



Lothian and Borders Sheriffdom
Restorative Justice Stakeholder Communication Needs Survey

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the stakeholders who took the time to complete the survey and share it with their contacts.

Background and Aims

As part of the Restorative Justice (RJ) initial test project within the Lothian and Borders Sheriffdom area, the CJS RJ national team is tasked with delivering **awareness raising** events / publications to ensure that stakeholders have as much information about RJ as is necessary for their role. The CJS RJ national team is also responsible for devising and delivering a variety of ways to **communicate** with stakeholders throughout the initial test project, both in terms of the CJS RJ national team providing information to stakeholders, and providing a mechanism for stakeholders to feed back to the CJS national team.

The aim of the survey was to understand the communication requirements to / from the initial test project area, with a view to replicating this across Scotland as RJ rolls out over time.

Method

A simple mixed methods survey was created using SurveyMonkey. The survey had 10 questions; these were a combination of open and closed ended questions and multiple choice. The survey was anonymous, and took on average, two minutes to complete. To access the survey, see appendix 1.

Participants were invited to complete the survey via email, which was sent to the Lothian and Borders Sheriffdom Development Group, with a request to circulate the this widely within their teams / services. The survey was live from 26th October 2022 to 18th November 2022. A further email reminder to encourage completion of the survey was sent on 14th November 2022.

Participants were made aware that the survey results would be used for the purposes of gathering data on how the project team plan, develop and support the initial test project in the Sheriffdom area - Lothian and Borders, and would be compiled into a report for the Scottish Government RJ stakeholder group. In addition, the results would help to inform communication methods across Scotland as RJ is rolled out over time.

Results

The original email encouraging completion of the survey and onward circulation was sent to 60 recipients who are members of the Lothian & Borders RJ Development Group. A total of 19 survey responses were received.

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Chart 1: Respondents as per local authority area

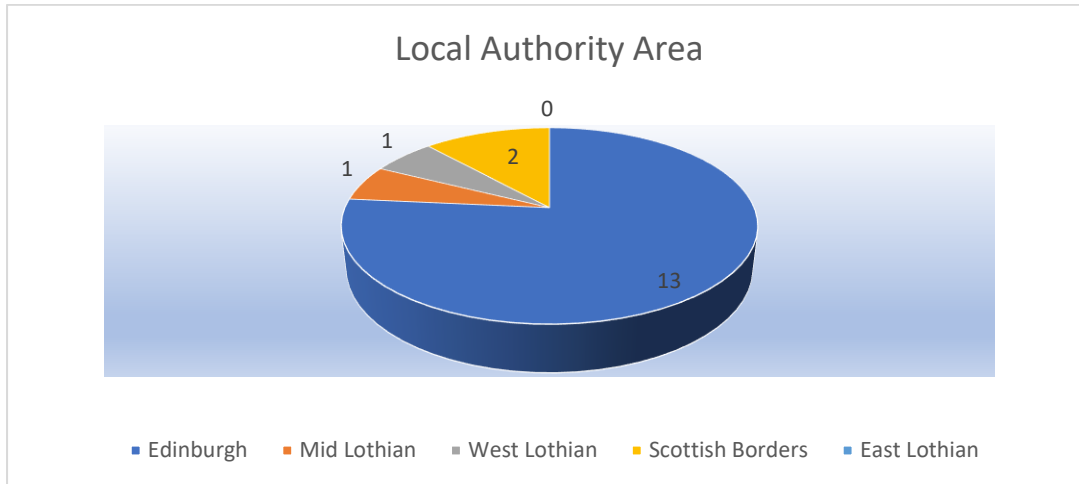
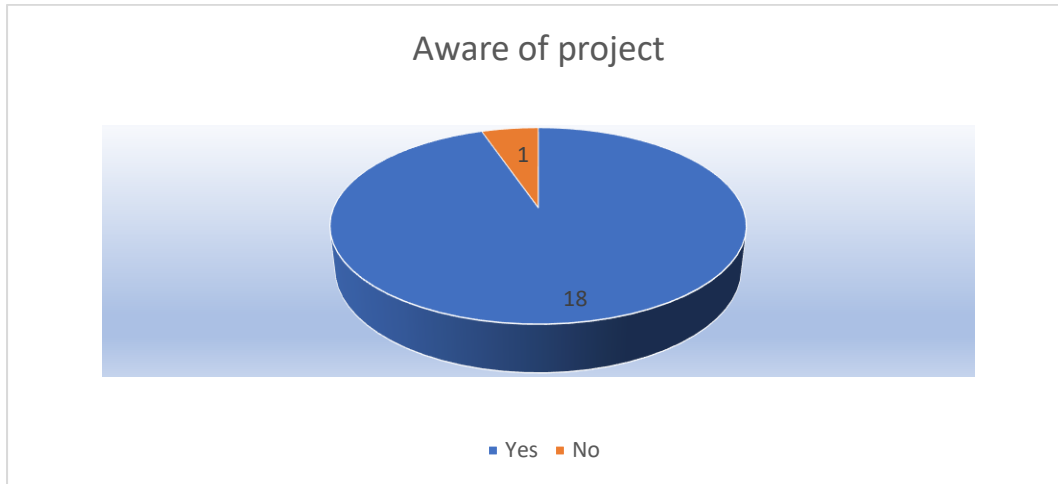


