



Victim Support Consultation Report

Overview

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) seek views of Cleveland residents, partners and stakeholders to better understand the type of support people would expect if they were a victim of crime or anti-social behaviour (ASB). This consultation explored whether individuals had previously accessed the Victim Care and Advice Service (VCAS), how they found the support provided, and what additional help they felt would have been beneficial. For those who had not accessed VCAS, the consultation asked what support they would seek if they became a victim.

Feedback gathered through this engagement has helped build a clearer picture of the guidance and assistance that matter most to communities across Cleveland. These insights play an important role in shaping future victim support services and ensuring they are responsive to the needs and expectations of local residents.

In addition, the consultation sought feedback on Restorative Justice (RJ).

Consultation Methodology

During the seven-week consultation period (18th February to 10th April 2026), the public consultation used a range of engagement mechanisms, including an online survey and face-to-face engagement including focus groups as detailed below.

Public Online Survey

The Victim Support Survey was a detailed online survey with up to 16 questions. The survey explored whether respondents had been victimised in the past year, what support they accessed, and how likely they would be to seek help beyond friends or family in the future. Depending on their answers, participants were asked who they would approach for support, why they might not seek help, and what services they would want victim-support organisations to provide.

The consultation also assessed awareness of the VCAS service and how people had heard about it. The final section focused on Restorative Justice, including past involvement, preferred approaches, perceived suitability for different types of offences, and any offences they felt should never be eligible.

Open-text questions allowed respondents to explain their reasoning and suggest additional support or improvements, providing richer insight into public expectations and concerns.

An online survey was shared via the below methods. In total, 225 responses were received.

The survey was promoted as follows:

- Via the OPCC's social media channels, Facebook and LinkedIn
- Sent via email to:
 - Elected members and MPs
 - Voluntary Development Agencies
- Partner organisations, stakeholders and commissioned services
- Via Cleveland Connected

Face-to-face Engagement

During the consultation period, face-to-face engagement stalls were set up in community locations to mirror the online survey. Residents were offered the option to complete the survey digitally or using printed copies, which OPCC staff later transferred into the online system.

Over the consultation period, stalls were in hosted in six locations across the Cleveland area, gathering the views of 72 residents.

Stalls took place at the below locations:

- Wednesday 18th February – Hill Street Shopping Centre, Middlesbrough
- Friday 27th February – Asda Supermarket, Thornaby, Stockton
- Friday 6th March- Sainsburys, Hart, Hartlepool
- Friday 6th March- Creative Minds Iftar Event, Middlesbrough
- Wednesday 11th March – Middleton Grange Shopping Centre, Hartlepool
- Friday 27th March – Teesside Park, Stockton
- Monday 31st March – Morrisons Supermarket, Redcar

Focus Groups

OPCC staff facilitated focus groups using short, targeted questions designed within allocated time to gather meaningful feedback. Recognising that some members of the public may have limited time or feel hesitant about completing the full survey whilst on engagement stalls, the in-person consultation provided an accessible

alternative. This approach supported the collection of more quantitative data by using a condensed version of the online survey, while also enabling participants to share their views collectively as a group. In addition, we wanted to ensure we reached more residents to gather views from broader and more diverse communities.

The specific questions:

- **Have you been a victim crime/anti-social behaviour in the past 12 months?**
- **If not, would you seek support if you were a victim of crime/ASB?**
- **Have you heard of Victim Care Advice Service (VCAS) and do you know what support they offer?**
- **Is there anything additional a victim support service should offer?**
- **Are you aware of Restorative Justice?**
- **Would you consider Restorative Justice approach and why?**

In addition, the OPCC staff spoke up to 32 residents in the focus groups below:

- Tuesday 18th March- Age UK- Skelton, Redcar
- Wednesday 25th March- Umbrella Hugs- Billingham, Stockton
- Wednesday 1st April- Deaf Empowering Network- Middlesbrough
- Monday 31st March- Community Stepping Stones, Mens and Motor Group- Redcar

Consultation Results

A total of 329 responses were received during the consultation period with the public.

This included 104 participants in face-to-face (engagement stalls and focus groups) sessions and 225 respondents to the online survey.

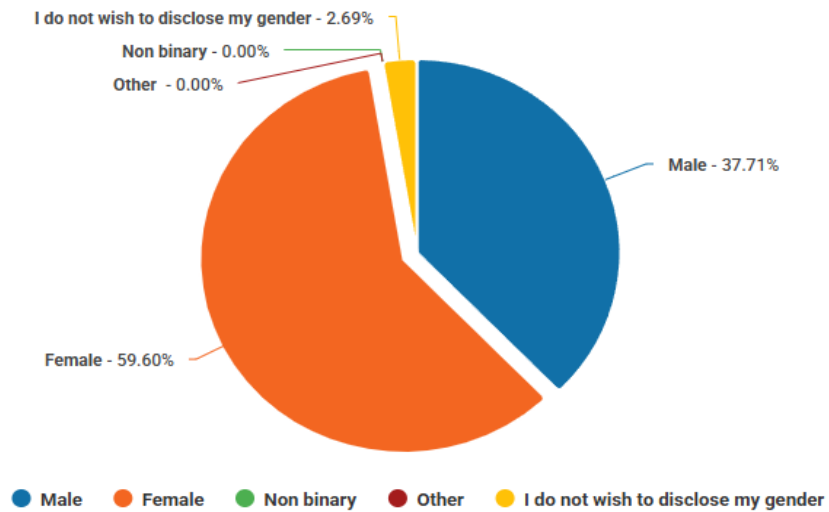
Consultation Demographics

The online survey also gathered additional demographic information, including gender, age, and race. As all demographic questions were optional, some respondents chose not to provide this information and skipped these questions.

