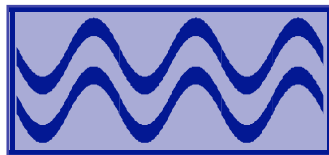




Evaluative Review

Lewisham Restorative Approaches Partnership

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Section One

Introduction

1.1 *About the evaluative report*

This report examines the progress of Lewisham's Restorative Approaches Partnership in its work in schools and attempts to identify:

- Evidence that restorative approaches are having an impact on behaviour in schools
- Lessons learnt from those who have made most progress in implementing the approaches
- Future needs to support continued development of restorative work in schools

To inform Section Two of the report interviews were held with:

- Siân Williams, BIP manager
- Caroline Newton, Restorative Approaches Co-ordinator
- Marcia Lewis, Manager, Lewisham Action on Mediation Project (LAMP)

To inform Section Three, interviews were held with staff and some students from a selection of those schools which have begun to make progress in implementing restorative approaches. These interviews explored how the change process has happened, what the impact has been, how the Partnership has helped to date and what is needed for the future. Interviews were carried out with staff from:

- Secondary schools: Forest Hill, Deptford Green and Catford Business and Enterprise College
- Primary schools: Athelney, John Ball, Baring, Forster Park and St Bartholomew's.

1.2 *A brief introduction to restorative approaches*

Restorative approaches are based on the principles of restorative justice (RJ), which is a way of repairing harm that has its roots in a number of ancient cultures including Native American, Maori, Aboriginal and Anglo-Saxon. The roots are ancient but there has been considerable recent interest in many parts of the world in applying its principles. In the school context, international interest has been triggered by concern about increasing levels of challenging behaviour reported in schools, problems caused by bullying and a continuing concern about children and young people excluded from schools either for a fixed term or permanently. There is growing recognition of the importance of building and maintaining positive relationships in order that effective learning can take place.

A key restorative principle is that where an event causes harm to any member of a community, a way needs to be found to repair that harm; in order to do so, those affected need an opportunity to express their needs, and those who perpetrated the harm need an opportunity to make amends. Cameron and Thorsborne (2001) explain this well in relation to education:

Restorative justice in the school setting views misconduct not as school-rule-breaking and therefore a violation of the institution, but as a violation against people and relationships in the school and wider school community. Restorative justice means that the harm done to people and relationships needs to be explored and that harm needs to be repaired.

Incidents in schools that are dealt with restoratively provide opportunities for harm to be repaired. The process takes place when all parties are in agreement that they want to address the harm in this way and, in particular, it is important that the person causing harm accepts that s/he has done so, is ready to be held accountable and wants to repair the wrongdoing. This is a different perspective to the simple application of sanctions, but it does not preclude their use as part of an overall restorative behaviour management system.

Where possible, restorative approaches bring together those harmed and those who cause harm who, through the restorative process, are faced with the impact of their actions. The judgment of staff involved as to the readiness of the person causing harm and the sensitive and supportive management of the resulting shame are important elements of the process, which can bring genuine changes in attitude and future behaviour. At the same time those who have been harmed have an opportunity to express themselves and to have a say in how the matter is resolved – part of their healing process. An agreement is formed by all parties, with the commitment of all present and includes a shared understanding of the consequences of any breach of this agreement.

If it is not possible to bring together harmed and harmer, restorative processes can also enable the harm, and ways of repairing it, to be explored. Many processes are based on a simple series of questions which can be used in a variety of settings, from small-scale conversations in corridors or classrooms to large conferences involving families and community members, or with whole classes.

- What has happened?
- What were you thinking/feeling at the time? And now?
- Who has been affected by what happened? How have they been affected?
- What is needed to make this right?
- How can we make sure this doesn't happen again?

Whilst the questions are not difficult in themselves, much depends on the style of delivery and skilled handling of the emerging information. The bigger the group

involved, the more skilful the facilitator needs to be, both in terms of handling group dynamics as well as sensitively managing the information that is likely to emerge. Experience both internationally and in the UK also suggests that restorative approaches will be most effectively used within a school culture where emotional health, wellbeing and literacy are developed on an ongoing basis.

1.3 Lewisham and Restorative Approaches

1.3.1 Key Drivers

As part of the Children and Young People's Strategic Plan, Lewisham is committed to implementing restorative approaches in schools.

Lewisham's decision to adopt this policy is based on evidence that restorative approaches have had demonstrable success both in the Youth Justice system and in other educational settings. In recognition of its success in a criminal justice context the Home Office published a strategy for using Restorative Justice in July 2003, and the Youth Justice system is now underpinned by restorative principles. Although the use of the approaches in a school context is newer, there is already a mounting weight of evidence – from studies of schools undertaken in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the USA and the UK - to demonstrate that they can reduce recurrence of incidents, change behaviour and build the school's sense of community and culture of responsible behaviour. In addition the Metropolitan Police encourage School Liaison and Safer Schools officers to use restorative conferencing, the DfES has also recently appointed an advisor for its new 'Violence Reduction in Schools' project that incorporates RJ and interest at central government level is growing.

