

PRESS RELEASE

To: Editors

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Success Rates Boost 10 Year Celebration of Restorative Justice

July 2007 marks the 10th anniversary of Sacro's Restorative Justice Service in the Edinburgh & Midlothian Council areas.

Since 1997, the Service has received over 2500 referrals from the Procurator Fiscal Service in Edinburgh. Last year, (2006-2007), where both victims and accused agreed to participate, 88% of cases involving shuttle dialogue* were successful. In cases where both victims and accused agreed to face-to-face meeting, the success rate was 100%.

Restorative Justice gives a voice to the victim, reduces re-offending** and increases confidence in the justice system. Sacro is unique in being the only provider of restorative justice services to the Criminal Justice System in Scotland within a Diversion from Prosecution context.

Sacro's Restorative Justice Service provides the Procurator Fiscal with an alternative to court prosecution in certain cases thereby freeing up court time and leaving greater resources to deal with serious crime and those who are a danger to the public.

The Service provides accused persons with the opportunity to make amends for their actions to the victim of their crime. This is achieved through the use of face-to-face meeting and shuttle dialogue. The facilitators who work on referrals include local volunteers recruited from the community and trained and supported by Sacro staff. Currently the Service has a pool of fourteen volunteers trained in restorative practice.

Persons responsible for crimes made amends to their victims in a variety of ways, including

- Apology and explanation
- Agreement on future behaviour
- Financial reparation
- A reparative task for the person harmed
- Work in the community
- A charitable donation
- Attending a specialist support agency

Quote from a victim of crime:

- “I think this is an excellent way to deal with minor offences. It must save court time. Restitution is preferable to fines or even community service”.

Quote from a person accused of crime:

- When asked ‘has your attitude changed toward the person you harmed since becoming involved with the restorative justice service? The answer was, yes, I realised what I had done and how it had affected them.”

The service is clearly an asset to the administration of justice in the Edinburgh and Midlothian areas.

The wealth of experience gained over the years through dealing with this number of referrals, has attracted the attention of Criminal Justice practitioners across Europe. Sacro’s Edinburgh & Midlothian Service has hosted fact-finding visits from Norway and Turkey as well as the Crown Office in London.

Celebrating ten years of operation is a considerable achievement in the life of a voluntary organisation. This has only been possible because of the enormous support received from of The City of Edinburgh Council and Midlothian Council, and the Procurators Fiscal.

Sacro also delivers Restorative Justice Services in Aberdeen and Motherwell.

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* Shuttle dialogue involves a facilitator acting as a go-between.

** Recent research reports 80% of offenders who took part in RJ conferences said it would lessen likelihood of re-offending. www.justice.gov.uk/publications/research190607.htm

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