Among the 297 respondents, over half of the respondents identified as female (59.60%), while 2.69% preferred not to disclose their gender, as shown in the graph

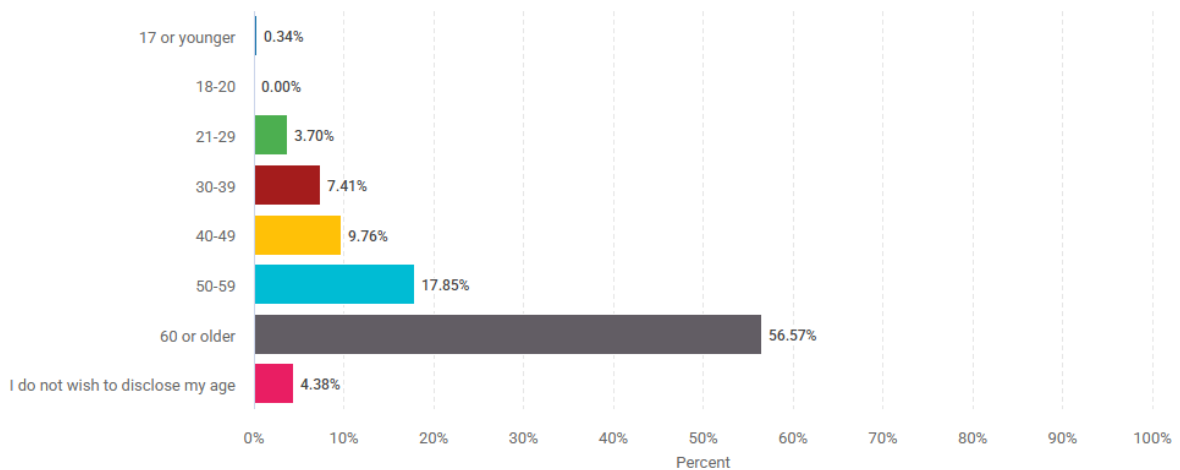
below.

What is your gender?



The largest age group among respondents was 60 years or older (56.57%), followed by the 50-59 age group accounting for 17.85% of responses. The distribution across most other age groups was relatively similar, whilst receiving no responses coming from the 18-20 age group (0%).

What is your age?



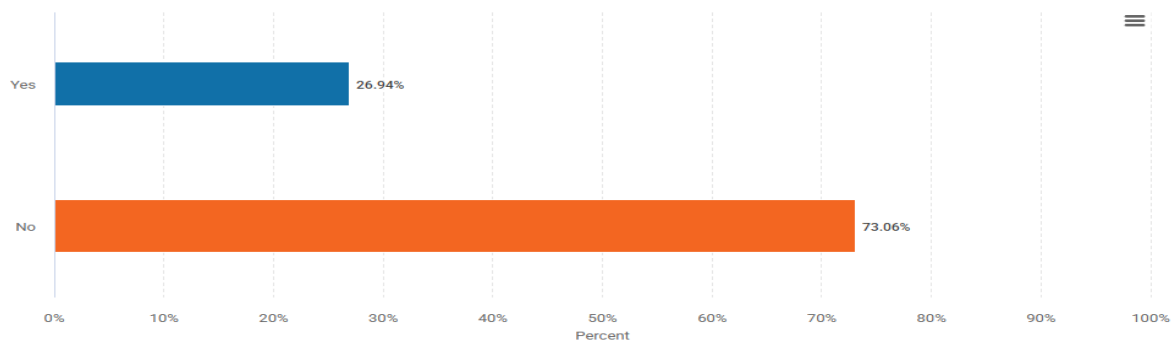
The majority of respondents (86.87%) identified as White British. A small number of participants identified as Asian, Black, Mixed Heritage, or another ethnic group (7.43%), while 3.37% chose not to disclose their ethnicity.

Views on Victim Care Advice Service (VCAS)

Online and Engagement stalls

The survey aimed to understand not only the prevalence of victimisation among respondents, but also the pathways they used—or would be willing to use—to seek advice, protection, or emotional support. These insights provide an important foundation for analysing how well current victim support services are meeting community needs and where further development may be required.

Have you been a victim of crime or anti-social behaviour in the past 12 months?

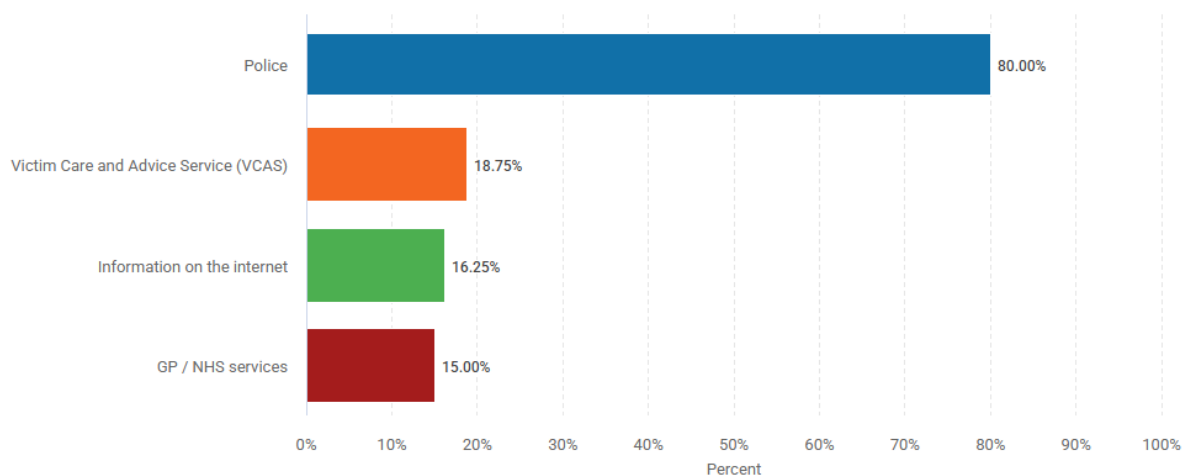


Across all 297 respondents (from both the online survey and face-to-face engagement stalls), eighty individuals (26.94%) reported having experienced victimisation as identified above.