With the introduction of the *Every Child Matters* agenda, RJ has a clear place in the key outcomes of 'Staying Safe' and 'Making a Positive Contribution'; through these outcomes and its place within a school culture that promotes respect for learning, use of restorative approaches can also impact significantly on 'enjoying and Achieving'. Lewisham's commitment to restorative approaches is reflected in Lewisham Directorate for Children and Young People's Strategic Plan as part of the 'Staying Safe' agenda

1.3.2 Lewisham Restorative Approaches Partnership

The Restorative Approaches Partnership is a partnership of stakeholders in Lewisham engaged in promoting, supporting and co-ordinating restorative approaches with children and young people within the borough. Its role is to provide training and support to facilitate the implementation of restorative approaches. It also has a co-ordination role to ensure consistency of standards. It includes representatives from the Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP) and the Youth Offending Team (YOT), the Metropolitan Police and the Lewisham

Action on Mediation Project (LAMP - a voluntary sector organisation offering mediation services within Lewisham) – and the Lewisham Children’s Fund.

The achievements of the Partnership since its inception in 2002 are outlined in section two of this report.

1.3.3 Funding

Funding for the project has been obtained from the Children’s Fund (c.£44,000 per annum), the Safe and Secure Communities Fund (£20,000 per annum), the Behaviour Improvement Project (£15,000 per annum) and the Youth Offending Team (£15,000 per annum). Funding has been used for providing specialised training and support services for schools; to fund the full-time post of Restorative Approaches Co-ordinator, a quarter of whose time is allocated to the Youth Offending team and the remainder focused on schools, and to fund LAMP’s peer mediation work with schools.

The funding from the Children’s Fund will cease in April 2006, and the Safe and Secure Communities Fund is currently under review.

Section Two

Summary of achievements of the Restorative Approaches Partnership

2.1 *Borough-wide training*

Two- and three-day courses have been made available annually to schools and other staff. These have been led by Marg Thorsborne, a leading world expert on restorative schools principles. They include practice in facilitation of restorative conferences.

The courses were provided in December 2002, March 2004 and February 2005. Further courses are planned for November 2005 and March 2006.

They have been attended by Lewisham staff and others as follows:

- Secondary schools: 41 staff from eleven schools
- Primary schools: 65 staff from 37 schools
- Special schools/PRUs: seven staff from three schools
- Voluntary sector groups: six staff from four groups
- Police: eight officers
- Youth Offending Team: seven staff
- Specialist support for schools (eg Behaviour and Education Support Team, Educational Psychologists, behaviour support staff) twelve staff
- Parent-governor: One governor

This is a total of 144 staff from the borough who have been trained to a high standard of competence.

In addition 23 secondary school staff and 47 primary school staff attended half-day awareness sessions led by Marg Thorsborne and a briefing for interested Lewisham Council managers and councillors has also been held.

Response to the trainings has been universally highly positive, with immediate responses including such comments as, *The best training I have ever done...The most useful information I have had since I started teaching.*

The schools interviewed for this report have indicated that the training has, for them, had a lasting impact. Most of the staff interviewed referred to its importance in persuading staff of the merits of the approach, and many recommended sending staff on the training. Marg's training style, and the reputation and authority she brings with her, has played a vital role in the success of the training and its lasting impact. Continued regular availability of training of a high standard has been highlighted as a key need for the future.

2.2 Production of guidance: Restoring the Balance

This 20-page booklet was developed as a resource to support and encourage schools in implementing restorative approaches. 5000 copies were printed and the initial distribution included ten copies to each secondary school and five to each primary school. Subsequent requests for further copies indicate the usefulness of the guide. At the present time approx 4,000 have been issued, mainly in response to requests from Lewisham schools although there has also been distribution at a local, national and international level.

2.3 Work with Schools

2.3.1 Restorative Approaches Co-ordinator (Sept 2004 – July 2005)

The Co-ordinator spends 75% of her time on education-based activities and has undertaken a variety of interventions to promote restorative approaches and support their implementation.

Interventions directly affecting schools have included:

Promotional (brief sessions to raise awareness)

- Lewisham Deputy Heads Conference Feb 2005 in collaboration with LAMP
- Lewisham Head Teachers Conference November 2004
- Staff meetings

Developmental (in-depth sessions to support implementation)

- In schools:
 - Twilight sessions in two primary schools
 - Half-day INSET in four primary schools
 - Whole day INSET in two primary schools
 - Two workshops with staff from the Crossways Federation (a federation including the sixth form school and four secondary schools)
 - Consultation with head teachers of two primary schools
 - Half-day training with year seven tutors at a secondary school
- Borough-wide:
 - Two half-day sessions with Learning Mentors
 - One whole day with Education Psychologists

Support and follow-up

- Forming a support group of practitioners
- Holding a Practice Day, attended by fifteen practitioners – four police officers, one member YOT staff, two staff from the voluntary sector and eight education staff
- Support sessions with practitioners in schools

- Intensive support for circle time
- Co-facilitation with a member of the YOT, of a series of large-scale restorative meetings between a secondary school and its local community

Schools have varied in the support required from the Co-ordinator, and the schools' experiences in Section Three show some of the ways in which this support has enabled them to introduce new practices.

2.3.2 Work of Lewisham Action on Mediation Project (LAMP)

LAMP has worked in schools offering a variety of educational programmes and support for the last five years. It has been able to expand its work in this area through the Partnership and financial input from the Children's Fund. The main focus has been on:

- Peer mediation - training students as peer mediators and supporting schools in implementing the support structures for peer mediation
- Staff training to support peer mediation systems and mediators
- Providing external mediation or conference facilitation services to deal with more difficult conflicts.
- Providing life-skills trainings for students, including training in conflict resolution skills.

