

PRESS RELEASE

To: Newsdesk

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CRIME WOUNDS ... JUSTICE HEALS

Do you want justice?

Do you wonder if justice can address harm?

Do you want to increase public confidence in the criminal justice system?

If you answer 'Yes' to any of these questions you will be interested in **Sacro Restorative Justice Services**.

Restorative Justice focuses on what needs to happen to address the harm caused by crime. It does this by enabling communication about the crime to take place safely between the person harmed (the victim) and the person responsible for the harm (the offender). The communication can be direct (face-to-face) or indirect (using a trained facilitator as a 'go-between').

There have been many developments in restorative justice since Sacro first piloted its Mediation and Reparation services in 1987. These services are now being relaunched on **11 October 2006** as **Sacro Restorative Justice Services**. The services, based in North & South Lanarkshire, Edinburgh & Midlothian, and Aberdeen, provide the Procurator Fiscal with a robust and effective alternative to prosecution in suitable cases.

The Procurator Fiscal refers approximately 800 cases per year to these services. Participation is voluntary. A consistent outcome over many years is the high success rate when both parties are willing to participate (81%). People who use these services have said that their needs have been met in a way that may not have been possible through the court process. The process avoids criminalising people, and yet ensures that justice is done, especially in the eyes of those directly affected. It gives those harmed the option of having a direct say in the outcome, allowing a result that is more appropriate to their needs. Also, the court time may be more efficiently used to deal with more serious crime.

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The advantages of restorative justice

For the person harmed, the advantages are:

- > To be able to ask questions and get answers
- > To say how they feel about what happened
- > To receive an apology and an offer of amends for the harm done
- > To feel safe again.

For the person responsible for the harm, the advantages are:

- > To understand how people have been affected by the crime
- > To take personal responsibility for the harm caused
- > To take steps to address the harm caused
- > To make positive changes so as not to repeat the crime.

“Restorative justice for me, reminds us of the ultimate purpose of the criminal justice system, to which all our initiatives and goals should be reaching. A system in which offenders are held accountable and given both the opportunity and support to reform; and a system in which the harm caused to victims and communities by crime is central, rather than our peripheral concern.”

*Baroness Patricia Scotland QC,
Minister of State for the criminal justice system and offender management.*

Sacro's Chief Executive, Susan Matheson said:

“Sacro believes that **Restorative Justice** has much to offer Scotland's criminal justice system both by repairing the harm caused by crime to individuals and communities and by reducing the risk of further offending. We are currently involved in piloting the use of Restorative Justice in crimes of serious violence and in providing information to demonstrate the effectiveness and potential contribution of **Restorative Justice** at all stages of the Criminal Justice System – including pre-sentence, pre-conviction and post-sentence.

The widespread provision of **Restorative Justice** can lead to better justice, give victims an active role, heal harm and increase public confidence in the justice processes within Scotland.”

ENDS

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