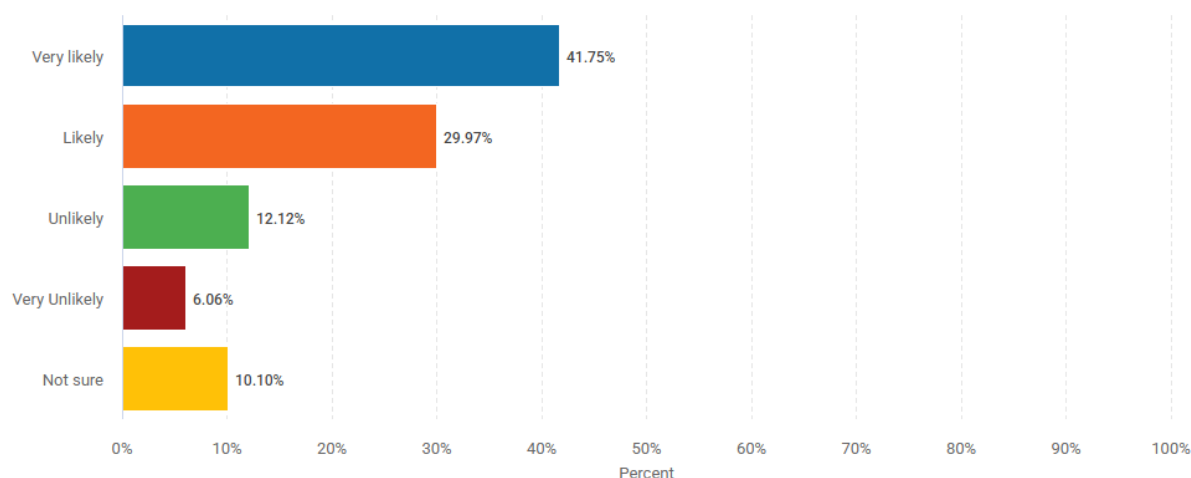
Only those who identified as victims were then asked which support services they had accessed, with the option to select multiple sources. Identified in the chart below, the majority (80.00%) reported the incident to the police. Just under a quarter (18.75%) accessed VCAS, followed by information on the internet (16.25%) and GP/NHS services (15.00%). Among those who selected 'other support services' (27.5%), respondents most frequently mentioned housing associations and specialist services for violence against women and girls.

Did you seek support through any of the following options? Please tick all that apply.

Sentiment Analysis



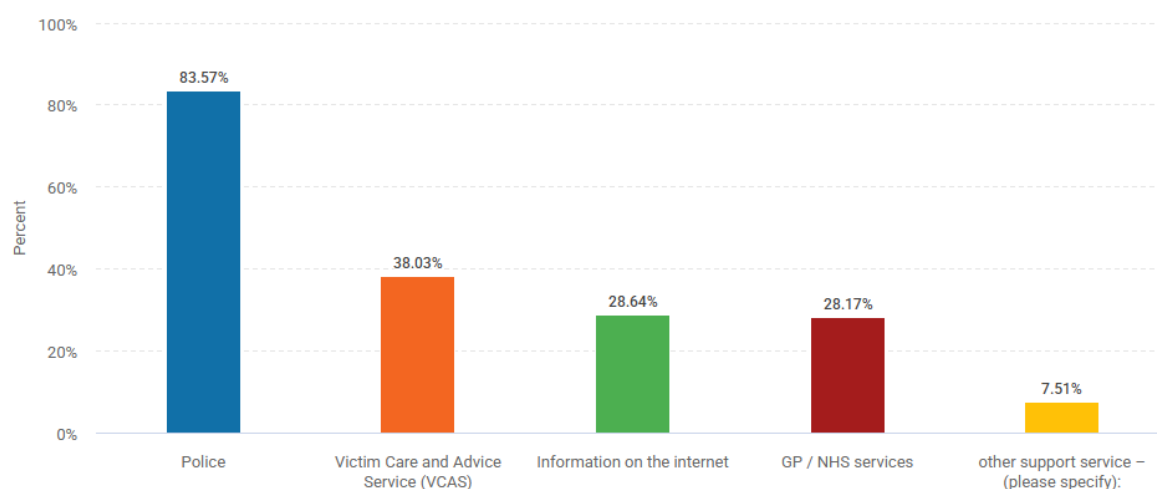
If you were a victim of crime or anti-social behaviour in the next 12 months, how likely would you be to look for support beyond your friends or family?



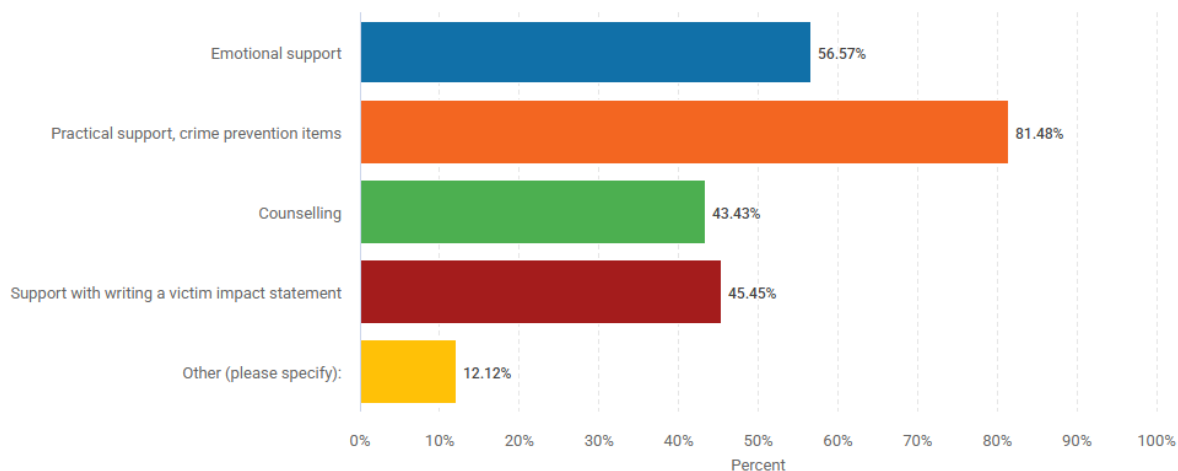
This question above was asked to all respondents, and 71.72% reported being very likely or likely to seek support beyond family and friends. A follow-up question then explored where they would seek support, as shown in the graph below. Among those selecting ‘other support services,’ specialist services for violence against women and girls and local councillors were commonly mentioned.

Among the 18.18% of respondents who said they were unlikely or very unlikely to seek further support, the free-text comments (7.51%) highlighted recurring concerns about past negative experiences with the police, including poor follow-up, feeling dismissed, and a belief that the police are overstretched or ineffective. Many described reporting as “pointless” because they felt that nothing would be done, reinforcing a broader lack of trust and confidence in formal support services.

If it is likely or very likely that you would seek outside help after being victimised, who or where would you go? Please tick all that apply.



If you ever needed support from a victim service what services would you like to see them provide? Please tick all that apply.



All respondents were asked what type of support they would want from a victim service. Over three-quarters (81.48%) preferred practical support, such as crime-prevention items. Emotional support was the next most common preference (56.57%), while around half said they would seek help with writing a victim impact statement (45.45%) or access to counselling (43.43%).

