



Restorative Thinking Limited

‘Parenting without Conflict’



**HMP Risley**

Evaluation Report

January 2018

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## Executive Summary

Restorative Thinking Limited has been delivering 'Parenting without Conflict' in prison and community settings since 2013.

'Parenting without Conflict' has been awarded the Department of Health's CANparent Quality Mark. This is a universal parenting programme that draws strongly on restorative principles and skills and applies these to parenting strategies, with the aim of better understanding our children's needs and how we respond to the challenges our child/ren present.

The evidence base of 'Parenting without Conflict' to date has been generated by Restorative Thinking's internal evaluation tools (since 2013) and the external evaluation undertaken by The Brathay Trust (2017): <http://www.restorativethinking.co.uk/prisons/restorative-domestic-abuse-perpetrator-programme-external-evaluation/>

A key finding from programme delivery since 2013 is that a vast majority of participants think the programme material changes the way they think about the parent/child relationship.

### What we already know – Restorative Thinking

The evidence gathered via Restorative Thinking's evaluation tools (developed with the Department for Education, University of Cambridge and the Department of Health and Social Science, University of Cumbria) exposes a number of consistent themes, programme outcomes that apply to a majority of participants. The key messages are:

- A minimum of 80%\* of parents feel they understand their child's development after attending the classes.
- A minimum of 80%\* feel they understand their child's needs after taking part in the classes.
- A minimum of 80%\* feel they understand their child's behaviour following the classes.
- A consistent observation, recorded by RT programme facilitators at least once in every round of programme delivery since 2013 is that participants think 'Parenting without Conflict' should be accessible to all parents/carers, potentially via formal education (school, college) or when expecting a first child, so that the learning can inform parenting strategies from the beginning of the child/parent relationship.

\*These figures include all programme delivery since 2013, in both prison and community settings (Children's Centres, Schools, Probation Services).



## **What we already know – The Brathay Trust**

This evaluation tested outcomes for participants of Restorative Thinking's 'Parenting without Conflict' (PwC) and 'Relationships without Conflict' (RwC) programmes; the latter is a restorative domestic abuse perpetrator programme. 197 participants completed 'Parenting without Conflict' in Cumbria between April 2015 – October 2017. 24 interviews and 57 Brathay Trust surveys were completed by programme participants.

- Feedback from Probation (CRC), Children's Services, Youth Offending, staff from HMP Haverigg and Focus Families indicates good outcomes for clients on the Restorative Thinking Limited programmes.
- N=3 Probation workers placed value on the programme delivery and stated good outcomes for clients on case load.
- 55% of those surveyed from Restorative Thinking Limited (Parenting without Conflict) felt able to take control over their lives.
- 88% of those surveyed who attended Restorative Thinking Limited's Relationships without Conflict and/or Parenting without Conflict course reported changed behaviour.
- 78% of those who attended Restorative Thinking Limited's Relationships without Conflict &/or Parenting without Conflict programme reported improved life chances.
- Of the n=27 participants with partners, 85% of those surveyed on Restorative Thinking Limited's Relationships/Parenting course stated that the life chances of their partners had improved.
- Of the n=28 participants with children, 78% of those surveyed reported an increase in their children's life chances.
- Participants reported that the chances of their partners and children have increased. They attributed this to the ability to manage emotions, communicate more appropriately and understand the wider impact of their behaviour.
- N=2 Parents and n=1 Social worker reported that children feel more safe at home as there is a marked reduction to conflict. Parents attributed this to expressing emotions appropriately and learning restorative parenting skills.
- N=2 professionals and n=2 parents who attended the Parenting without Conflict programme report that children are able to engage in healthy communication. This is attributed to feeling safer within the family home as well as parents being more 'approachable'.
- Emergent findings indicate that n=2 children whose parents attended Restorative Thinking Limited's RWC & PWC programme are able to express their feelings within the home environment. Parents attribute this to improved empathic course facilitators who delivered material which supported them to develop better communication and parenting skills.
- 78% of those surveyed reported feelings of improved life chances for their children.