LAMP's work in schools over the 2004-5 academic year included:

- Peer mediation training and implementation support in three secondary schools and four primary schools.
- Life skills training for the whole Year 9 of a secondary school
- Staff training including lunchtime supervisor trainings in two primary schools
- RJ conferences and mediations involving staff, students and parents, in three primary schools and the Pupil Referral Unit
- Initial discussions with a number of schools, resulting in at least six schools scheduling peer mediation training for the Autumn of 2005

LAMP staff work in collaboration with the Restorative Approaches Co-ordinator. They meet regularly to review their work school by school to ensure consistency of approach, agree priorities and run training jointly when appropriate.

Evidence showing the effectiveness of LAMP's work is found in Section Three.

2.4 *National and international involvement*

The partnership has represented Lewisham at conferences and presentations and has been visited by people wishing to initiate restorative approaches in their own areas, nationally and internationally.

Section Three

Schools' Experience

This section contains a snapshot of how some schools have implemented restorative practices. Their experiences have been included to show how restorative approaches can work in practice, the positive impact they are having on behaviour and relationships in schools and some of the issues faced in embedding them.

Staff from the following schools were interviewed:

Secondary Schools

- Forest Hill
- Deptford Green
- Catford Business and Enterprise College

Primary Schools

- Athelney
- Baring
- Forster Park
- John Ball
- St Bartholomew's

3.1 Secondary Schools

3.1.1 Forest Hill School (boys 11- 18, school roll 1400) (Interview with Mick Levens, Deputy Head Teacher)

This boys' secondary school has a history of good relationships and strong pastoral support, but wanted to address high rates of exclusion and detention. Three members of staff went on the borough's first training course in restorative conferencing in December 2002. Following this training Mick commented that, *We could see the potential for RJ but it was hard to see how it would fit into the school systems because of the time it takes up.*

The school started to use restorative conferences on an ad hoc basis, with evident success. One parent wrote a letter of thanks after participating in a conference:

We realised through this process that our son needs continued monitoring and guidance like all teenagers do.the most significant thing for us is the fact that had this incident taken place a few years ago, he would probably have been excluded or expelled. We know that this action would not have solved the problem. Being made to face up to the consequences of his actions has been much more beneficial to him and the others involved. I fully support this initiative.

Mick realised that a strategic approach was needed, and wrote a paper in April 2004 proposing a pilot with Year 7 students. During the pilot all Year 7 students would be offered a restorative process in preference to exclusion wherever possible and, if a fixed term exclusion was considered unavoidable, they would be offered a restorative conference as part of the reintegration process. The results have borne out the effectiveness of the approach - there were 16 fixed term exclusions for Year 7 during the academic year September 2004 to July 2005, compared with 50 for Year 7 in the previous academic year up to July 2004.

To support the pilot Mick arranged for Marg Thorsborne to run a full-day INSET with a focus on understanding restorative principles and considering the specific needs of students. This succeeded in bringing consistency to staff responses. Many were already operating in line with restorative principles but the training provided a consistent language and an introduction to the tools needed to implement restorative approaches. As a result many staff have started to use restorative language and concepts in everyday interactions within the school.

Further training was given by the Restorative Approaches Co-ordinator to all Year 7 tutors and teaching assistants, the school organised a presentation for parents/carers and wrote to them outlining the school's use of restorative approaches, and all staff who taught Year 7 were familiarised with the new procedures. Four Learning Mentors were trained to facilitate restorative conferences, and arrangements were made to ensure that they had the time to

administer and manage restorative conferences wherever appropriate. The Learning Mentors have taken a lead role in preparing and administering conferences, which has taken the administrative workload away from teaching staff and made conferencing much more widely available and manageable for the school.

The opportunities provided by the borough to attend training with Marg Thorsborne were seized and a total of eight staff have so far been through Marg's training. This has added to the number of people who have expertise in this area.

In February Mick participated in the borough's study visit to Australia and New Zealand where a number of schools have embedded restorative practices. From this experience she has been able to use ideas from these schools and adapt them for Forest Hill. For example, the school is applying restorative thinking across the board in internal school sanction systems, such as detention and referral systems. This process is described in more detail below.

When the pilot began one of the major issues highlighted was the school detention system. It was clear this was both overloaded and out of kilter with restorative principles. A complete review of the school detention system was undertaken to ensure that it was used consistently across the school and to build in restorative principles. This included improving communication with parents/carers and designing a process where detention time is used to reconnect constructively with the teacher, so reducing the need to resort to further sanctions. The reduction in the number of school detentions run by the school's Senior Management Team (from 2935 during the academic year 2003-4 to 481 during 2004-5) demonstrates the increased numbers returning to the class teacher as requested and resolving difficulties, instead of receiving further detentions or more serious sanctions.

The referral system, in which students disrupting lessons are referred to a room within the school, was also reviewed. Time in the referral room is now used to reflect constructively using a *Restorative Thinking Plan*, supported by a Learning Mentor trained in restorative approaches. When teachers send a student to the referral room they now expect to see the student either at the end of the lesson or at the end of the day to discuss what they have planned to do to put things right, and to carry out a conversation to restore the student/teacher relationship.