Whilst 12.12% respondents specified 'other' comments highlighted:

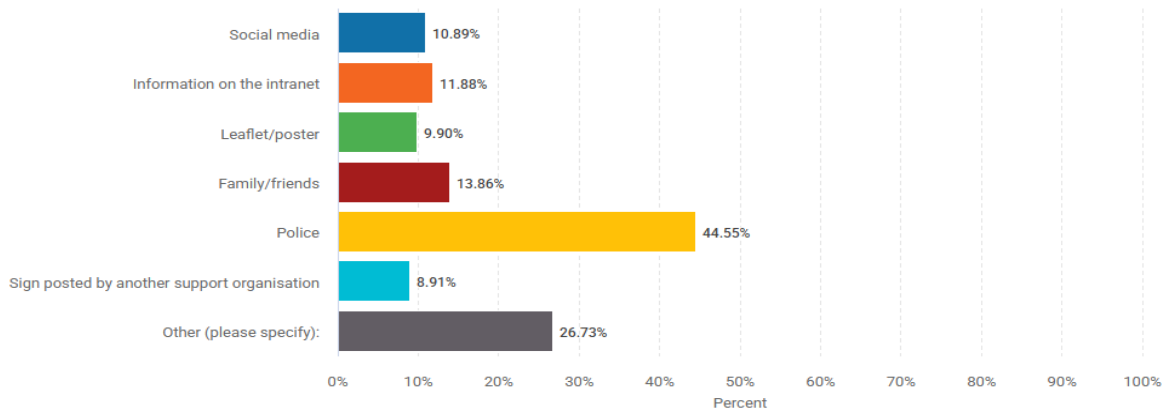
A need for additional support during court proceedings, clearer information about the criminal justice process

Signposting to other relevant services,

Assistance with housing associations or housing providers.

65.99% respondents were unaware of VCAS and 34.01% were aware of the service. Whilst the second question of this survey it was noted that 18.75% respondents have accessed VCAS.

How were you informed of VCAS? Please tick all that apply.



Near half of the respondents (44.55%) were informed of VCAS by the police. Followed by ‘other’ respondents (26.73%) commonly specified, through work. A few comments also referenced, media, internet, radio and newspapers.

Face-to-Face Focus Groups

Across all four focus groups, thirty two participants shared mixed experiences of crime and varying levels of awareness and confidence in victim support services. Some older participants recalled positive past interactions with police and, in some cases, **helpful support from VCAS, particularly around burglary and fraud**. They reported that the support received from VCAS went above and beyond what they anticipated, reflecting the high quality and dedication of the service. However, **awareness of VCAS was inconsistent, with many participants**—especially in the Deaf community and women’s groups—**unfamiliar with the service or unclear about what it offers**.

Fraud and scamming emerged as a common issue, particularly among the women’s group, who described feeling violated, ashamed, and frightened. They emphasised the need for better education on digital safety, such as two-step verification. Participants also **highlighted barriers to accessing support, including emotional triggers, lack of follow-up, and uncertainty about where to turn**.

The Deaf community raised accessibility concerns for self-referrals. Although the participants were **unaware of the service and had not accessed the service** for support. They found VCAS materials difficult to engage referencing the flyer was too text heavy. Also noting the website hard to navigate for some deaf communities, and the absence of accessible referral routes. They stressed the **need for text-based communication**, BSL interpreter support from the outset, and more inclusive promotional materials. Sign-live app was a recommended service.

The men’s group expressed distinctively indicating they would be reluctant to access support unless the crime was particularly serious. They generally felt able to cope independently, relying on personal resilience and strong family or friendship

networks. Several participants also acknowledged that, **in their words, “being men,” they were less inclined to seek support.**

Across groups, participants felt that victim support services need wider promotion, **clearer signposting, and more tailored support for vulnerable individuals,** including older people and those living alone. Suggestions included advertising through police channels, insurance companies, Citizens Advice, and public transport. Some participants believed **counselling and 24/7 access would strengthen the service.**

Views on the police varied: some groups expressed trust and satisfaction with local policing, while others described frustration with limited responses to ASB or crime. Overall, **participants recognised the value of support services but highlighted gaps in awareness,** accessibility, and capacity that limit their use.

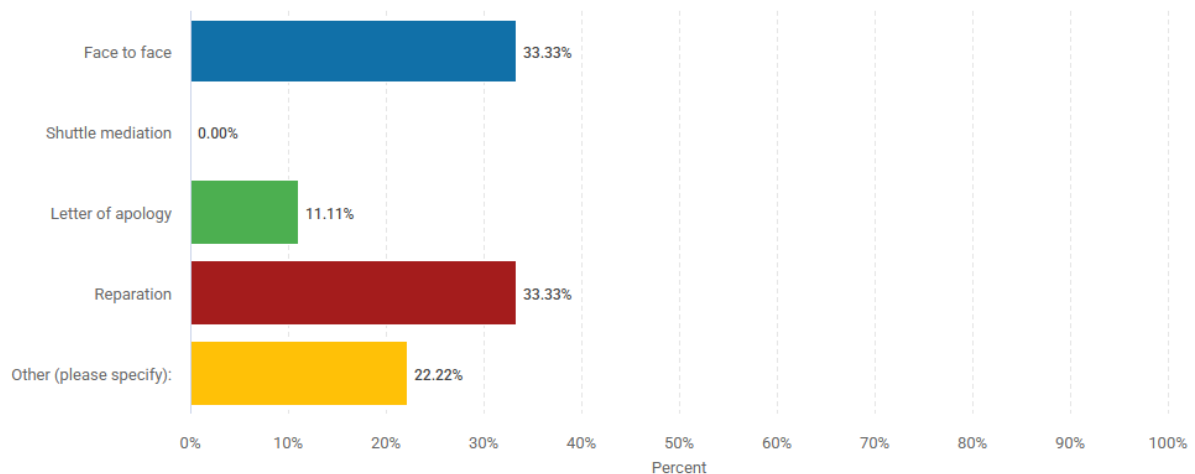
Views on Restorative Justice

Online and engagement stalls

The final element of the survey asked respondents about their previous involvement in Restorative Justice, their likelihood of considering it in the future, and their preferences for how it should be delivered. Participants were also asked whether they would use Restorative Justice (RJ) alongside or instead of prosecution, which types of approaches they would prefer, and which offences they felt it was suitable or unsuitable for.

