primary school will be Moat Primary School. The Senior Leadership Team and groups of young people will be trained in restorative practice. Pilot evaluation will be through performance data monitoring and through qualitative indicators to be negotiated with the school and pupils. Lead Commissioner for Education and the Restorative Practice Development Team will be negotiating the details of a restorative pilot with the new Executive Head of Moat Primary School.

Links: Matson (Pod 3) is in the catchment area for Moat School

Training: Mark Finnis with ongoing practice and learning support from the RP Team

RP Leads: Sarah Cairns

Supporting resources: Moat Primary, Gloucester Pods, Families First Plus Team Gloucester

### **Affiliated pilots**

- Gloucestershire Innovations/BASE
- Development of Family Group Conferencing in Families First Plus teams

## Emerging Opportunities for the Future

- Joint working between Restorative Gloucestershire and GCC Commissioning, designing a residential service from the start with restorative approaches in mind, linked to the current proposal and national initiatives to reduce numbers of young people going into the Criminal Justice System.
- Other schools hoping to adopt a whole school restorative ethos including a Special School (possibly Bettridge) and another Secondary school in Gloucester.
- Children's Social Care Practice Development Team are buying consultancy time from Mark Finnis for their team training, to ensure restorative practice informs their work.
- Adult Social care are also employing Mark Finnis to train staff in restorative practice.
- Opportunities are currently being discussed to expand the use of Family Group Conferences across levels of need.

## Approach to Training

In consultation with Mark Finnis and recognising our learning from the Innovations Programme and Restorative Gloucestershire, we propose to implement an intensive and sustainable approach to training. This will ensure that all of us achieve a standardised competence in restorative approaches.

### **Expectations**

- To have a skilled and confident workforce participating in a unifying approach to practice.
- That participants take ownership for their learning and development and that we collectively support and challenge each other's approach to practice.

### **Aspirations**

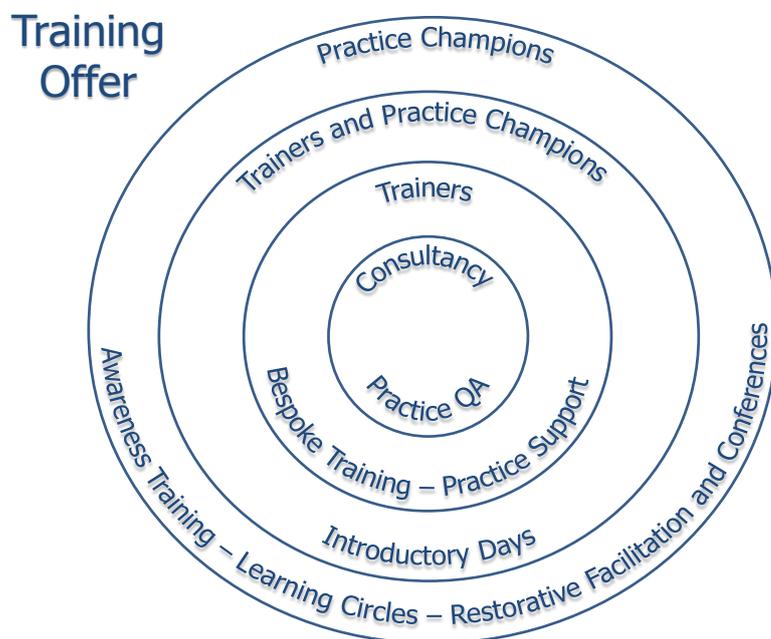
- To develop practice that delivers the best outcomes to positively impact on the lives of vulnerable children, young people, their families and communities.
- To develop excellence through using proven and pioneering ways of working, and by continuously improving and adapting.

## Approach to Sustainability

The guiding principle we will use, informed by evidenced based research and the experience of developing BASE in the local Innovations Programme, is that training alone, as a workforce development strategy, is insufficient. People need a combination of training, self-directed learning, reflective spaces, and a clear competency framework to work towards.

