

## Restorative Practice

This summary is part of a series produced to support the implementation of the Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Well-being. They are intended to help schools make informed decisions when choosing interventions and approaches to improve and promote mental well-being. The interventions and approaches reviewed are not endorsed by Welsh Government or Public Health Wales.

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg / This document is available in Welsh

### Key messages:

- The research suggests Restorative Practice probably improves emotional or mental well-being in secondary aged learners. The evidence is not conclusive because there is limited evidence available.
- Restorative Practice aims to develop learner and teacher relationships through providing a structured communication approach that aims to resolve conflict and improve behaviour and well-being.
- Schools looking to change culture may consider using Restorative Practice, which is best delivered as a whole school approach.
- Having a consistent approach is key to the success of Restorative Practice. As such it is important that the whole teaching and support team are involved in the process.

### What is Restorative Practice?

Restorative Practice is an approach designed to promote emotional intelligence and positive relationships between individuals and their communities. The aim is to protect and promote mental well-being by improving behaviour, increasing empathy, and positive life skills.

The approach encourages everyone within the school community, including learners, teachers and support staff to be involved in making decisions that affect them. School staff are trained to use a range of tools and techniques to prevent and resolve conflict.

This may include use of action groups, discussion circles or conferences. The approach focuses on accountability, responsibility, mutual respect and inclusion. It can be a proactive approach to prevent harm and conflict, or repair harm if conflict has already occurred.

The approach originates from the Restorative Justice movement that emerged in North America in the 1970s. Restorative approaches in education have developed since the 1990's. Further background information about restorative approaches is available from the [International Institute of Restorative Practice website](#).

## What aspects of well-being does Restorative Practice intend to support?

Evidence suggests Restorative Practice supports different aspects of well-being including how individuals think, understand their feelings and those of others, and manage relationships. More information about mental well-being and the things that influence mental well-being can be found on the [Public Health Wales webpage](#).

## How does Restorative Practice influence a change in well-being?

The Restorative Approach aims to influence a positive change in well-being by supporting the whole school community to develop relationships, emotional literacy, conflict resolution, truth recognition, accountability and responsibility. Through developing these skills, the approach aims to improve behaviour, attendance, learning, teaching and increase empathy, happiness and positive life skills across the whole school community.

Theoretical models describe how a change in outcome might take place. Restorative practice is a practical application with theoretical underpinnings. These include a person-centred approach which places the individual at the centre of the conversation and ensures the individual is actively involved in decision-making. It is also a solution-focussed approach that supports individuals to consider how they can use their skills, strategies and ideas to do things differently.

## What are the implications for schools?

Schools should consider what needs they have in their school community for example improving relationships or addressing bullying behaviours. These may be identified within existing processes such as reviewing Schools Health Research Network (SHRN) data, whole school approach to emotional and mental well-being self-evaluation, knowledge of learner needs or school development plans.

When considering what intervention or approaches may help, it is important to recognise that any one stand-alone programme may not fully meet the school's identified needs.

Restorative Practice is an approach used in all aspects of school life. It is included within school policy and curriculum as well as playing a key role in the culture and ethos of the school community. This can be seen in the classroom, canteen, and after school activities.

A whole school approach is the best way to introduce Restorative Practice into the school setting. This involves making sure the whole teaching and support team are engaged with the process. Being consistent is also key because the Restorative Approach takes time to become embedded within the school community and to see the changes in emotional or mental well-being among those taking part. This means once your school starts the Restorative Practice journey, it should be embedded as a new way of working so the full benefit of the intervention can be identified across the whole school setting.

Things that might help to support the use of Restorative Practice in a school include; using school data to understand what the school needs are, senior leadership team support and a whole school commitment to using the approach.

If already using Restorative Approaches, or planning to, schools should think about how they can monitor and evaluate to understand the impact of Restorative Practice against identified emotional and mental well-being priorities of the school community.