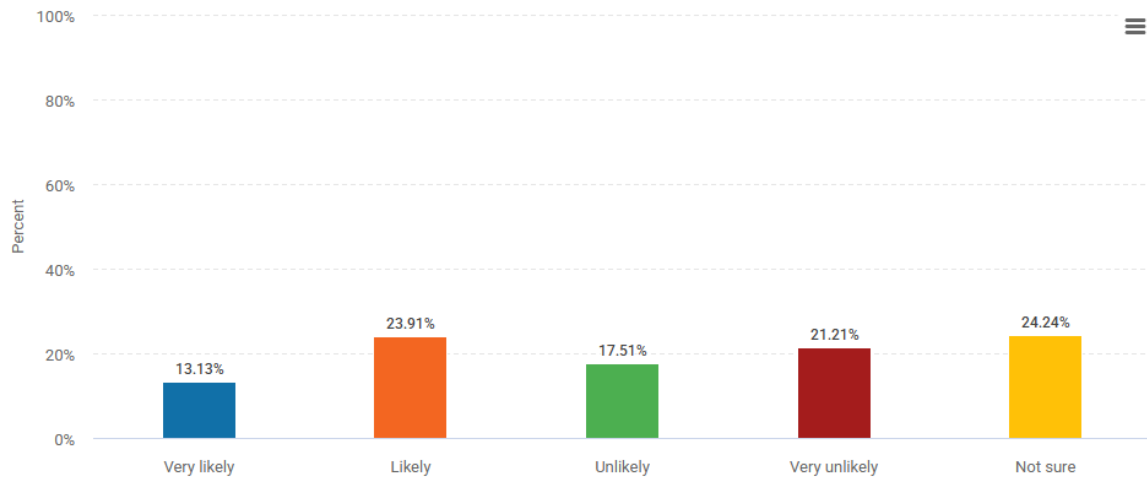
Overall, 96.97% respondents have not been involved in restorative Justice. The remaining 3.03% respondents indicated the type of RJ was used. Other specified, Restorative and Relational Justice. Another respondent noted, they had not been involved in RJ but were aware through work.

If yes, please select the type of Restorative Justice used.



The chart below shows a broadly divided public attitude toward the use of restorative justice if they were to experience crime or anti-social behaviour in the next year. While just over a third of respondents (37%) indicate they would be likely or very likely to consider a restorative justice approach, a similar proportion (around 39%) say they would be unlikely or very unlikely to do so. Notably, the largest single group—24.24%—report being unsure, highlighting a significant level of uncertainty or lack of awareness about restorative justice.

If you were a victim of crime or anti-social behaviour in the next 12 months, how likely is it that you would consider a restorative justice approach? Sentiment Analysis

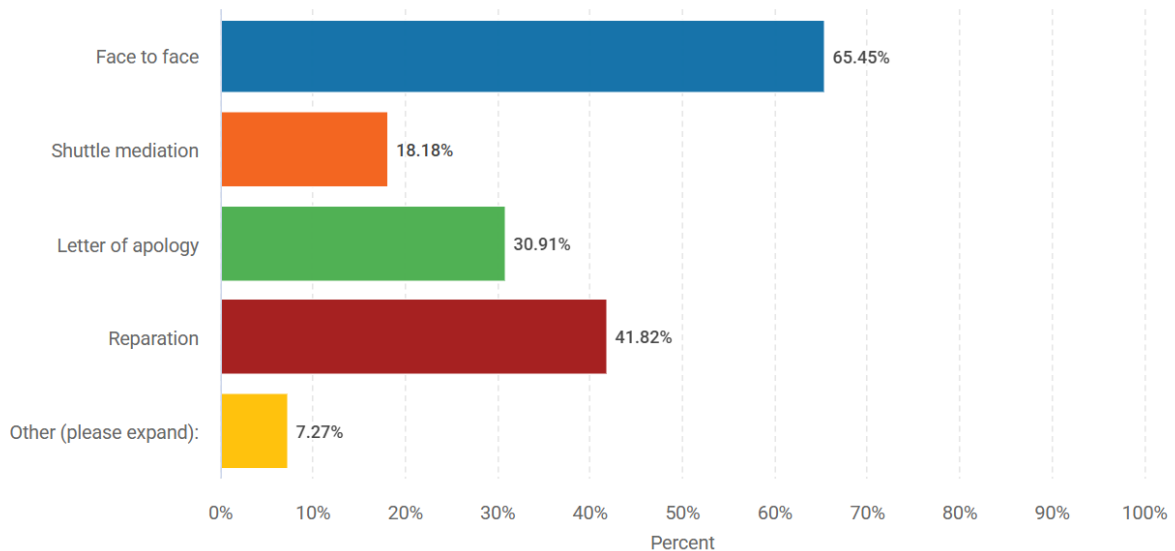


The 37% who said they were likely or very likely to consider RJ were asked a follow-up question based on the statements shown in the graphs.

Which of the below apply to you?

Answer Choices	Responses	Count
I would only consider Restorative Justice alongside a prosecution		52
I would consider Restorative Justice as a stand alone intervention		58

What would your preference be for the type of Restorative Justice used. Please tick all that apply

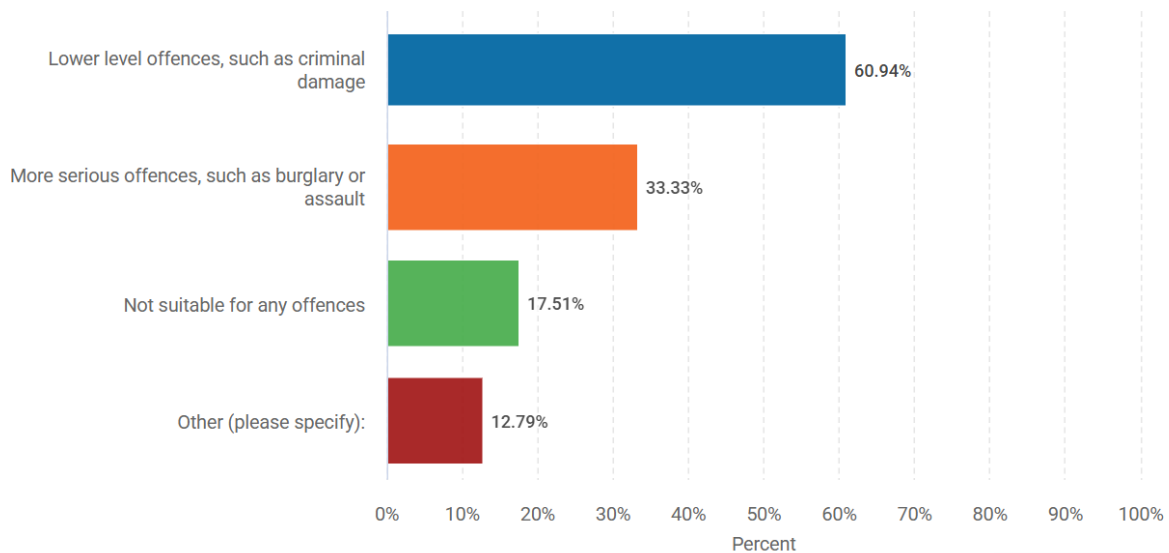


The findings show clear preferences in how respondents felt Restorative Justice should be delivered. The majority favoured a face-to-face approach (65.45%), making it the most preferred option by a significant margin. This was followed by

reparation activities (41.82%) and letters of apology (30.91%). Shuttle mediation was the least preferred method, selected by only 18.18% of respondents.