## **Context for this report**

In September – December 2017, Restorative Thinking Limited was asked by POPS to deliver 'Parenting without Conflict' with four separate groups at HMP Risley. In total, 22 participants completed the course and the associated evaluation tools and 2 facilitators provided written feedback. For this short project, we decided to focus on the testing the following programme outcomes for participants:

- 1) Evidence of change in thinking about the parent/carer role.
- 2) Evidence of change in behaviour (parenting strategies put into practice).
- 3) Evidence of positive outcomes for children whilst parent/carer is attending 'Parenting without Conflict'.

## **Key findings:**

- **All** programme completers reported that the programme material, in particular the theories presented in the course, changed the way they thought about the parent/child relationship.
- **Most** programme completers shared evidence of how the learning from the programme was beginning to feed into their relationship/s with their child/ren.
- **Some** completers reported positive outcomes for their child/ren whilst they were attending 'Parenting without Conflict'.

## **Other findings:**

- The group dynamic added to programme learning outcomes and individual development of participants.
- Emerging peer mentors; one participant attended **all four programmes**, initially as a participant and then to support colleagues through the programme.
- Majority of participants took opportunity to chat with facilitators in breaks, often asking for support in applying the learning to their own unique relationships with their child/ren and partner/spouse.
- Many participants reported the relevance of their learning to their parent/child relationship/s and also that the learning supported wider relationships.



# Background

## **Restorative Thinking Limited**

Restorative Thinking Limited is a Social Enterprise providing innovative restorative prevention and intervention programmes, training, implementation, consultation, supervision, wrap-around support and evaluation with Primary and Secondary Schools, Children's Centres, Youth Justice Services and Criminal Justice Services (Prisons, Probation Services) and Police and Crime Commissioners.

Restorative Thinking Limited (hereafter RT) has been awarded the RSQM (Restorative Service Quality Mark) and the TPQM (Training Provider Quality Mark) by the Restorative Justice Council.

Restorative Thinking Limited is partner of the Anti-Bullying Alliance and is supported by the Shackleton Foundation.

## **POPS**

POPS (Partners of Prisoners) was established in 1988 by family members experiencing the stigma and distress of supporting a relative through a custodial sentence. POPS provide support services at all stages of the criminal justice system, from the arrest of a loved one through to the first steps towards resettlement.

Based in Manchester, POPS deliver multiple projects across the North West, Yorkshire and Humberside, with Family Support Workers attached to a variety of prison, probation and youth offending initiatives as well as running prison visitor centres, all with the aim of empowering families through the provision of timely information and targeted support.



## **Project Rationale**

In 2016, NOMS published the intention to re-commission prison visitor centres and family services for new contracts to be in place for April 2017.

POPS contacted Restorative Thinking Limited in July 2016. Whilst delivering family support services to offenders and their families in a range of settings both in custody and in the community, POPS recognised an increasing need for interventions to support individuals to develop healthier, stronger relationships, in particular, how to communicate effectively without aggression or confrontation. POPS asked Restorative Thinking Limited to deliver 'Parenting without Conflict' at HMP Risley to support wider Family Support work at the prison.

## **'Parenting without Conflict'**

'Parenting without Conflict', written by Dr. Helen Flanagan and Lesley Parkinson, is a universal parenting programme, awarded the Department of Health's CANparent Quality Mark in 2014.

The programme meets the standards of an approved intervention programme in the criminal justice system, grounded on a coherent theoretical basis. 'Parenting without Conflict' targets specific needs and applies responsivity principles. The four sessions develop key life skills applied to parenting. The programme is structured to encourage reflection on learning and time is allowed between sessions for this to happen. 'Parenting without Conflict' draws on cognitive behavioural techniques, dialectical behaviour therapy, solution focused therapy and developmental psychology. The Programme appeals to all learning styles (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic) and uses appropriately trained staff and restorative practitioners to deliver four 2.5 hour sequential sessions to build participant engagement and consolidate learning and understanding.



## 'Parenting without Conflict' Programme Profile

'Parenting without Conflict' is a universal, intensive group-work programme for men and women in custody and community settings.

It uses parent/carer-child/ren relationships as a vehicle for developing the knowledge and skills to strengthen and improve parenting strategies, at the same time challenging attitudes and thinking, with the aim of contributing to desistance from crime.