## What do I need to know if I'm thinking of using Restorative Practice?

<b>Intended recipients</b>	It is a universal programme which means it is suitable for everyone. This includes learners and staff.
<b>Age range</b>	4 years – adult.
<b>Delivery method</b>	It is usually delivered as a whole school approach.
<b>Resource requirement</b>	<p><b>School requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivered by the school.</li> <li>• All staff should be engaged in the Restorative Approach.</li> </ul> <p><b>Training:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training for teachers is provided by external providers and can be delivered within the school setting or teachers can attend external study days.</li> <li>• Training costs vary from circa £175 per person for 2-day online training to £1800 for a 3-day staff conference for up to 12 delegates, or £2,600 for more than 12 delegates.</li> <li>• The Restorative Justice Council (RJC) hold a list of approved course and online learning resources. Within Wales, the 'Wales Restorative Approaches Partnership' is accredited by RJC.</li> </ul>
<b>Language</b>	Resources are available in English and Welsh language through the 'Wales Restorative Approaches Partnership' and 'Restorative Justice4 Schools'.

Note details are correct as of July 2023.  
 Further information is available from the following websites: [Restorative Justice Council](#), [Wales Restorative Approaches Partnership](#) and [Restorative Justice 4 Schools](#).

## What did we want to find out?

We wanted to find out whether Restorative Practice improved emotional or mental well-being of learners and staff in the school community. To do this we were looking for published academic research that measured changes to outcome measures related to emotional or mental well-being.

## What did we do?

We searched for academic research papers that looked at whether Restorative Practice changed emotional or mental well-being outcomes.

We reviewed papers to identify key information which was summarised and presented to an expert panel. The panel included a range of professionals with experience in Education, Health, Policy and Academia. The panel met and agreed recommendations for this summary based on our evidence identified from the search.

Full details of the evidence review and expert panel decisions are available within the technical report which can be provided upon request. Please email:

[hi-programme.support@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:hi-programme.support@wales.nhs.uk)

## What did we find?

We found nine academic research papers\* that looked at the use of Restorative Practice in schools. The well-being outcomes that showed positive change as a result of Restorative Practice approaches included; bullying; quality of life; well-being; social-emotional and behaviour functions; empowerment; positive relationships; connectedness; empathy; self-esteem and caring or helping behaviour.

We found mixed results for outcomes related to aggression; happiness; school engagement; sense of belonging; school climate and harmony.

The evidence suggests that differences in implementation of the approach within the unique context of each school environment is likely to impact some outcomes. One study suggested a negative effect on personal feelings of safety.

We concluded that Restorative Practice probably improves emotional or mental well-being in secondary aged learners or school staff, but the evidence is not conclusive. The evidence is only available for secondary aged learners and staff and is not conclusive because there is limited evidence available.

Overall, the evidence suggests Restorative Practice can bring about positive change to a wide range of emotional and mental well-being outcomes. The evidence suggests that it is best delivered as a whole school approach, which seeks to modify the whole school environment and ways of working and needs all members of the community to engage. It is also important to embed Restorative Practice in line with its core principles. It is suggested that the effect of using a restorative approach improves over time, as such the longer the approach is embedded the better the emotional or well-being outcomes in a school setting.

## What are the limitations of the evidence?

The evidence suggests that during the research some schools may not have followed the Restorative Approach process or not described in detail how well the approach was followed. This makes it difficult to know how much of an impact the approach had within those schools as we do not know exactly how the approach was implemented.

## How up to date is this evidence?

Evidence published up to Autumn 2022 was included in this review.

## Concluding Statement:

**Restorative Practice probably improves emotional or mental well-being outcomes. As such improvements may be seen in how individuals think, understand their feelings and those of others, and manage relationships.**

It is best embedded as a whole school approach. Schools who are using Restorative Practice or are considering using it should ensure that the approach is embedded and used consistently throughout the school environment.

Consideration should be given to monitoring and evaluation to understand the impact of using Restorative Practice against identified emotional and mental well-being priorities across the school setting.

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## \*References:

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### Restorative Practice



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