In this way restorative messages are consistently communicated to students across all the major sanctions. To keep parents/carers informed and involved a letter was sent to them describing the new approach to behaviour and relationship management.

The school is now in a position to consider using a restorative approach whenever a difficult situation arises. Another, more recent, development has been the use of classroom conferences to deal with problem behaviour in classes. In one example, all members of a year 9 class which was experiencing persistent behavioural difficulties were asked to write statements about what was harming relationships

in the class and what problems were stopping learning. Anonymity was guaranteed. The result was clear identification of bullying behaviour. As a result two students were moved out of the class and a classroom conference held in which the anonymous statements were read out and every class member was encouraged to say how they had been affected and what they wanted for their class for the future. Although students were at first reluctant to speak, once some started to describe their feelings, others began to take responsibility and apologise to each other. In the words of the teacher:

By the close of the conference huge progress had been made. It was apparent that a very significant step had been taken. In the weeks post-conference there has been a real improvement within this group. They appear much happier.

The two students who were removed from the class have been placed in different tutor groups and given support; both are making good progress.

When students and staff are engaged in this kind of process, learning takes place. This contributes to the development of skills for emotional competence and the ability to deal with conflict. To complement this work the school has engaged LAMP to deliver a programme of life skill capacity building for Year 9 students as well as a peer mediation programme. This delivers a clear message from the school that it values students taking responsibility for their actions and addressing rather than avoiding difficulties. The popularity of the peer mediation training amongst Year 9 – it was oversubscribed - shows the high status accorded both to peer mediators in the school and to this way of working with students.

Having achieved some significant success through restorative approaches, and had good responses from staff, students and parents/carers, the school is now attempting to embed them across the board. The school would like to create a new post of Resource Teacher for Learning and Behaviour, based on a New Zealand model, specifically to co-ordinate and support the use of restorative approaches within the school.

Key Learning:

- A strategic, planned approach is needed if the school is to be adequately resourced to run restorative conferences as part of its normal behaviour and relationship management practice.
- Existing behaviour policies and systems of behaviour management need to be reviewed to build in restorative principles.
- A creative approach to disruptive behaviour, from a restorative standpoint, can generate unique solutions to problems.

Key support needs

- Regular training courses of a high standard to ensure that staff, especially new starters, can be engaged with the principles applied in school.
- Annual peer mediation training and other capacity building for students.
- Support network and borough resources focused on the needs of secondary schools to ensure that school staff engaged in restorative practices are kept abreast of latest developments and have the opportunity for regular exchanges of ideas and experiences with colleagues in other schools. People providing support need secondary school experience.
- Funding is being sought to fund the post of Resource Teacher for Learning and Behaviour.

3.1.2 Deptford Green School (mixed, 11-18, school roll 1227)

(Interview with Mel Stanley, Deputy Head of School and Head of Lower School site)

Mel became Head of the Lower School (Years 7 and 8) in 2004. As someone with a long-standing interest in pastoral support, who had attended the borough's course in restorative conferencing in March 2004, she realised that this role presented a great opportunity to work on relationships generally. She saw the opportunity to incorporate restorative approaches in a systematic way, and established, with the help of an Assistant Head Teacher, a pilot scheme in which restorative conferencing was applied to all conflict and behaviour management issues at the lower school site, including the vast majority of cases which would otherwise have resulted in fixed term exclusion. Where exclusion is deemed necessary restorative conferencing is offered on re-entry.

This pilot has operated from Sept 2004 to July 2005. An analysis of the impact of the pilot has been undertaken by a postgraduate PGCE student, and shows the following:

- 389 incidents were dealt with restoratively, all with written contracts produced. It is estimated that approx 50% of these would have been fixed term exclusions under the previous system.
- Over the first two terms of the 2004-5 academic year there was a reduction in exclusions of 74% compared with the first two terms of the 2003-4 academic year.
- A reduction in repeat offending. Under the pilot scheme only two contracts have been broken more than once, and eleven once. This is less than one third of the number of exclusions for repeat offences in the previous year, and only one eighth of the number re-offending more than once. It indicates a 97% success rate.
- High levels of student satisfaction: surveys of those participating indicate 82% satisfaction with the system, with most believing that conferencing would reduce re-offending.

Implementing this pilot has been a major project. To begin with it was important to get the agreement of key senior staff to allow the pilot to go ahead. The support and encouragement of the Head Teacher was essential. In particular it has been vital that the Heads of Years 7 and 8 have been closely involved. Discussions with them to plan the project in detail have been helped by using materials such as the *Restoring the Balance* booklet and Marg Thorsborne's training manual, *Restorative Practices in Schools*.

It was then important to involve other staff. Mel used the first two INSET days in September 2004 to hold workshops for all those who work pastorally with Years 7

and 8 so that they would understand and support what was planned. These meetings helped to clarify the kind of procedures which would be adopted.

Parents and students needed to know about the new procedures. A letter to parents let them know what was happening and a regular “RJ update” column was added to the school newsletter. Mel also presented to a meeting of the school governors, who were very supportive.