The programme is delivered by experienced group programme facilitators who are also experienced restorative practitioners. The programme uses facilitator input, group discussions, break-out sessions for pair and small group challenges, videos, role play, fiction and recorded written activities to develop, strengthen and maintain relationships with children.

**Programme:** A four-week parenting programme, with time between each session for reflection and putting the learning into practice. Colourful resources for participants are provided. Further reading is signposted.

**Programme length:** Four 2.5 hour sessions, over four weeks.

### **Who is the programme for?**

Groups of 4-12 male or female prisoners aged 18 years or above.

### **Where is the programme delivered?**

In category A, B, C, D and resettlement prisons.

**Staff required:** Prison family support worker to co-ordinate referrals, timings and movement. This parenting programme is delivered by Restorative Thinking facilitators, or via a licensing agreement (prison group facilitators trained and supported to deliver).

**Methodology:** Uses facilitator input, group discussion, break-out sessions for pair and small group challenges, videos, role play, fiction and recorded written activities.

### **Qualifications offered:**

All participants completing the programme receive a 'Certificate of Achievement'. We are looking into attaching a formal qualification to this programme.

### **Delivery options:**

- Restorative Thinking facilitators deliver the programme in your establishment, supported by a prison Family Support Worker (to co-ordinate referrals, timings and movement to/from programme sessions).



- Restorative Thinking's 'Parenting without Conflict' is delivered in your establishment via a Licensing Agreement whereby prison group facilitators are trained and supported to deliver the programme, with ongoing wrap-around support with the RT team; Quality Assurance.

**Aims of the programme:**

- Develop and strengthen parent-child relationships
- Apply restorative principles and skills to parenting
- Challenge attitudes and thinking
- Communicating and staying calm
- Coping with difficult behaviour
- Understanding the different stages of a child's development
- Managing conflict
- The psychology behind behaviour and conflict
- Contribute to desistance process
- Realistic goal-setting
- Consolidate positive identity
- Improve health and wellbeing



## Group Work

Restorative Thinking programmes are delivered with groups of 4-12 participants. Whilst we may include elements of 1:1 work, the primary work takes place in a group. We believe that group work follows a powerful methodology with a specific theoretical framework and skill base that is fundamental to learning and the retention of learning.

Groups create an environment in which relationships are built very quickly and allow members to generate problem-solving skills alongside interpersonal, leadership, cross-cultural and follower skills.

Our brains are hard-wired for us to be social animals, to connect; group work not only provides this opportunity, but also promotes the utilisation of our pre-frontal cortex, the part of our brain that governs our higher level thinking skills.

Positive group experiences have been shown to contribute to learning, retention and success (Astin, 1997; Tinto, 1998; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2006).

Group sessions can:

- Break complex tasks into parts and steps
- Plan and manage time
- Refine understanding through discussion and explanation
- Give and receive feedback on performance
- Challenge and support assumptions
- Develop stronger communication skills
- Share diverse perspectives
- Pool knowledge and skills
- Develop new approaches
- Establish a shared identity with other group members
- Find effective peers to emulate

Restorative Thinking's experienced and effective group facilitators can facilitate a host of skills that are increasingly important not only in our interpersonal relationships as a parent but also as a partner/spouse/friend and in the professional world.



## Trauma Informed

All of Restorative Thinking's programmes are trauma-informed, both the programme content and way the programmes are delivered – by facilitators with an awareness of the issues related to trauma and the vulnerabilities of trauma survivors. We follow the Five Core Values of Trauma-Informed work, as follows:

1. **Safety:** ensuring programme participants feel physically and emotionally safe when they attend and take part in our programmes;
2. **Trustworthiness:** programme participants know that providers and practitioners will ensure that expectations are clear and consistent and that appropriate boundaries (especially interpersonal ones) are maintained;
3. **Choice:** preferences of participants in routine practices are prioritised in session 1 and revisited at the beginning of each session;
4. **Collaboration:** input from programme participants is actively considered in practices and decisions so that a collaborative relationship is encouraged between participants and facilitators;
5. **Empowerment:** programmes are developed and delivered to maximise participants' empowerment, recognising strengths and building skills that can be drawn on in custodial settings and will enable a successful transition from prison to the community.