Table 1: Respondents as per sector and / or organisation

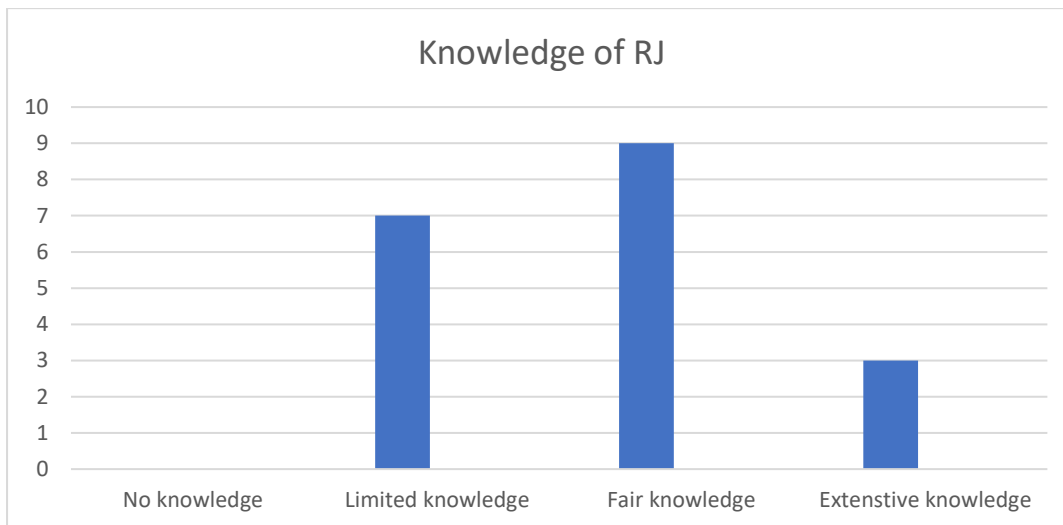
Prisons	2
SCRA	4
CJ Social Work	3
Edinburgh Council	1
Police Scotland	1
Housing	1
Victim Support Scotland	1
Rape Crisis Edinburgh	1
Voluntary Sector	1
West Lothian Council	1
Public	1
Social Work Scotland	1
Scottish Borders Council	1
Total	19

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Chart 2: Respondents awareness of RJ project



Graph 1: Respondents perceived knowledge of restorative justice?