7.72% respondent's 'others specified' in free text it depends on the severity of the crime to deem what would be appropriate. Comment were made such as 'whatever the victims wants' 'unpaid litter picking', 'face to face, digitally on MS Teams'

Which of the following do you feel that Restorative Justice is suitable for? Please tick all that apply.



This question above was asked to all 297 respondents to understand which types of offences they felt were suitable for Restorative Justice (RJ). Over half (60.94%) felt RJ was appropriate for lower-level offences, while a third (33.33%) believed it could be used for more serious offences. A smaller proportion (17.51%) felt RJ was not suitable for any type of offence.

12.79% responses for 'other specified' reveal a broad mix of views on when restorative justice is considered suitable, with a significant number of participants expressing uncertainty or limited understanding of the approach. Many respondents **felt that suitability should be determined on a case-by-case basis**, guided by the victim's wishes and the specific circumstances of the offence. There was clear support for **using restorative justice in low-level, minor, or first-time offences**—particularly involving young people or situations where reparation is possible. While others expressed scepticism about its suitability for serious crimes.

All of the respondents using the free text was asked specifically which of the offences that should never be open to Restorative Justice. Across all responses, there is a clear pattern of strong public caution around the use of restorative justice, with many participants expressing uncertainty or limited understanding of how the process works. While some respondents **supported restorative justice for low-level, minor, or first-time offences**—and emphasised that suitability should

depend on the victim's wishes—there was **majority of responses in an agreement that serious, violent, or high-harm offences should never be eligible.**

Sexual offences, domestic abuse, crimes against children or vulnerable people, murder, serious assaults, and offences causing significant psychological or lasting harm were repeatedly highlighted as inappropriate due to the risk of re-traumatisation and the gravity of the harm caused.

Concerns were also raised about **repeat offenders or individuals misusing restorative justice** to avoid prosecution or reduce sentences. A smaller number of respondents rejected restorative justice entirely, favouring more traditional, harsher forms of punishment, and while others stressed that decisions should be made on a **case-by-case basis with victim consent.**

“Any crime to a victim will run the risk of trauma, as a counsellor i work with the trauma's of children and how these traumas shape them as a person which effects their whole being and future. Most of the time these victims are not the child's fault but their parents. Once a child is old enough and with the right support, Restorative justice maybe a service that may work for these victims and their parents too.”

“Absolutely not the worst crimes. Or any others, unless desperately wanted by victim.”

“Any physical harm by men or women. If the perpetrators knew their victim. Adults victimising children. Violence. Psychological harm/manipulation.”

“Really serious crimes such as murder that has been planned or stranger murders that are premeditated unlike man slaughter which can be through accidents, one punch scenarios”

“Heinous crimes should never be open to restorative justice as a standalone, but could also include restorative justice alongside other forms of punishment.”

“I think it should depend on how the person/s impacted feel/s for crimes against adults. I don't feel it would be appropriate for crimes against children except possibly where the offender was a child themselves, then it would depend on the offence, the best interests for both youths, and have input from appropriate adults.”

The final optional question asked whether there was anything else respondents would like to see provided in a Restorative Justice service, with near 64% offering comments.

Across the feedback, participants expressed a strong preference for **more practical, visible, and meaningful forms of reparation**, with many wanting offenders to

directly repair or compensate for the harm they caused—through paying for damage, completing community service, or undertaking work that benefits victims and the wider community. Linked to this was a clear emphasis on **accountability**, including calls for firmer consequences for repeat offenders and stronger penalties where individuals reoffend after taking part in Restorative Justice.

A significant number of respondents highlighted the need **for greater awareness, clearer communication, and more accessible information** about how Restorative Justice works, alongside timely processes, continuity of staff, and improved support for victims. There was also interest in expanding Restorative Justice for youth-related or low-level offences, such as minor property damage, littering, graffiti, and anti-social behaviour, with suggestions that young people should better understand the impact of their actions.

Others proposed integrating Restorative Justice with **community-based work, education, rehabilitation, or housing-related support** to address underlying causes of offending. A smaller group remained sceptical, questioning the effectiveness of Restorative Justice or viewing it as too lenient, with a few suggesting it should be replaced entirely by more traditional punitive approaches.

Focus Groups

Across the focus groups, **views on Restorative Justice (RJ)** were mixed, with participants **expressing both interest and hesitation depending on their personal experiences**, confidence levels, and perceptions of offender behaviour.

In the Age UK coffee afternoon group, participants were divided. Some felt RJ could be positive and healing, **offering victims the chance to “get it off your chest”** and understand the offender’s perspective. Others were sceptical, questioning whether certain offenders—**such as drug-dependent shoplifters—would ever show genuine remorse**, and expressing concern about increasingly brazen criminal behaviour.

The women’s group also reflected a split in opinion. Several participants viewed RJ as **empowering, giving victims a sense of control, closure**, and the opportunity to express the impact of the crime. However, others felt the process would be too frightening or emotionally overwhelming, especially if they already lacked confidence engaging with the police. For these participants, **meeting an offender felt unsafe or retraumatizing**.

In the Men and Motors group, views again varied widely. Some **participants felt RJ was a good idea** or were interested in whether it could include community service. Others **doubted its effectiveness, stating that it “won’t restore anything”** or expressing confusion about how RJ differs from an impact statement. A few participants felt reporting crime itself was a “waste of time,” which influenced their scepticism toward RJ.