'Parenting without Conflict' is grounded in restorative practice and social and emotional learning, towards improving emotional self-management and interaction with our child/ren and others. The learning appears to benefit participants from all socio-economic groups and we often witness renewed confidence and an improved ability to cope with traumatic experiences.



## **Programme ('Parenting without Conflict') Rationale in the criminal justice context**

47% of male prisoners and 50% of female prisoners ran away from home as a child; 27% of prisoners come from a childhood spent in care; 43% of prisoners have a family member convicted of a criminal offence (figures from Ministry of Justice, UK, 2012). RT's parenting course introduces information and practical skills to enable mums and dads in a prison setting to improve their relationship with their child/ren immediately, during family visits, phone calls, via letters and, importantly, to reconnect successfully with their child/ren on release from prison.

RT wants to interrupt the cycle that sees 65% of (male) children of offenders going to prison.

### **Farmer Review**

The Secretary of State commissioned Lord Farmer's Review to investigate how supporting men in prison in England and Wales to engage with their families can reduce reoffending and assist in addressing the intergenerational transmission of crime as part of the Government's urgently needed reform agenda. Lord Farmer published '*The Importance of Strengthening Prisoners' Family Ties to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime*' in 2017; here are some of the key findings:

- Relationships are fundamentally important if people are to change;
- Courses and approaches to develop and improve parenting and relational skills...would enhance establishments' existing good practice in family work and personal and social development (PSD);
- The emergence of a rehabilitation culture inside every prison...will not happen unless good relationships with families...are treated as a much higher priority in many jails;
- It is essential that family work should always be seen and referred to...as the third leg of the stool that brings stability and structure to prisoners' lives, particularly when they leave prison;



- Good family relationships are indispensable for delivering the Government's far-reaching plans across all the areas outlined in their white paper on Prison Safety and Reform, published in November 2016;
- The best family work I have seen in prisons has brought men face-to-face with their enduring responsibilities to the family left in the community, particularly their wives, partners and children, but also their parents, siblings and grandparents;
- To improve the use of evidence and data, the body that considers 'what works' to rehabilitate offenders should also act as a repository of information about effective family work.

### **Transforming Rehabilitation**

The Transforming Rehabilitation Programme is aimed at increasing the '*focus on rehabilitation and dealing with offenders' broader life management issues*'. Assisting offenders to develop parenting skills contributes to the emphasis on life management issues relating to family relationships, supports sustainable employment and desistance from crime. NOMS Commissioning Intentions 2014 specifically sets out its custodial intentions '*to ensure a safe, decent environment and rehabilitative culture*'. Restorative Thinking's parenting programme introduces effective ways of better understanding our children's needs and improving how we communicate with our child/ren whilst in custody; managing family conflict and developing healthy relationships.

A significant number of offenders in custody have experienced the care system and family breakdown. Some offenders may also be from families currently being supported through the 'Troubled Families' intervention programme. Graduates of the RT programme will return to the community with enhanced parenting and conflict resolution skills, and will be able to apply this within families, and in the best cases, will be able to support other family members and to pass on these newly acquired skills to wider family members.

Restorative Thinking is keen to build on Lord Farmer's key findings and the evidence base from The Brathay Trust evaluation, April 2017 (see below), to further test the impact and outcomes of the 'Parenting without Conflict' programme in a custodial setting.

Evidence suggests that maintaining family ties within prison reduces an offenders' chance of reoffending by 39%. 'Parenting without Conflict' tackles the sensitive issues of families and parenting in a safe and constructive way, to encourage family ties and contribute towards the rehabilitation agenda.



# Implementation and Delivery

## Assessment and Evaluation Design

Reflecting on the findings of Restorative Thinking's internal evaluations since 2013 and The Brathay Trust external evaluation of 2017, Restorative Thinking adopted a mixed methods approach to strengthen the qualitative evidence base of 'Parenting without Conflict' through the evaluation of the HMP Risley project, with a specific focus on capturing the impact of the programme (content and delivery) with male offenders in a custodial setting, in particular any evidence of improved outcomes for children. In addition to a range of paper-based evaluation tools, informal interviews with service users and observations of group delivery feed into this report. This project ran from September – November 2017, too short a time scale to evaluate the impact of the programme on recidivism, and so our focus is on the mechanisms of change and the resultant impact on behaviour change. We were interested in particular in finding out how far engagement with 'Parenting without Conflict' facilitates a change in thinking and behaviour with regard primarily to the parent/carer role and how far engagement with the programme has an impact on children.

