

What is a Restorative Conference?

A restorative conference is a meeting, or a series of meetings, with the aim of exploring feelings and solving difficulties between two or more people to address perceived harm caused as a result of a dispute or wrong doing. It can be used when conflict arises in the workplace, when people experience behaviour they find inappropriate and when relationships break down and individuals or teams are affected. It uses an informal approach similar to mediation.

Restorative conferences are led by facilitators who have been trained by Restorative Justice Council registered trainers and undertake regular case supervision from a case supervisor.

Facilitators will not take on sensitive and complex cases unless they have the skills, experience and knowledge required; they must also not act on any case with a conflict of interest. Facilitators follow the local safeguarding policy and procedures.

What principles inform this work?

There are six principles that facilitators adhere to in the course of their work:

Restoration – the primary aim is to repair relationships;

Voluntary participation – participation in a restorative conference is voluntary and based on informed choice; if the facilitator or their supervisor feels this is missing they will not accept the referral;

Neutrality – restorative conferences are fair and unbiased towards participants. Facilitators are drawn from across the organisation and at all levels;

Safety – processes and practice aim to ensure the safety of all participants and create a safe space for the expression of feelings and views about any harm that has been caused;

Accessibility – restorative conferences are non-discriminatory and available to all those affected by conflict or harm; and

Respect – restorative conferences are respectful to the dignity of all participants and those affected by harm.

What stages are involved in a restorative conference?

There are five stages involved in Leeds City Council's restorative conferences. These are:

Referral—a referral is made to the Workforce Development Team who will request the completion of a referral form and allocate a facilitator. The facilitator will contact the referrer to initiate the process within five working days of allocation;

Face to face/telephone meetings—the facilitator will speak to the parties involved separately to explain the process and prepare those involved to come together and participate in the conference. This involves establishing how the process works, and clarifying expectations for the meeting and agreement of conduct;

Preparation for conference—the facilitator will arrange the venue, prepare notes and paperwork for conference write up, seek supervision from an accredited peer and ensure risk and safety has been determined for a suitable approach:

Facilitate conference—all parties come together for a face to face meeting where the participants will be encouraged to actively participate, communicate respectfully with each other and identify their own solutions to the problems.

The facilitator will guide the participants through the process ensuring that the dialogue is focused with everyone being given the opportunity to actively participate.

In addition they ensure that emotional and physical needs are catered for, that participants have the time and space to reach agreements and that the conference is recorded;

Conference follow up—the conference is written up and agreed actions are shared by the facilitator, who checks that the participants have the capacity and ability to carry them out.

Where can I get more information?

The Restorative Justice Council [website](#) explores the wide range of situations that restorative practice can be applied to.