To support the new approach, administrative procedures had to be rethought. Contracts are now recorded on the school’s management information system, which has been adapted to include restorative conferences. Records of contracts made and who was involved are kept for all restorative meetings whether they are short meetings to resolve an unpleasant incident or a full restorative community conferences.

Great care has been taken to put in place ways in which the success of the project can be demonstrated. Mel is particularly clear about the importance of effective records:

Good record keeping is vital. First, for practical reasons – when you are working with a student you need to know what contracts he or she has outstanding at the moment. Second, you need good information to demonstrate to governors, students and staff what impact the system is having. And third, you need to be properly reflecting and looking at how things are going based on hard evidence so then you can work out how to improve, change and fine-tune. Now that we can demonstrate that this element is working and having good effects, we can move forward and look at other restorative methods we can build in.

Key Learning:

- Leading this initiative has been a key part of Mel’s role; without a senior teacher leading or driving the initiative current gains could be lost.

Future Plans

- As the pilot has been able to demonstrate successful outcomes from using conferencing with Years 7 and 8 Mel hopes that the system will now be successfully extended into the upper school.
- Within the lower school the aim is to build on what has been done to date by working with the teaching staff to see how restorative processes might be used within the classroom. This will probably be run as another mini pilot using two departments. The head of drama has already agreed.

- Training volunteer lower school students to be peer mediators and training all students in how to deal with incidents restoratively.
- Hold a presentation and discussion session for parents in addition to sending them a letter.
- Continue exploring ways of telling the stories and sharing the successes with the whole school community so that restorative practices begin to be embedded rather than remain as an idea the school is trying out.

Support Needs

- Access to training for both teaching and support staff.
- Maintaining and developing links with other schools, LEAs and individuals who are working in the field of restorative approaches so that practice is further enhanced by sharing ideas.

3.1.3 Catford Business and Enterprise College (Girls, 11- 18, school roll 940) (Telephone Interview, Cynthia Harding, Behaviour Support Co-ordinator)

Cynthia and her colleague Sue Wiseman in Stepping Up - a learning support unit for students at risk of exclusion – attended the borough's first training course on restorative conferencing in December 2002. Cynthia saw conferencing as an ideal tool to help her students learn to accept the consequences of their actions and make different choices. She approached the Deputy Head who was supportive and became the main source of referrals.

In the last year, 25 community conferences were conducted – almost all of these were either alternatives to exclusion, or for reintegration into the school after exclusion – and these are now built in to the school's behaviour management policy.

Several of the conferences held each year involve parents/carers. Sometimes it becomes apparent during a conference that there is a problem between sets of parents/carers, and the conference format has made it possible for them to apologise to each other, in front of their children. In doing so they have acted as very powerful role models.

Many other informal mini-conferences are also conducted within the Stepping Up unit.

Currently formal conferences are always facilitated by Cynthia and Sue. Other pastoral managers have expressed interest in being trained and may be in future. The school culture is supportive, and generally any staff who have participated in the conferences say it is time well spent.

However, at the moment the limited time available to the Cynthia and Sue to conduct conferences presents a real problem which limits the extent to which the process is used.

A peer mediation programme has been set up as part of the Genesis transition project for years 6 and 7. Cynthia believes there is scope for expanding this in the near future.

Key learning

- Operating this system with very limited resources places real constraints on the extent to which restorative approaches can be used, and a resource plan is therefore essential to support any strategic plan for developing their use.

Support needed

- The school would like to make use of external conference facilitators where appropriate to relieve time and resource constraints within school.
- There is a need for practitioners to reflect on individual cases and a practitioners' support network would be very valuable for this purpose.
- The school would also benefit from assistance in developing a strategy – reflecting on how far it has gone and what needs to be done.
- Further peer mediation training which is not tied to the transition work in which the school is involved.

3.2 Primary Schools

3.2.1 Athelney Primary School (mixed, 3 – 11, school roll 334)

(Interviews with Natasha Russell, SENCO; Dion James, Learning Mentor and Gill Wales, Deputy Head; observation of circle time with Year 3 facilitated by Restorative Approaches co-ordinator)

The Headteacher and SENCO attended the Borough's training in restorative conferencing in March 2004 and decided to implement the approach. Gill described the school's reasons: *We realised we needed to build on our input on emotional literacy with a common approach to conflict. We've always tried to do this but we needed a consistent approach. RJ fitted the bill, because it's a way for everyone to have an input.*

Initially the topic was raised at staff meetings and all staff were given copies of *Restoring the Balance*, and restorative chat cards (cards with the restorative questions on them) to enable them to start to apply the approaches. Gill wrote to the School Council to involve them and the school identified two key areas to apply intensive effort – playground policy, as most conflicts occur in the playground, and a particularly problematic Year 3 cohort who the school felt needed intensive support including facilitated circle time. The Restorative Approaches Co-ordinator was asked to assist with both of these areas, and she was also asked to provide training in the background to restorative approaches for all staff. Her work in the school to date has included:

- January 2005 - training session with teaching staff
- April 2005 – a whole day INSET on behaviour issues
- June 2005 – facilitating a meeting for support staff
- Ongoing from January 2005 - Facilitating circle time with Year 3 cohort in order to both increase their emotional literacy and coach staff on the use of circle time
- Ongoing from March 2005: Facilitating a working party developing a new Playground Policy.