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Chart 3: Respondents perception of usefulness of RJ training

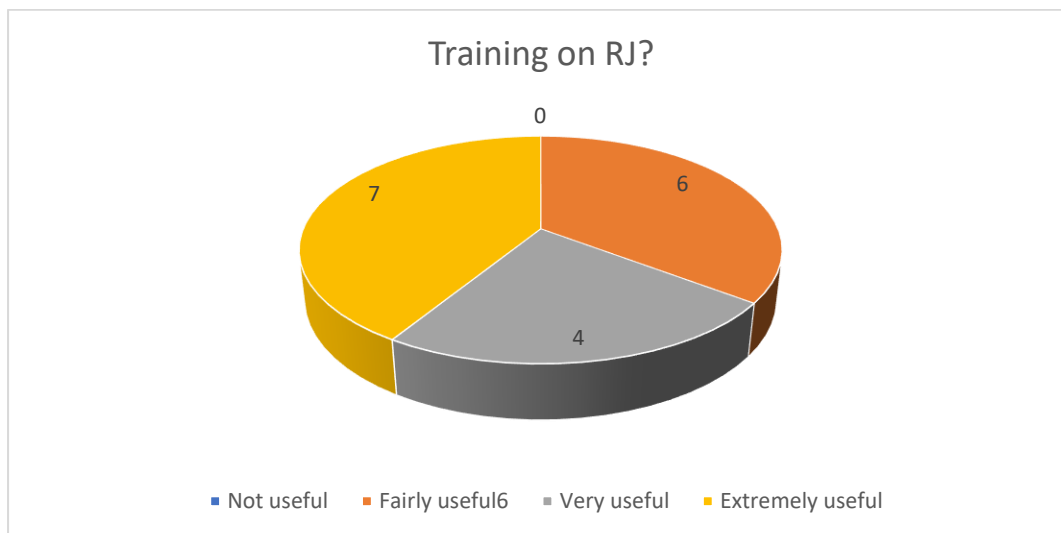


Table 2: Thematic training requirements of respondents

General RJ	6
Restorative approaches / practices	9
RJ and gender based violence	8
RJ and domestic abuse	8
RJ and sexual abuse	7
RJ and children / young people	8
RJ for specialist and complex cases	7
RJ and risk assessment / mitigation strategies	8
RJ and the Justice system in Scotland	6
Lived experience of RJ	6
Supporting people who have been harmed through the RJ process	6
Supporting people who have caused harm through the RJ process	6
Information sharing	7
Other (not stated)	2

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Graph 2: Preferred training medium

