



RESTORATIVE  
CLEVELAND

*Working together, repairing harm*

### **Case Study 3 – Criminal Damage**

Kindly provided by The Children's Society/Hartlepool Youth offending

The Children's Society, working in partnership with the Preventions Service and the Youth Offending Service, worked together to undertake restorative justice as part of the boys Triage Programme. The two boys both attend the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in Hartlepool and had damaged the plastic sheeting of a polytunnel, which had been recently been purchased for young people and staff to help grow plants.

The restorative justice process was used to enable the two boys to think about their behaviour, and make a positive shift to help heal the harm caused between the victim and themselves.

**Developing a Restorative Justice Child-Focused Approach** - A victim awareness session was initially carried out in a safe and comfortable environment to allow the best possible outcome for the victim and the young people. The intervention was undertaken at the PRU - a context which provided an environment that helped enable the two boys to open up, feel relaxed and be themselves.

The young people were able to express their own views without feeling they were getting into trouble for doing so. Issues surrounding confidentiality, safeguarding and consent were explored.

The restorative justice workers began to work with the two young people by opening up dialogue to establish and develop a relationship, which was based on trust and rapport. The two boys chose to participate in the dialogue constructed, at their own pace. Child-focused techniques included open-ended questions which the boys were happy to discuss in detail.

As the relationship developed, more challenging questions were broached about their offending behaviour. The boys were given quality time and a safe space to think and reflect on their behaviour. As a result both boys started to reflect and take responsibility for their actions.

**The Victim Awareness Session, Indirect Mediation and Apology** - The two boys then moved forward and wanted to make amends for the harm caused. They did this by participating in a restorative process and acknowledging that they had damaged the polytunnel for other young people.

The boys engaged well in the restorative justice process. They talked at length about the offence. The boys explained in their own words what had happened and decided of their own accord to write an apology for the Head Teacher.

The boys then decided that they also wanted to apologise and meet face to face with the Head Teacher in direct mediation.

**Direct Mediation** - The boys chose to meet the Head Teacher and apologised for their actions.

The boys explained to the Head Teacher that they “felt sad and horrible about what had happened”. They stated that the staff “must have been upset about what they did”. The boys said to the Head Teacher that staff and young people “were going to put flowers in the polytunnel” and that they “thought it had been about three and a half thousand pounds to buy”.

The boys explained to the Head Teacher how they “had been locked up”. One of the boys said he “did not like going to court and being watched on camera”. The other boy said how “it had been horrible”. The boys went on to tell the Head Teacher that they “had spoilt the polytunnel for other people.” The boys said that they “needed to think before acting.” The boys said to the Head Teacher that they “were sorry for what had happened” and that they “regretted it.”

***The Head Teacher accepted these apologies. He was pleased with the responses and the apology letters that he received from the boys. The Head Teacher explained to the boys that he would like to keep the apology letters. He was going to put them on wall and frame them.***

***The Head Teacher felt that the boys had been given time to reflect and had been genuine in their reply.***

**Reparation activities** - The boys went on to carry out direct reparation in the PRU working in conjunction with YOS Restorative Reparation Officers. The Head Teacher was satisfied with the outcome in that the young people had helped to repair the harm caused by picking up litter and helping to make the school look tidy.

Both boys were praised by the restorative justice workers. They were given the opportunity and autonomy to make things right and felt good about being able to do the right thing.

The restorative process was a positive and empowering experience for all involved. As a result relationships in school were starting to heal and the young people explained that they were unlikely to commit a similar offence again.