Considering restorative practice as an emerging social science, RT sought to focus particularly on the human elements of the programme outcomes. We analysed participant understanding of the course material, the extent to which any learning was applied to self and/or the parenting role, evidence of impact on children. We gave each participant the opportunity to read (and agree/disagree with, comment on) Restorative Thinking's end of programme reports (written for each individual by the RT facilitators); this included the opportunity for participants to comment on their own learning and to identify any strengths and further learning needs and/or support.

We used the **Family Learning in Prisons Outcomes Framework** to gather evidence of impact, using the following categories:

**HEALTH & WELLBEING** Physical health; Improved physical health; Improved diet; Mental health; Improved mental health; Improved mental wellbeing; Increased involvement in positive activities; Reduced anxiety and stress.

**FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS** Improved family relationships; Improved relationship with children; Improved communication with partner/adult family members.



**OTHER SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS** Improved relationship with other offenders; Improved staff/prisoner relationships; Positive relationships with non-prison staff.

**LEARNING** Increased motivation and confidence to learn new skills; Moving on to further learning; New skills gained.

**EMPLOYABILITY** Increased literacy skills; Increased maths skills; Gaining work related skills.

**PERSONAL PROGRESSION** Increased self-esteem; Increased communication skills; Increased confidence.

We added one further category, to help us understand any direct and immediate impact on children whilst their parent/carer attends 'Parenting without Conflict':

**IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN** Increased communication; Improved quality of communication; Achievement and attainment.



## Assessment and Evaluation Framework

Restorative Thinking Limited has worked with the University of Cambridge and the University of Cumbria to develop a suite of assessment and evaluation tools. Details of the final assessment and evaluation instruments that it was agreed would be used and shared with Restorative Thinking Limited to inform this evaluation report are shown in the table below:

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Instrument</b>
Before the programme begins	<p><b>Referral Form</b></p> <p><b>Pre-programme self-assessment form</b> Completed by participants prior to session 1.</p>
During the programme	<p><b>Attendance Register</b></p> <p><b>Participant Progress Record</b> Session by session rating by <b>participants</b> on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• level of engagement</li> <li>• level of understanding</li> <li>• ability to apply to self</li> </ul> <p>Space for comments for each session.</p>
During the programme	<p><b>Facilitator Progress Record</b> Session by session assessment of participant progress by <b>facilitators</b> on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• individual participant progress</li> <li>• individual participant needs</li> <li>• individual participant strengths</li> </ul> <p><b>Facilitators meet after each session to reassess each participant's strengths and needs and then tailor the following session to encourage individual progress.</b></p>
Upon completion of the programme	<p><b>Post-programme self-assessment form</b> Completed by participants at the end of session 4.</p> <p><b>Feedback Form for Participants</b> Participant evaluation of the programme and self-assessment.</p> <p><b>Feedback Form for Facilitators</b> Facilitator evaluation of the programme.</p> <p><b>Participant Report</b> Written by facilitators prior to session 4, shared with each participant during session 4; opportunity for participants to add their own comments and sign off.</p>



## **Assessment and Referral Processes**

'Parenting without Conflict' is a universal programme, available to all parents (both mothers and fathers). The programme has been delivered in custodial settings with male groups and in the community with mixed groups (male and female).

Restorative Thinking's parenting programme sets out the criteria for participants to be at any point of the cycle of change, to support them moving on with their lives. The capacity to change is a balance of motivation and ability, therefore the Restorative Thinking programme should be delivered at a point of sentence when external factors are such that the participant is stable and their emotional health and well-being is conducive to positive engagement. Participants should only be accepted onto the programme if there is no identified risk to the public or potential victims, via the exposure to such material or activities.

Responsibility-taking is not a pre-programme requirement; the programme has deliberately been designed not to exclude those in denial of their offending. It is recognised that often these are the individuals that struggle the most to reduce their own risk of harm.