Though restorative practice may look simple, or something that 'we do already', it can be deceptively so if taken at face value. Those adopting it may need to learn (or unlearn) quite a lot to apply it as intended. We will therefore plan how to embed that learning in ways that recognise that learning and application is a co-production, meaning the support needs and challenge required are defined by all participants; this is not a top-down strategy.

To guard against training delivery without impact, all pilot areas benefiting from the training will be required to sign up to a negotiated SLA about the remit of the pilot and input to the delivery and evaluation phases. A role description will also be co-produced setting out the expected commitment, related benefits and support available in championing, managing and/or supporting pilot activity.



As the Engagement Phase closes, the training will be targeted for those involved in the proposed pilots. Half or one day introductory training will still be made available as far as possible for continued engagement and awareness raising. Key staff will be identified as Practice Champions for their organisation and will be instrumental in ongoing awareness training. They will be offered Level 3 RP training and will be supported by Restorative Practice Team members who will take on a mentoring role.

Learning circles will be developed to support each pilot and all attendees of Level 3 training, tailored to fit in with existing demands as far as possible. Using the restorative principles will allow the participants to shape and guide the learning towards competency, in a way that works for them.

The purpose of the learning circles will be to promote a deeper understanding of the philosophy and practice of working restoratively; to further develop staff confidence and competence in applying restorative practice in their daily work; and to engage participants in thinking about and discussion of the complexities of working restoratively (potentials, obstacles, requirements and limitations).

A Reference Group is developing out of the existing Engagement Phase Practice Workstream. The role of this group will be to make sure the professionals at all levels across agencies are engaged in the delivery and evaluation of the pilots; that awareness raising and training is fit for purpose; and that the voice of children and families is at the heart of pilot evaluation. Communications taken from post training feedback, Learning Circles and Evaluation meetings will be collated by members of the Reference Group. These will form part of the reporting back to participants and to programme stakeholders as part of monthly meetings/report.

We are currently in negotiation with the identified national trainer and holding discussions with Restorative Gloucestershire and BASE, to establish a viable Train the Trainer scheme for local sustainability.

## Approach to Evaluation

Pilot evaluation will in itself forge restorative ground; from October to December 2016 it will involve working with staff in the pilots to further define the qualitative differences that people want to see, alongside the data. Evaluation will involve

- Use of Questionnaires
- Interviews with a range of professionals, children and families
- Observation of a range of meetings and activities
- Analysis of national and local service and school statistical data.

## **6. Risk Management**

The reference group, over time, have identified the potential barriers to sustained learning and application of restorative practice, as well as to achieving consistent quality in restorative practice. These have included concerns about whether

- there will be sufficient provision for learning from practice;
- seniors will be able to safeguard the time needed;
- there will be pressure to meet more targets;
- there will be pressure to carry out restorative events within unrealistic timescales;
- restorative approaches will be used in unsuitable cases or situations;
- there will be adequate resourcing.

## **7. Resources**

The resources for the proposed pilots has been mapped in terms of the associated cost, and the human resources that will be made available to support design, delivery and sustainability.

The funding is firmly understood to be a set up budget. Continuation of this budget cannot be relied on for ensuing years. A key aspect of sustainability planning will be to explore sources of other funding where the restorative approaches merge directly into future partner initiatives.