Across all groups, the **overarching theme** was a difference in opinion as some saw Restorative Justice as a **meaningful, victim-centred approach that could support healing**, while others questioned its practicality, emotional safety, or impact—particularly in cases involving **repeat offenders or individuals perceived as unlikely to show genuine remorse**.

Further insight on support-seeking patterns by gender

The data analysis of the victim support survey provided an opportunity to explore deeper correlations between demographics. Notably, gender-specific themes and trends highlighted significant differences in experiences and perceptions of seeking support between male and female respondents.

Views on Victim Support

Online and engagement stalls

The survey findings highlight several gender-based patterns in how victims of crime or anti-social behaviour seek and prefer to receive support. While similar proportions of men and women reported being victimised and both groups commonly turned to the police, notable differences emerged in the types of services they accessed and the support they would choose in the future.

When comparing male and female respondents who had experienced victimisation, the proportions were similar to the overall survey findings, with 23.21% of males and 26.94% of females reporting victimisation. Around 80% of both groups sought support from the police. However, differences emerged in other support that they had received, 18.75% of female respondents accessed VCAS compared with 11.54% of males. Females were less inclined to seek information online (16.25%), whereas a higher proportion of males did so (23.08%). Notably, females significantly had accessed GP/NHS services (15.00%) compared with males (7.69%).

Male and female respondents showed broadly similar patterns in the types of support they would seek if victimised, with around 70% of both groups indicating they would look for help beyond family and friends. The specific support options selected also showed some close alignment across genders but differences whilst seeking support beyond police:

Police: Males (88.75%)- Females (83.57%)

VCAS: Males (32.50%)- Females (38.03%)

Information on the internet: Males (28.75%)- Females (28.64%)

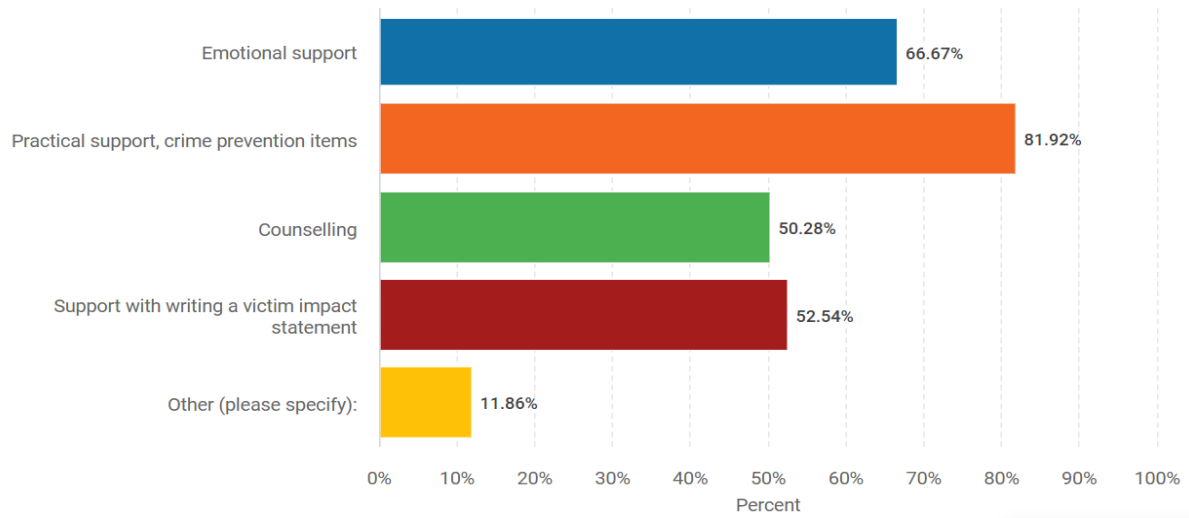
GP/NHS services: Males (21.25%)- Females (28.17%)

The small remaining percentage selected 'other'. Women respondents commonly referenced specialist support services for women and girls, while men mentioned the council, housing services, or their local MP.

Around 20% of male respondents reported being unlikely or very unlikely to seek support beyond family or friends, citing low confidence in the police or other services, or a preference to handle issues themselves. In contrast, approximately 18% of female respondents felt they had strong support networks within family and friends or were unsure where to seek external support.

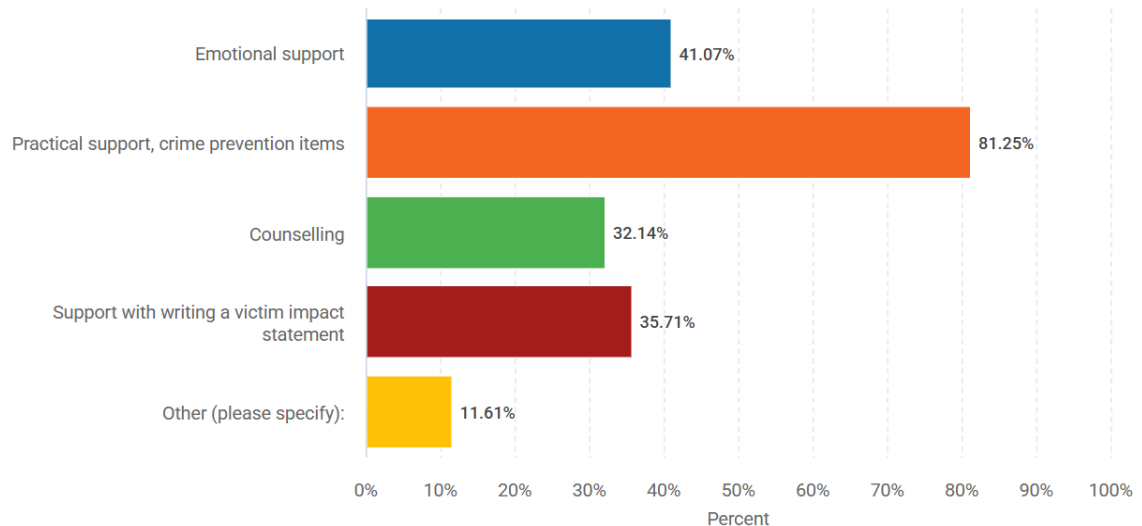
Female Respondents

If you ever needed support from a victim service what services would you like to see them provide? Please tick all that apply.



Male Respondents

If you ever needed support from a victim service what services would you like to see them provide? Please tick all that apply.



