



FORUM

Hull, UK: Toward a Restorative City

BY LAURA MIRSKY

Hull, UK, led by the Hull Centre for Restorative Practices (HCRP) and the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), is endeavoring to become a “restorative city.” The goal is for everyone who works with children and youth in Hull, one of England’s most economically and socially deprived cities, to employ restorative practices.

Nigel Richardson, Hull’s director of Children and Young People’s Services, is leading the restorative initiative. Hull — population 250,000, with 57,000 children — had a thriving fishing industry that disappeared several generations ago, and the city failed to regenerate itself economically, said Richardson, resulting in “low aspirations and self-esteem, and a high proportion of people living below the poverty line.” Hull invested heavily to rebuild housing, the city center and secondary schools. But, said Richardson, “There’s no point in physical regeneration without social regeneration.” His strategy is to “invest disproportionately in children and young people now,” with restorative practices (RP) at the core.

Hull’s RP scheme officially began in August 2007. Participants are committed to implementing “an explicit means of managing relationships and building social connection and responsibility while providing a forum for repairing harm when relationships break down.”

COLLINGWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Results are extremely promising. The first successes were at Collingwood Primary School. In 2004, before RP implementation, Collingwood was given Ofsted’s (Britain’s Office for Standards in Education) lowest ranking: “needing

special measures.” Within two years of RP implementation, the school achieved Ofsted’s highest ranking: “outstanding.”

Estelle Macdonald, head teacher (principal) of Collingwood (who is now also head of HCRP) took over the school in September 2004, when it was in special measures. She implemented “a nurtur-



Students discuss important matters in a circle at Endeavour High School.

ing program that worked through circle time and a positive vocabulary focusing on how we wanted children to behave, rather than what they did wrong,” and “a solution-focused approach to planning and problem solving.” This made a big difference, helping remove Collingwood from special measures. Yet, said Macdonald, they still struggled with the really challenging children, who “seemed to fall outside our systems.”

When Macdonald heard about RP, she traveled to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA, for training and to visit a restorative school operated by Community Service Foundation and Buxmont Academy (IIRP demonstration programs). She introduced RP at Collingwood straightaway. The whole school staff was trained in RP, restorative concepts were introduced to pupils, and classroom circles were employed twice daily. Collingwood has since “built a highly positive school culture and

an exceptional sense of community and helped its pupils develop the skills to feel respected, secure, happy and able to make the most of their lives.”

COLLINGWOOD DISCIPLINE DATA SPRING 2007 — JULY 2008

98.3%	fewer classroom exclusions
92.0%	fewer exclusions from break [recess]
77.8%	fewer lunchtime red cards [for discipline]
75.0%	fewer racist incidents
86.7%	punctuality improvement

A DVD on RP at Collingwood is at iirp.org/store (US) or iirpukonlineshop.org.uk (UK).

ENDEAVOUR HIGH SCHOOL

Endeavour High School was Hull’s second school to implement RP. Head teacher Christopher Straker (now also an HCRP head) said that RP had brought about enormous behavior changes at Endeavour. The latest Ofsted report noted that RP seemed to have made Endeavour a place where “respect and safety are the norm and problems get sorted out.” RP is “about making people providers of their own solutions,” said Straker. “It’s solved lots of problems. There’s no bullying anymore because things get sorted out between kids.” A sign that RP has become the norm is that “both children and parents ask us to use it.” Straker mentioned a recent circle with students and “dinner ladies” (lunchtime supervisors) about lunchroom mess. “The kids asked for the circle,” he said. Endeavour is training 20 15-year-olds to train children in other secondary schools, said Straker, noting, “It’s important to take it out of the professionals’ hands — out of the dependency culture.”

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ENDEAVOUR DISCIPLINE DATA

SPRING 2007 — JULY 2008

45.6%	fewer verbal abuse incidents
59.4%	fewer physical abuse incidents
43.2%	fewer disruptive behavior incidents
78.6%	fewer racist incidents
100.0%	fewer drug use incidents
50.0%	fewer theft incidents
44.5%	fewer fixed term exclusions
62.5%	fewer days staff absence (saving over £60,000 in 8 months).

