



## Transforming lives through Restorative Justice

# Putting the Victims of Retail Crime first through restorative practice.

June 2022

For the attention of the APCC Business Crime Portfolio group

### Purpose

This short paper summarises the proposed project for using restorative practice to address conflict and harm experienced by the forgotten victims of retail crime.

### Evidence

The **Retail Crime Survey 2021** identifies concerning data indicating the reality for victims of retail crime.

- 455 Violent or abusive incidents a day.
- Only 40% rate the police response as fair or good.
- Prosecution rate of violence or abuse in retail crime is only 6%

The survey also indicates a breakdown in the confidence in current police activities;

*“A perceived lack of police response to low-level theft, the perception by some that shop theft is not criminal activity and even the lack of police response to crime of violence associated with theft (our survey shows crimes of abuse and violence are only prosecuted 6% of the time) might encourage criminals to turn to shop lifting as easy pickings. It has also led retailers not reporting crime, believing it is a waste of time as the evidence may not be sufficient by the time the police arrive.”*

Why me? believe the victims of retail crime deserve better. Whilst there is a welcome focus of police attention on retail crime offenders through diversionary schemes and offender programmes there is, however, little innovation to support retail victims to cope and recover from the impact of crime. Restorative Justice approaches have the potential to change this in addition to an impact upon future reoffending.

### Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice focuses on three central concepts—harm, accountability, and engagement (Howard Zehr, 1997). As crime is viewed as harm to individuals and communities rather than a violation of rules, Restorative Justice seeks to repair the harm by addressing the needs of those involved. Above all, **this consists of attending to the needs of victims and communities to ensure healing takes place**, but it also may consist of investigating and addressing the unmet needs of offenders that resulted in the criminal behaviour.

### A Project Approach

Why me? have proposed to the National Retail Crime Steering Group a groundbreaking 18 month project within one defined geographic location to utilise restorative approaches and resources to better understand and respond to the victims and potential victims of retail crime with a view to rolling out the model nationally. In the event more than 1 police area shows interest in the project Why me? will seek additional funding.

## **Who would be involved in the project and how would it be structured?**

Why me? have extensive experience setting up and running these types of projects and funding has been indicated to be available from The Home Office. Initially we will seek to identify a supportive Crime Commissioner (PCC) who will drive the project within their area. Senior strategic leadership is key to project success. We will assist to identify additional key senior leaders, including representatives from the retail sector (We suggest representation from NRCSG, National Business Crime Centre and local retail representation) to form a strategic steering group. In the event that sufficient PCCs indicate interest in participating in this project we will seek additional funding from the Home Office, as it will be more effective in proving the concept if the number of pilot areas are expanded.

At the Operational level Why me? will identify and work with the PCC-commissioned restorative service unit to build capacity and jointly be the conduit between the local police and retail sector.

The types of actions which will form part of the project delivery include

- All retail stakeholders, e.g. shop owners and managers in the geographic area to be contacted initially by local RJ services and offered support and participation in the project. This would lead to face to face meetings with individuals and groups using restorative conversations to examine past experiences and expectations. Where crimes are reported the restorative practitioner would contact retail victims to examine the harm caused and explore Restorative Justice opportunities either direct or indirect. Reflection discussions would also be part of the project to examine the views of retail victims regarding the police response.
- Using the above information the project would identify process improvements in dealing with victims of retail crime and develop a local implementation plan for delivery of these improvements.
- Restorative Interventions, direct or indirect, to be considered for all reported retail crimes. This would involve delivery of a Restorative Interventions by the local RJ service unit as part of the justice process e.g. Out of court disposal, prosecution or work alongside these justice outcomes. This recognises that for victims the timing of participation in a RJ process can occur at different times.
- The project would seek to increase the use of victim impact statements, especially for violent offences, where currently the court may be unaware of the harm caused to retail victims. The restorative discussions with retail victims will identify these opportunities.
- Opportunities for improved communications between police & retail sector would be identified through quarterly stakeholder workshops and ongoing direct feedback.
- Good case studies would be identified and steps taken to maximise publicity, including use of videos for national publication.

A set of shared Output and Outcome Indicators would be identified by the Strategic steering group to assist with project evaluation. The aim of the project would be to identify key activities to address the harm experienced by retail crime victims. These activities can then be cascaded nationally to maximise impact from project investment.

## **Evaluation**

It is our intention that discussion would take place with the National Business Crime Centre regarding the potential of setting up an independent evaluation model as part of the project. Why me? has experience of project evaluation and would assist regarding setting project goals and targets. Ideally a dynamic evaluation model where learning is fed into the ongoing project is preferred.

Prepared by

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