Natasha has used the restorative conferencing process many times, including one occasion that involved parents and other members of the community as she described: *One of the parents suggested that we include a community warden, which seemed appropriate in that case, so we did and it was a unique event which had a lasting impact on those involved.* More often though, conferences are just amongst the children, with Natasha facilitating:

It can be very useful for things which involve groups of children – for instance when six children were involved in a fight I got them all together and we held a conference . The children were very forthcoming in saying what should happen, and some were quite hard on themselves, but by checking in with everyone they were able to come up with an agreement that everyone thought was fair.

The impact has been noticeable: *The school has been a lot calmer, and I have really noticed a difference in the Year 3 classes – they are much better now at saying what they are feeling* (Natasha).

For the future, the school is considering adding peer mediation to its portfolio but stresses that it needs to consolidate what's being done already, as Gill illustrates: *We are at the beginning of a process, laying the foundations, and we know it will take time. We would like to move forward and implement peer mediation, but we are not ready to do that at this point.* One challenge is to ensure continuity during the Autumn term when neither Natasha nor Dion, who have played a major part in the schools restorative work, will be in school.

Key learning:

- Circle time, when used regularly, can be effective to improve the functioning of a class as well as building students' skills of self-expression and empathy.
- Teachers need support when working with difficult cohorts both to build their own skills and those of the class.

Future Plans and Support Needs

- Assistance in developing a sustainable strategy for using restorative approaches.
- Continued support for playground policy development and capacity building in circle time.
- implementation of a peer mediation scheme.

3.2.2 Baring Primary School (mixed 3 – 11, school roll 231)

(Interviews with Viv Hammond, Learning Mentor and Diane Brewer, Headteacher)

In December 2002 Diane Brewer and Viv Hammond attended the borough's half-day introduction to restorative approaches by Marg Thorsborne. At the time, although the school did not have a particularly poor behaviour profile or a history of exclusions, there was concern about the number of fights going on in the playground. Restorative approaches seemed a good way to address this so the following academic year, in March 2004, both signed up for a two-day course on restorative conferencing, together with the senior midday meal supervisor.

Since then there have been a number of sessions with staff to develop the use of restorative approaches. In September 2004, the Restorative Approaches Co-ordinator ran a half-day INSET for all staff on restorative approaches. Viv ran a one-hour session in a staff meeting on the restorative chat technique. She has also introduced the technique to parents who participate in parenting classes.

The Senior Midday Meal Supervisor has been a key player in encouraging restorative approaches, since most conflicts arise during the midday meal break. If there is an issue at lunchtime, normal practice is for the children involved to sit down with one of the three trained staff to have a restorative discussion or mini-conference. Often this is informal and not documented, but in the case of serious incidents an agreement is typed up. The approach has also been applied in the nursery with good results: *The nursery children have outstripped expectations – they choose what they can do to make things better for each other.* (Diane).

The use of this approach by adults has complemented simultaneous initiatives aimed at building students' emotional literacy and communication skills: *The emotional literacy programmes under Healthy Schools have helped* (Diane). There has been a focus on collaborative play, providing free toys and workshops such as a skipping workshop, puzzle and chess clubs. Circle time is used in Years 5 and 6 with a focus on friendships and bullying. A group of Year 5 students have been trained as peer mediators, a new system which will be launched at an assembly in September. To make sure the system is respected and supported by adults, all midday meal staff have been given training which they are paid to attend. There are also plans to train groups of students as Playground Friends. These approaches work at different levels to improve students' ability to have effective relationships at school, and to work to resolve their own difficulties when they arise.

The school has also used restorative approaches to address conflicts which arise between staff and parents, and makes use of LAMP to provide an external mediation service.

Overall, positive effects have been noted, as Diane's comments show:

The children are calmer. They are more able to say what they have done wrong and more open about what happened, because they know they are not going to get into trouble. They are more able to listen to the other person; there is a lot of listening to the person who's been harmed. The process empowers children to understand emotions – theirs and others' – and this greatly helps them to develop communication skills.

In future the challenge is to increase use among staff. Some staff, while not actually against the process, do not see how they could use the process, and more training is needed to develop a consistent approach. Many situations in which a conference might be helpful do not go that way because the adults concerned are not ready for it. For the future, there are plans to continue to increase staff awareness and support, and to implement new restorative processes such as a Think Wall (restorative questions are put up on a wall in the playground as an aid to resolving conflict) and Think Sheets (questions are used to help students work out where things have gone wrong for them during lessons).

Key learning

- Focus on lunchtimes is important, and mealtime supervisors need to be involved.

Future support needed

- A lot of the practical support needed will come from existing local networks.
- Continued access to a service like LAMP's is needed for serious school/family issues.
- Continued access to high quality training is important for new and existing staff who have a key role to play.
- Support in developing practices among staff.

3.2.3 Forster Park Primary school (3-11, school roll 368) *(Interview with Alison Swann, Learning Mentor)*

Although two members of Forster Park school staff attended the borough's training in 2002, both have since left the school. However there is interest in developing restorative approaches as a way to deal with aggressive behaviour between students and sometimes towards adults. The school has made use of the booklet *Restoring the Balance*, ordering 20 copies for the school. They have also arranged training through LAMP for 20 students from years 5 and 6 as peer mediators and implemented a peer mediation system.