THE RIVERSIDE PROJECT

The success at these schools led to the City Council's Children and Young People's Partnership, in September 2007, embarking on a two-year restorative practices pilot involving all children's services professionals in Riverside, one of seven areas of the city. Paul Carlile, Riverside Project consultant (formerly northeast England regional coordinator for school improvement), said that the Riverside Project has trained over 3,500 staff at 12 primary and two secondary schools, children's homes, family resource centers, social services and health services agencies, plus police and local community enforcement officers, community wardens, foster carers and volunteers. The goal is to enable young people, educators, parents and carers to adopt practices that enhance personal well-being, promote appropriate behaviors and strengthen acceptance of responsibility, said Carlile.

RIVERSIDE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE DATA

SPRING 2007 — JULY 2008

73.1%	fewer classroom exclusions
79.6%	less pupil-to-pupil verbal abuse
73.3%	less pupil-to-staff verbal abuse
57.1%	less pupil-to-pupil physical abuse
83.3%	less internal supervision at break
79.4%	less lunchtime supervision
94.6%	fewer incidents referred to SLT/HT [Senior Leadership Team/head teacher]
75.3%	fewer pupils excluded from break
80.6%	fewer fixed term exclusion days

THE FAMILIES PROJECT

Macdonald and Straker are excited about the Families Project, which is directly engaging families in their children's welfare, a joint effort of head teachers, school emotional support workers and social workers and local family group conferencing (FGC) services. Head teachers are working to identify and support children experiencing the greatest difficulties in behavior, attendance and achievement (which often go together). The children's families are contacted and asked, "How can we help?" Circles are held with family members, who discuss how they feel about the problems and what to do. Involving family members has proved beneficial to everyone. Said Macdonald, "The families have reacted really positively, because when they're part of the process supporting them, they're much more likely to engage with it and get something from it."

Macdonald talked about Jack, a chronic truant whose mother was "at the end of her tether." Family Project worker Jo Faulkner (also an HCRP trainer) held a circle with Jack and his family. Jack's siblings said, "Mum, you never made us go to school. We don't want him to end up like us!" Jack declared that his father didn't engage with him, spurring him to get involved. The next day, Jack ran home from school after second period, as usual, but this time his parents made him go back to school. Since then, Jack has maintained a perfect attendance record, and his mother has become a Collingwood lunchtime supervisor and an active school supporter.

POLICE

Hull police are using RP. In December 2008, Hull police agreed that restorative processes can be used for first-time minor offenses before any judicial process is invoked, said Paul Carlile. Inspector Iain Dixon said that

all 170 Hull police officers have received a one-day introduction to RP training and 65 have been trained to facilitate restorative conferences (which bring together victims, offenders and their supporters to repair the harm of wrongdoing or crime). RP is mostly being used in neighborhood conflicts thus far, said Dixon. He mentioned a case where an elderly woman on an estate (public housing project) had complained to police hundreds of times about young people's noise and profanity. A police-led conference with local youth and the woman stopped the noise and profanity. "I'm more than sold on the practices," said Dixon. "It holds people accountable; they can't hide behind the system or a solicitor [lawyer]."

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

RP is proving highly successful in Hull's Children and Young People's Services Safeguarding and Development (CYPSSD) area, which includes fostering, adoption, residential and field work. Silvia Madrid, looked-after children partnership and development officer, said that all Hull CYPSSD practitioners, including those who work with disabled children, are being trained in RP. When manager of a children's home, Madrid used circles to address children's behavior and with police and neighbors to handle problems. These practices have spread throughout Hull children's homes, greatly reducing children's criminal records and police involvement. Circles are also used for staff issues. Said Madrid, "RP has given staff tools to actually listen to children. It also provides ways to examine their practice."

The eForum will issue ongoing updates on RP in Hull. ☉