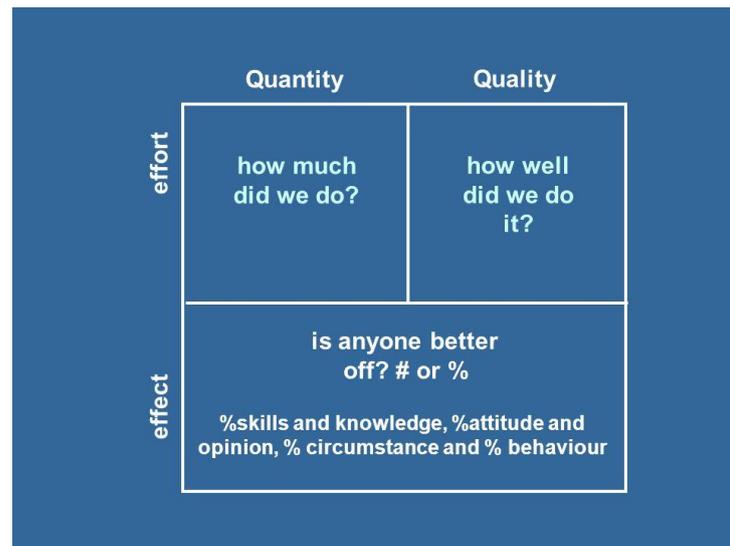
## **8. Quality Assurance**

The Quality Assurance Framework will be designed to provide clear, practical information and encourage and support individuals and organisations to achieve high-quality restorative practice consistently - and to measure its' impact.

Although the Framework will include nationally recognised standards to inform practice, the development of individual setting assurance mechanisms on top of this will be supported and encouraged. This will be to make sure that quality assurance is informed by the commitment, insights and wisdom of young people, parents and practitioners.

The Quality Assurance Framework will be informed by the 3 key questions embedded in Results Based Accountability (Mark Friedman), which in turn informed the

Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board approach to Quality Assurance (deep dives):



### How Much Did We Do?

Input measurements across all pilots will be established, to track for example how many people were trained, what learning circle activity was put in place and what restorative activities were tested. This informs the pilot evaluation of quality and impact below.

### How Well Did We Do It?

Quality in restorative practice is about safety and consistency, adherence to principles and values, and achievement of fair outcomes. Quality assurance will therefore involve

- Children/families who may be encouraged to participate in restorative initiatives;
- Practitioners, to be reassured skills adhere to best practice after initial training;
- Service leads, for development of practice and achievement of desired results;
- Oversight bodies who need to have confidence in the services they scrutinise.

### Is Anybody Better Off?

Impact measures will be negotiated with each pilot site. They will take account of the objectives of the restorative practice in each setting;

- In a school for example, it will include data about attendance and exclusion, but also locally negotiated measures of quality and impact such as a positive mutually supportive learning environment, a reduction in disruptive behaviour.
- In communities or workplaces, qualitative objectives might be improvement of relationships, reduction in conflict and strengthening of collaboration.

Evaluative methodology will include a range of observed practice, eliciting stakeholders' views, assessing participation levels, and measuring pre-negotiated performance outcomes. For example;

- Impact of Learning circle implementation across all activity
- Case Audits
- Staff Survey, Team Self Assessments and feedback from service users
- Exit interviews from staff
- HR feedback
- IT systems reports on outcomes.

Consideration of organisational culture in terms of commitment to restorative approaches will require self assessment of, among others, governance structures, decision-making processes and monitoring mechanisms. The reference group will develop an organisational culture checklist to support self and peer evaluation.

## **9. Governance**

Currently, the work involved during the Engagement Phase and the design of the proposed pilots reports to the Vulnerable Children Board (Gloucestershire County Council). Consideration will be given to determining the most appropriate multi agency governance structure.

A key objective of the Governance arrangements will be to develop the capacity, systems, infrastructures and oversight that support the growth, evolution and sustainability of restorative approaches.

## **10. Recommendations**

For the Director of Children's Services to

1. Endorse the proposed areas for practice pilots, as recommended by senior partners involved in pilots, Restorative Practice Development Team and the Restorative Practice Reference Group.
2. Discuss with partners what Pilot 1 (Leadership and Organisational Culture) will include in the detail, supported by the Restorative Practice Development Team.
3. Discuss with partners where the multi agency governance for delivery and evaluation of the pilots best sits