Alison has seen that restorative language alone can make a huge difference: *I have been dealing with a child whose behaviour is often very aggressive. When I ask him, 'What do you think should happen?' the wind is taken out of his sails. He thinks for a bit and then says, 'Well, I think we should both apologise to each other'.*

Although it is a recent initiative the peer mediation scheme has been a success. It has resulted in a large reduction in the number of students being sent in to see a teacher at lunchtimes; instead many cases are referred to the peer mediators. Alison commented that, *Initially the lunchtime staff were sceptical, but they can see it works and have come round to the idea.*

The way in which students were selected for the scheme – by nomination and vote, based on the question, “Who do you feel you could talk to about a problem?” has yielded some interesting choices including some students who had previously been in trouble. This has given these students a great opportunity to gain some constructive experience and see themselves differently. Some of their responses in the training evaluations show this: *'I enjoyed the course because it made me listen more'; 'I liked the body language and face expressions exercise because it helped me learn how to read people'; 'I found it really hard not to give advice'; 'the training was fun and I enjoyed myself and learnt a lot'.*

The mediators get regular support from Alison and have had a follow-up session from LAMP: *This is really important as they need the chance to reflect and learn. It is more difficult to find the time for regular meetings with Year 6 as they have SATS and other pressures. We will really start to see the benefits next year when we train new Year 5's and there is already a trained group of Year 6's.* (Alison)

As well as peer mediation there is a big focus in the school on emotional literacy and working together. Each class has circle time, currently every three weeks, and it is hoped this will rise to once a week as part of the new SEAL agenda (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning curriculum produced by the National Primary Strategy). Alison sees restorative approaches as potentially a useful tool for use in circle time.

Alison is working with the Acting Head Teacher, Jenny Chiverton, on changes to the behaviour policy and introducing more restorative practices to the school. They will be looking in particular at school values, circle time, peer mediation, restorative discussion and restorative conferences.

Future support needs

- New Peer Mediation training for Year 5 students (including follow-up day).
- Staff to attend Marg Thorsborne's next course.
- External input at an INSET to help staff understand the approach and involve them in updating the behaviour policy. The school would then take on training the lunchtime supervisors and anyone else needing training.

3.2.4 John Ball School (3-11, school roll 461) (Interview with Sue Riley, Learning Mentor, and with 3 students)

Sue Riley has been working for some time to introduce restorative practices in the school in order to reduce low level disruptive behaviour and bullying, and to prevent playtime arguments escalating and playing out in the classroom. The school is aiming to become a 'Listening School'.

A number of initiatives had already taken root when the Deputy Head Gill Hunt, together with Sue and a Teaching Assistant attended Marg Thorsborne's training course in March 2004. These initiatives included peer mediation training with Year 6 students, playground friends with Year 4 students and widespread use of circle time both on a regular basis as a 'check-in' and to resolve class issues.

Following Marg's training, Sue ran a training session for support staff including lunchtime supervisors. About a third of the support staff now use mini-conference and restorative discussion techniques when dealing with arguments and fights. Together with the peer mediation system - which is used daily at lunchtimes and deals with an average of two cases a day - this has made the school calmer at lunchtimes. The two approaches complement each other: the mealtime supervisors are able to concentrate their efforts where it is needed, and this has enhanced the interactions between children and adults. Mediators also perform a valuable role of walking the playground to help children who are lonely.

Sue and Gill have also worked with the Early Years staff, who now make use of a simplified form of restorative questions and report that the children respond well to them.

Formal restorative conferencing involving parents has been used rarely and there have been concerns around the meaning of a "contract" when adults are involved. However the process has been used on many occasions to work with conflicts between children and in one case between a child and a member of staff. The behaviour policy has been modified to say, *We aim to embed restorative agreements within our development plan.*

Informally restorative principles are used to deal with many issues which come to the attention of Sue, for example enabling children who work through a sequence of restorative questions together with a minimum of adult facilitation, reporting back to the adult who then concludes the process. There are plans to create a Thinking Wall in the playground which has the restorative questions on display.

Although there has been good progress, Sue believes there is further to go in fully engaging the teaching staff and in bringing governors and parents on board. Staff have attended a brief twilight session with the Restorative Approaches Co-ordinator but need a longer session including a role play so that they can experience the impact of the approach.

Support needed

- Continued access to training of a high standard.
- External input to provide a special INSET training for teaching staff, and to run sessions for parents and governors.
- Resources such as video or training materials to help convince people who cannot get to the training sessions.

3.2.5 St Bartholomew's CE Primary School (3-11, school roll 267) *(Telephone interview with Headteacher, Jill Bonner)*

St Bartholomew's saw restorative approaches as part of their work on emotional literacy. They requested an all-staff INSET day on restorative approaches and the Restorative Approaches Co-ordinator provided a whole-day session in January 2005. Jill was enthusiastic about this: *This was a brilliant day — staff were very upbeat. It was very important to have all the staff for a whole day.* Since then, a number of staff have started to use restorative discussions as Jill describes: *We have had some very useful experiences out of this already, with children apologising to each other.*

The school is implementing things gradually, in a low-key way. Every class uses circle time, and in the staff INSET day they practised techniques for using circle time restoratively. There is also a circle of friends scheme. Next year Jill plans to train fifteen peer mediators, using LAMP trainers: *This will be a very useful way to get people stopping and thinking before they act, and it fits very well with the new SEAL agenda.*

The work on emotional literacy is already paying off, Jill believes: *Children have been empowered to talk about bullying. There is one child we know has been bullying a number of others; groups of children are now saying it out loud. I put that down to circle time and the other ways in which we encourage students to describe their feelings.*

No large conferences have taken place as yet, though Jill thinks there have been some instances where it could have been used: *The problem is really that other things crowd it out — but we do realise that this is the way to go.*

Key Learning

- Giving time over to a whole school INSET is very valuable.
- Restorative approaches fit closely with other work on emotional literacy especially the new SEAL agenda.
- It is possible to start small and build in more approaches over time.