The standard referral route for 'Parenting without Conflict' begins with a paper assessment by the Offender Supervisor, followed by an interview with the prospective participant to assess suitability for the programme. Referral criteria are detailed here:

### **Criteria:**

- The programme is suitable for men and women.
- Most offences are suitable for the Restorative Thinking parenting programme.
- It can be sequenced with other interventions.
- It can be used for DV cases; however, it would need to be sequenced with another intervention e.g. BBR in order to address the risk of serious harm.

For this project, POPS managed referrals from the offender population engaged with the wider family services provided at HMP Risley by the POPS team. Restorative Thinking provided a leaflet (Appendix A) to help POPS to raise awareness of the parenting programme, with details of the course content and how to apply to join the programme. Consequently, programme participants arrived at session 1 of 'Parenting without Conflict' expecting to engage in a positive way with the programme material and group dynamic and most participants had specific learning aims relating to their own current situation/s as fathers/step-fathers and partners/spouse.



## **Overview of programmes delivered**

<b>Round</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Facilitators</b>	<b>Number of participants starting the course</b>	<b>Number of participants completing the course</b>
1	Thursdays, October 2017	Mrs Lesley Parkinson Mrs Michelle Morgan	6	6
2	Thursdays, October 2017	Mrs Lesley Parkinson Mrs Michelle Morgan	9	7
3	Thursdays, November 2017	Mrs Lesley Parkinson Mrs Michelle Morgan	4	4
4	Thursdays, November and December 2017	Mrs Lesley Parkinson	5	5

Attendance and retention was strong and consistent, with just two starters unable to complete; one found some of the content too emotive and a second missed two sessions due to scheduled appointments and could not therefore complete.



# Programme Delivery

## Participant Progress at HMP Risley, September-December 2017

We used the **Family Learning in Prisons Outcomes Framework** to gather evidence of programme impact, with a focus on qualitative outcomes, to use alongside RT’s earlier internal evaluations of this programme and the mainly quantitative outcomes captured by The Brathay Trust external evaluation. We have drawn on the participant pre-and post-assessment forms, participant progress records, facilitator progress records and end of programme feedback forms for both participants and facilitators and the end of programme individual reports, programme observations and interviews with facilitators to capture the evidence below.

In total, 22 participants completed the course and the associated evaluation tools and 2 facilitators provided written feedback.

In the tables below, participant comments are coloured yellow and are in italics; facilitator comments are coloured green.

Health and Wellbeing
He has a wonderful sense of humour and this is something the whole group enjoyed!
<i>“...the session was fun.”</i>
He also records feeling more confident at the end of the course.
His happy and open attitude has helped the group to bond and contributed towards a great learning environment.
<i>“We need to talk to them (children) about their feelings for good mental health.”</i>
He demonstrated awareness of the importance of developing emotional literacy and said, “...we need to talk to them about their feelings for good mental health.



## Family Relationships

*"Understanding a wider range of options to help with parenting."*

*"Made me realise that to make my boys happy is not just about saying yes all the time. I need to show them right from wrong."*

*"My son is 11 years old and even now this course is helping me understand a lot about his everyday needs and requirements."*

*"Learning about the different sections of the brain helped me understand how my child might be feeling at a particular time."*

*"I really enjoyed the course and I now have greater knowledge of how to be a better parent to my children in the future. I have gained a vast amount of parenting skills and cannot wait to develop them with my children."*

He has been able to give solid examples of how the course material relates to his own situation as a parent and has reported to the group some success in trying out some of the new strategies. He told the group in session 2 how he has used questioning around thoughts and feelings with his children and that he had a good response.

*"I will come out of this feeling more confident about parenting in a productive manner."*

*"I feel I'm a better parent to my kids after doing the course."*

*"I've gained a better understanding of my children's behaviour."*

*"I realise that being there for my kids is more important than anything."*

*"The course has helped me to connect with my kids and that it is never too late to reconnect with them. And to be more supportive to my children's mother."*



## Other Social Relationships

He identifies a new skill learnt through the programme as being “more relaxed and to think first.”

He has helped other members of the group realise that they can understand the course material and apply it to themselves.

He was responsive to suggestions from other members of the group about how to engage his children more readily during a visit.

He was really keen to share and answer questions and relate the theory to his own experience of being a parent and the way in which he was parented. His input really helped other group members to engage with the material.