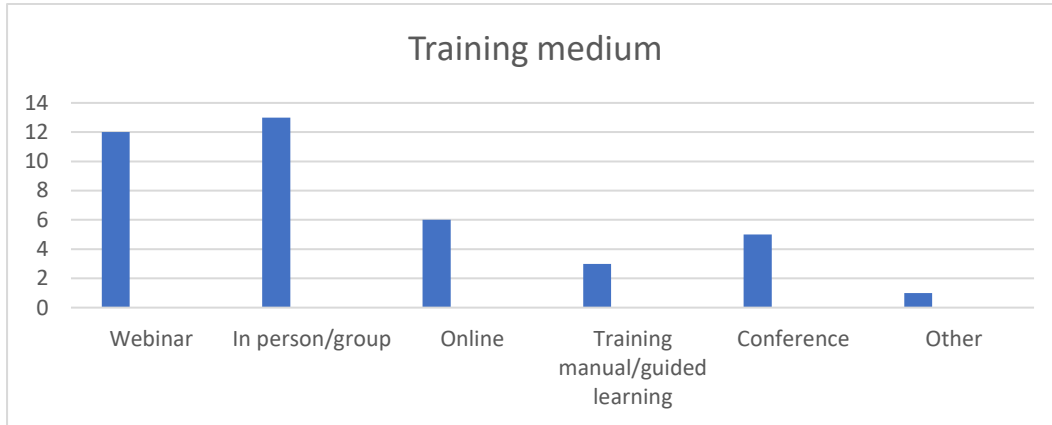
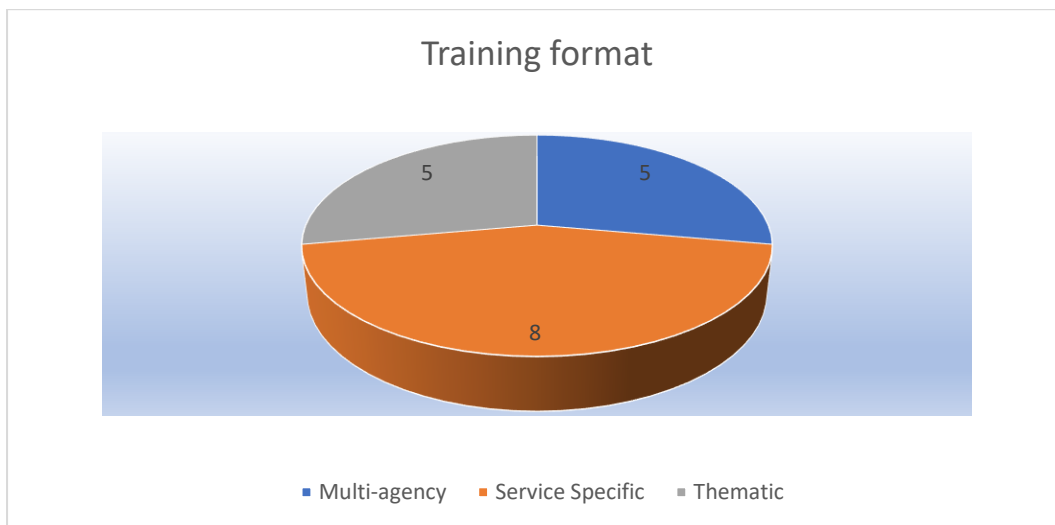
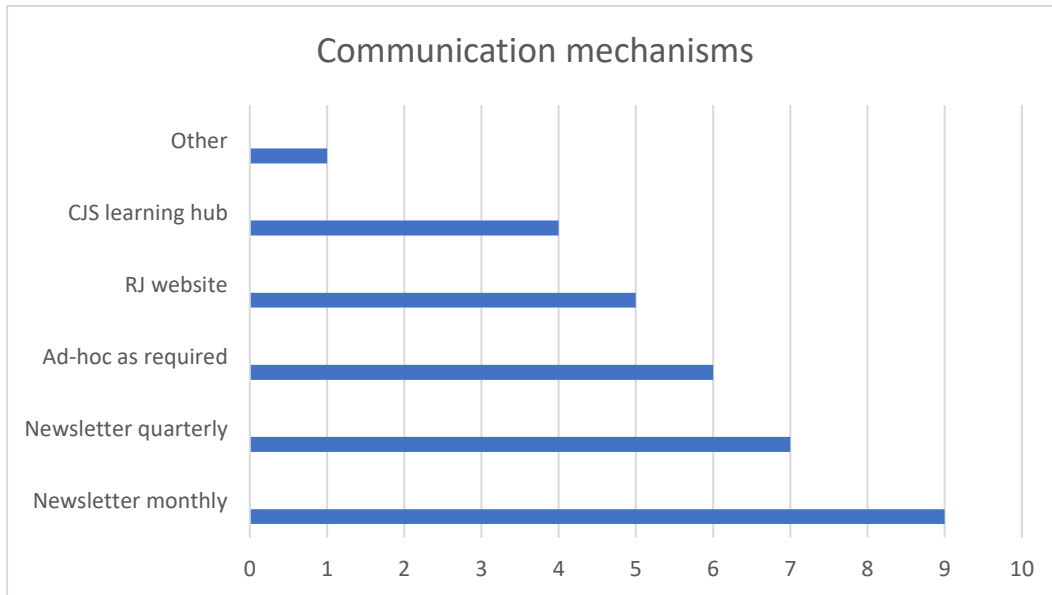