The survey showed clear differences between male and female respondents in the types of support they would like to receive as victims. While both groups expressed a strong preference for practical support such as crime-prevention items (around 80%), females were far more likely to want emotional support (66.67%) compared with males (41.07%). A similar pattern appeared for counselling, with 50.28% of females selecting this option compared with 32.14% of males. Also, for support with

completing a Victim Personal Statement, selected by 52.54% of females and 35.71% of males.

The small percentage remaining was selected to specify the 'other', suggestions provided by male respondents (11.61%) commonly stating depends on the crime and one respondent noted finding a male's refuge facility. Whilst female respondents (11.86%) highlighted support through the court proceeding or information to understand the criminal justice system and sign posting to other support agencies.

Views on Restorative Justice

Online and engagement stalls

The findings show no significant gender differences in respondent's willingness to consider Restorative Justice (RJ). Both male and female participants demonstrated similar levels of openness to using RJ as a support option. Among male respondents, 35.72% said they would be very likely or likely to consider RJ, closely aligned with 37.85% of females. Likewise, 42.86% of males and 35.59% of females indicated they would be very unlikely or unlikely to use RJ. A notable proportion of both groups expressed uncertainty, with 21.43% of males and 26.55% of females unsure about engaging with RJ.

The respondents selected very likely/ likely the type of restorative justice with similar views on approaches selected a stand alone intervention or alongside prosecution. There was a clear disparity between male and female respondents with the following statements:

I would only consider Restorative justice alongside prosecution: Males (35.00%) - Females (53.73%)

I would consider restorative justice as a stand-alone intervention: Males (65.00%) - Females (46.27)

As noted, female respondents decided either way, whilst male respondents were more inclined for the stand-alone RJ practice. In addition, the question was proposed on the type of Restorative justice approach, the findings as followed:

Face to face: Males (60.00%)- Females (68.66%)

Shuttle mediation: Males (15:00%) Females (20.90%)

Letter of Apology: Males (22.50%) Females (35.83%)

Reparation: Males (40:00%) Females (43.28%)

The small percentage remaining was selected to specify the 'other', suggestions provided by male respondents indicated litter picking, or the decision made by the victim.

Lastly, it was identified using the free text box which offences that should never be open to restorative justice for both groups strongly expressed serious violence offences, sexual offences, domestic abuse, crimes against children or vulnerable people, murder, serious assault.

Summary

Victim Care and Advice Service

Across 297 respondents, 27% had experienced victimisation. Most victims sought help from the police (80%), with smaller numbers accessing VCAS (19%), online information, GP/NHS services, or specialist organisations such as housing associations and VAWG services. Most respondents (72%) said they would seek support beyond family and friends, while those who would not often noted negative past experiences with police, including poor follow-up and feeling dismissed.

Respondents prioritised practical support (81%), followed by emotional support, help with victim impact statements, and counselling. Awareness of VCAS was low, with 66% unaware of the service, despite some having accessed it. Nearly half of those aware learned about VCAS through the police.

Focus groups reflected similar themes. Participants reported mixed experiences with police and inconsistent awareness of VCAS. Some older participants described positive support, but many—especially in the Deaf community and women’s groups—were unfamiliar with the service. Fraud and scams were common concerns, and barriers such as emotional triggers, lack of follow-up, and uncertainty about where to seek help were frequently mentioned. The Deaf community highlighted significant accessibility issues, including text-heavy materials and limited referral routes. Men’s groups expressed reluctance to seek support unless the crime was severe.

Across all groups, participants emphasised the need for better promotion, clearer signposting, and more tailored, accessible support, particularly for vulnerable individuals and those living alone.

Recommendations

1. Increase awareness and visibility of VCAS and victim support services

- Strengthen promotion through police channels, community organisations, housing providers, and local media.
- Improve signposting at key touchpoints such as GP surgeries, Citizens Advice, and public transport.

2. Improve accessibility and inclusivity of materials

- Redesign VCAS resources to be less text-heavy and easier to navigate.
- Provide BSL-accessible materials, text-based communication options, and clear self-referral routes.

3. Expand practical and emotional support options

- Prioritise practical support (e.g., crime-prevention items), emotional support, counselling, and help with victim impact statements.

- Further assistance for additional support during court proceedings, clearer information about the criminal justice process.
- Consider offering 24/7 access or crisis-response options where feasible.
- Signposting to other relevant services, housing providers.

Restorative Justice

Most of the 297 respondents had very limited experience with Restorative Justice (RJ), with 97% reporting no previous involvement and only a small minority aware of it through work. Views on using RJ in the future were evenly split: 37% said they would be likely to consider it, 39% were unlikely, and 24% were unsure, reflecting low awareness and mixed confidence.

Among those open to RJ, 65% preferred face-to-face meetings, followed by 42% favouring reparation activities and 31% letters of apology, while shuttle mediation was least popular at 18%. In terms of suitability, 61% felt RJ was appropriate for lower-level offences, 33% believed it could apply to more serious offences, and 18% felt it was not suitable for any offence. Respondents strongly supported case-by-case decisions based on victim consent, especially for first-time or youth-related offences, but were sceptical about its use for serious crimes.

There was clear consensus on offences that should never be eligible for RJ, including sexual offences, domestic abuse, crimes against children or vulnerable people, murder, serious violence, and offences causing lasting psychological harm. Concerns were also raised about repeat offenders or those misusing RJ to avoid prosecution.

Additional comments (provided by 64% of respondents) highlighted a desire for meaningful reparation, stronger accountability, clearer public information. Many supported RJ for youth and low-level community-impact offences, while some remained sceptical about its effectiveness or perceived leniency. Focus groups echoed these mixed views, with some seeing RJ as empowering and healing, and others feeling it could be unsafe, emotionally difficult, or ineffective—particularly where offenders lacked remorse.

Recommendations

Increase public awareness and understanding of Restorative Justice through clear, accessible information, as many respondents (24%) were unsure about using RJ and 97% had no prior experience. The lack of understanding of RJ identified the following feedback:

- **Limit eligibility to first time offences, lower-level and youth-related offences**, reflecting the 61% who supported RJ for minor offences and the strong consensus against its use for sexual offences, domestic abuse, crimes against children, and serious violence.

- **Strengthen accountability and meaningful reparation**, aligning with public calls for visible community work by the offender, and providing compensation to the victim, and tough consequences if you participate in RJ and reoffend.
- **Integrate RJ with wider support**, such as rehabilitation, education, and community-based interventions, to address underlying causes of offending.
- **Address public scepticism** by sharing evidence of effectiveness, clarifying how RJ complements prosecution, and explaining safeguards against misuse.