He was able to identify that talking about ‘need’ instead of ‘want’ might have a more positive outcome for all involved.

He has a wonderful sense of humour and this is something the whole group enjoyed!

## Learning

He notes that he is “not always right”, that “change is good” and that as a parent we should “ask ‘what’ instead of ‘why’!”

He had done some reading prior to the session and had also supported x in reading the course material.

*“I want my boys to be able to learn and I’ll show them by learning myself.”*

*“The course was very informative for me. At first I thought I will just be here to tick a box and get through it but the more I listened the more I started to realise I wasn’t always the best parent I could be! To be a good role model not letting them grow up thinking they can do what they want and there is no consequences!”*

He rightly identified the need to “find out the facts” before judging children.



*"I have really enjoyed taking part, met new friends and others facing the same problems I will be experiencing on release."*

He correctly completed the left/right brain sorting exercise, demonstrating understanding of the brain theory aspect of the course.

In his end of programme evaluation form, he writes that he has learnt how to deal with child tantrums, how to communicate better with his children and how to be the best parent he can. He also feels he has learnt a new skill – emotional literacy.

Many participants use their weekly progress records to record their learning in relation to the course material, giving specific examples of how they have been able to either think further about the programme input and/or put this to use.

*"It's showed me that there is always a reason for my child's behaviour and this is a form of communication and as a parent I'm not making a mess of it and there is always room for improvement."*

## Employability

*"Respect others and use your manners."*

*"The techniques and programme have helped me immensely and I can't wait to put them into action."*

He is always well-prepared, attentive, keen to learn and willing to contribute his own knowledge and experience.

He identified 'honesty' as a quality he values.

He has brought a great deal of humour to the group. He gets involved in all he is asked to do.

He intelligently questioned the theory and challenged the content at times; this demonstrated a deep level of thinking and a need to thoroughly understand the content and not just agree with it.

He had clearly remembered a substantial amount from a childcare qualification he completed at school.

He has a clear intellect and a confidence to share his knowledge and understanding with others.



## Personal Progression

*"Feel it (the course) could be beneficial to me."*

He has identified (one of) his own key learning points as "tips/experiences from others."

He refers to the workbook and bookmark as "good tools which I will refer to in the future."

He has also been using the taught technique to remember the brain theory relating to controlling his own frustrations over the course of the week.

*"I feel this course has been very enlightening to me, and the things I have learnt I look forward to being able to put into practice."*

*"I have enjoyed the course and overall thought everything went well. But I particularly enjoyed the windows of parenting and the brain theory and development of the brain and learning ways to be a better parent."*

*"I'm feeling happy about doing the course; it's going to help me to start seeing my son."*

He has written a brilliant poem about the course which demonstrates excellent comprehension of the whole course and a real talent as a poet (Appendix B).

*"...enjoyed a brew and learned things too."*

He moved from feeling 'extremely dissatisfied' with his relationship with his children to 'somewhat satisfied', indicating that he has found the course material useful.

*"I feel that each session went well and I learned more each session."*

*"It's never too late to connect with my kids."*



## Improved outcomes for child/ten

One participant was party to a Child Protection Plan and faced the prospect of his children going into care imminently. He was able to use his attendance and engagement on the programme as evidence of his commitment to addressing his parenting strategies whilst in custody. He often spoke with facilitators in break times to talk through how he was using some of the learnt strategies from 'Parenting without Conflict' to manage his own emotions and communicate with Social Services.

One participant decided to contact his children following a long period of no contact whilst engaging on the programme.

One participant started to change the way he communicated with his child during visiting time, starting to cuddle and play more.

Participants used the group dynamic to share the joys of parenting with each other, and this helped individuals to focus on how to maintain ties with their children whilst in custody.

Participants shared that they had started writing letters and sending drawings to their child/ren whilst on the course, to strengthen communication ties.

POPS Family Workers reported observing improved parent/child relationships during family visits for participants of 'Parenting without Conflict'.

He was responsive to suggestions from other members of the group about how to engage his children more readily during a visit.

He told the group in session 2 how he has used questioning around thoughts and feelings with his children and that he had a good response.