Section Four

Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Significant Observations

The schools' experiences shown here clearly demonstrate that while a lot can be achieved in a year, the process of change is lengthy and most benefits will be realised after a period of time. It is also clear that developing resources to implement restorative approaches is a major issue for schools especially in the development stage, and that they need support whilst building new, sustainable systems.

Schools that have used the services of the Restorative Approaches Co-ordinator and/or LAMP have been able to make a good start and some have reached a maintenance stage where only minimal external support, such as ongoing access to high quality training and practitioner support networks, is needed. Others still require further development support.

There are also a large number of schools in the borough which, although showing interest, have not yet begun to move significantly along the restorative path. The promotional role of the Restorative Approaches Partnership needs to continue in order to enable schools that are interested and ready to start restorative work.

Detailed recommendations for the role the RA Partnership can play in this are given overleaf. However, all these recommendations depend on sustainable funding for the RA Partnership. Current funding is based on short term grants, which makes it hard to give the sustained commitment and support which schools need to embed restorative approaches. For the initiative to have lasting effects longer term, mainstream funding needs to be found.

4.2 General Recommendations

- The role of the RA Partnership needs to be recognised as long-term. Mainstream funding is needed to support the Restorative Approaches Co-ordinator post, for training and for related services from the voluntary sector partner, LAMP. These resources need to be included in strategic plans such as the Children and Young People's Plan over the coming years.
- Address the existing insecurity around funding for the period post-April 2006.

4.3 Conclusions and Detailed Recommendations for the Restorative Approaches Partnership

4.3.1 Each of the school stories demonstrates a unique approach. There is no 'one size fits all' method for schools, although there are many common features. One implication of this is that each school needs to develop its own strategy based on its particular issues and resources, taking into account the experience of others.

Recommendation: Provide: a) consultancy service to help school identify the best way to proceed; and b) knowledge sharing – via networks, websites etc – to spread good practice adopted elsewhere .

4.3.2 A summary of the future support needs of the schools, based on those interviewed, follows:

Secondary schools

- External conference facilitators
- Network of practitioners-focused on the needs of secondary schools – for reflection on cases and skill development
- Support for strategy development
- Peer mediation training
- Regular access to high quality training for staff

Primary schools

- Support for strategy and policy development
- Peer mediation training
- External conferencing and mediation for parent/carer / school issues
- Regular access to training in conferencing and other restorative approaches for staff
- External support in providing INSET on restorative approaches
- Resources such as a video or training materials to help champions make the case for restorative approaches
- Support for circle time

Recommendation: Ensure that the Partnership is able to provide these services as required.

4.3.3 In primary schools, there is huge synergy with the SEAL agenda. Restorative approaches can be a key tool to support efforts in this area.

Recommendation: Provide specific guidance on how restorative approaches can support the SEAL agenda.

4.3.4 In many cases the success of the project relies on a member of staff driving the approach. Often this is someone in a non-teaching role.

Recommendation: Recognise that this role can be extremely challenging, provide both individual support and a support network for those playing a championing role as well as practitioners.

4.3.5 The high standard of conferencing training offered on a regular basis by the borough has been a major factor acknowledged by most of the schools interviewed.

Recommendation: Continue to provide such training regularly, and review the possibility of building the borough's capacity by developing home-grown trainers whilst retaining links with centres of expertise elsewhere.

4.3.6 INSET sessions for all staff, including support staff, to explore restorative approaches are a common feature within the schools that have developed restorative practices. In some cases support from outside has been highly valued and in others this has been handled in-house.

Recommendation: Continue to offer support for in-school staff training, whether by providing facilitators or by providing resources and training that enable staff to run their own sessions.

4.3.7 Peer mediation schemes are perceived as highly successful in terms of both building the capabilities of those trained and resolving low level conflicts, thus also freeing the time of adults for constructive engagement with students.

Recommendation: Continue to provide peer mediation training and development services while also reviewing the possibility of building schools' capacity by training and supporting trainers within the schools.

4.3.8 There is a potential danger that services provided within schools by the Restorative Approaches Co-ordinator or other providers are used without the school building sustainable systems to take work forward. There is a need to ensure that learning is sustained within the school once such support is withdrawn.

Recommendation: Consider a formal agreement process with schools to clarify commitments on both sides when services are provided within the school.

4.3.9 There is a wide variation between the schools interviewed in the extent to which data on restorative approaches is collected. In some cases this makes it difficult to assess or demonstrate the impact they are having.

Recommendation: Work with schools to help them to see the usefulness of data and provide guidance in setting up simple systems for data collection and reporting to demonstrate impact.