## Further support identified by participants on their final report:

*"I want someone to help me talk with my sons so they can get their feelings out about how they feel about me being gone out of their lives for 4 years – don't want them thinking I have abandoned them."*

*"Tips on reconnecting with my partner on release and my other family members, giving them the "Truth" about what happened."*

*"I would like to know where the parenting books are in the library. I would like to be able to have a review of this course in a couple of years to see if it works for me."*



## **What can we learn from this evidence?**

### **Evidence of change in thinking about the parent/carer role:**

The Family Learning in Prisons Outcomes Framework above provides examples of how engaging with the programme has introduced to participants fresh ways of thinking about the parent/child relationship. Participants specifically highlight new knowledge about setting boundaries with children, brain development, better understanding of children's needs, the importance of strong connections. In addition, participants talk about more general improvements in 'parenting skills' and 'being a better parent'.

### **Evidence of change in behaviour (parenting strategies put into practice):**

The Family Learning in Prisons Outcomes Framework above provides examples to show that participants actively and visibly begin to change their behaviour as a parent whilst participating on the course: asking 'what' instead of 'why'; being mindful of being a positive role model, for example taking up this course as an example of the importance of continuous learning. Facilitators reported that prior to the sessions starting and during breaks, they were regularly approached by participants to discuss individual scenarios, both asking advice as to how best to apply the material to a personal situation and asking for further input as new strategies were put to the test. There is also evidence to show how the group environment and the mutual support this generated led to participants having the confidence to try out some of the new learning and to develop their parenting role. In the best case scenario, engaging with the programme led one father to reconnect with his child following a period of disconnection.

### **Evidence of positive outcomes for children whilst parent/carer is attending 'Parenting without Conflict':**

- Children having contact from their father following a long period of no contact.
- Increased affection from father during prison visits (cuddles, play).
- Children receiving letters and drawings from their dads.
- Dad role modelling learning (through this course).
- Dad talking/asking about thoughts and feelings.



## **Recommendations for future delivery**

### **Restorative Thinking Limited**

- Aim to deliver 'Parenting without Conflict' as part of a longer, wider (multi-venue) project so that programme outcomes can be monitored at set points post-programme completion, to strengthen the data attached to the programme and to rigorously test the contribution engaging with the programme makes to recidivism.
- Identify ways in future delivery to continue to monitor the impact of the programme on outcomes for children.

### **POPS**

- Provide RT with a copy of anonymised referral forms in relation to the Restorative Thinking programme to support an understanding of participant profiles.
- With permissions in place, track programme graduates to support a greater understanding of how far engagement with 'Parenting without Conflict' meets the intended outcomes and contributes towards recidivism.



# Appendix A



## Restorative Parenting

*"I've learnt to sit my son by me and to explain wrong from right." (Parent, Salford)*

*"I learnt patience and listening and taking my child's needs on board." (Parent, Bristol)*



**Do you wish to know more about your child/ren's development and their needs?**

**Would you like to understand how to cope better with challenging behaviour?**

**Could you benefit from learning more about communicating and staying calm?**

If the answer is 'yes' to any of the above, then this course is for you!

*Restorative Parenting* has been awarded the Department of Health's CANparent quality mark. Delivery dates are:

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Time: **9.00-11.30am** at (room/venue)

If you are able to attend all four sessions, please contact (name, contact details)





## Appendix B

I have children,  
do you have children as well  
when you really think about your kids  
what can you tell

Is it biological  
are they hungry or cold  
you can't always tell  
if truth be told

Parents never stop learning  
no matter how old  
they get, never forget  
you can look oh so closer  
when your child's upset

do they feel safe and protected  
is that a reason for the cry  
has their integrity been compromised  
are they embarrassed is it the pride  
no matter what it is, don't say 'why?'  
how would you react if you felt your  
parents weren't on side

ask them how they feel  
what's going through their head  
situations can be avoided  
if they are talked about or said

set up some fair boundaries  
show love but please don't smother  
nobody's a perfect dad  
nobody's a perfect mother

what is perfect?

there is a parenting course  
ran by two lovely women  
get onto the course and you'll be  
winning  
yes, you'll be glad, if just for a  
biscuit and a brew  
or to get out of your pad

(by Chris)



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