Chart 4: Training format preference

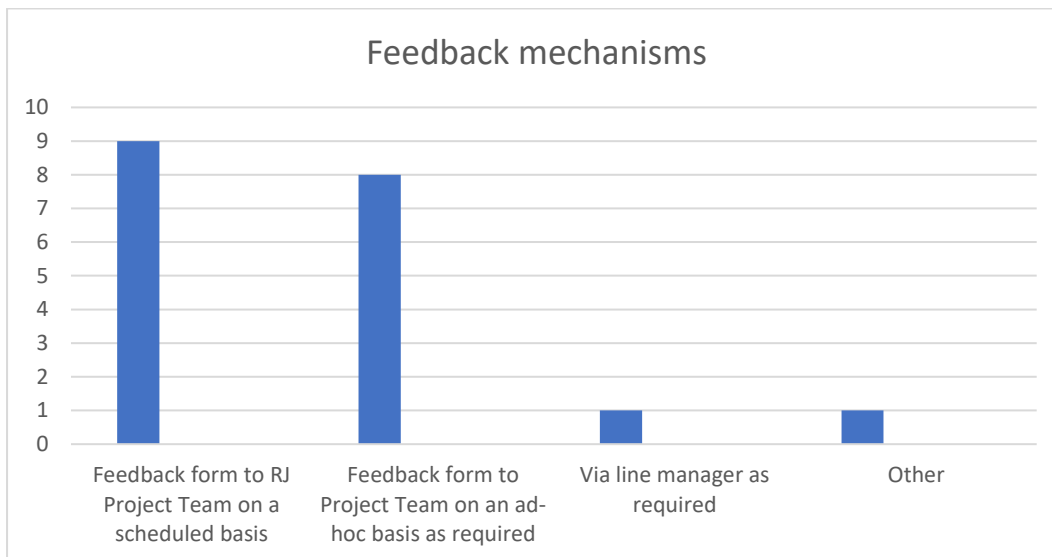


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Graph 3: Respondents preferred communication methods



Graph 4: Preferred feedback mechanisms of respondents





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Discussion

Completion of the survey was less than hoped at n=19 responses. Most respondents identified as being associated with the Edinburgh area. Respondents were from 13 different sectors/organisations, with the Scottish Children's Reporter providing the majority of responses. Other respondents came from a variety of public sector, voluntary and third sector organisations, and one person identified as being a member of the public.

The vast majority n=18 of respondents said that they were aware of the RJ initial test project within the Lothian and Borders area, and 16 people said that they had 'limited' or 'fair' knowledge of RJ, with 3 respondents identifying as having 'extensive' knowledge of RJ.

Training

All respondents who answered the question in relation to training on RJ felt that it would be of use would be of use, with 11% saying that this would be 'extremely' useful, 36% saying that this would be 'very' useful, and 55% indicating that this would be 'fairly' useful.

Thirteen possible training elements related to RJ theory and practice were suggested as being potentially available, and 9 respondents said that they felt they would benefit from all of these suggestions. The most commonly requested specific training was in relation to RJ practices/approaches (n=9), closely followed by training on RJ and gender based violence, RJ and domestic abuse, RJ and young people and RJ and risk assessment/mitigation strategies (n=8).

In terms of the format of any training, the most popular options were in-person (n=13) and webinar (n=12).

44% of respondents indicated that their preference would be for any training to take place on a service specific basis, with 28% opting for multi-agency training and 28% on a thematic basis.

Communication

When asked which methods of communication about the project **from** the RJ Project Team to stakeholders would be most desirable, the most popular method was via a newsletter (n=16), with 9 respondents opting for a monthly newsletter and 7 suggesting a quarterly newsletter.

The most popular means of facilitating communication in relation to the initial test project from stakeholders **to** the CJS RJ national team was via a feedback form on a



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scheduled basis (n=9), closely followed by use of a feedback form on an ad-hoc basis (n=8)

Conclusion

From the data collected, it was clear that respondents were aware of the test project. Almost all respondents felt that they would benefit from some thematic training relating to RJ. The preference for training was in-person or webinar, with almost half of respondents saying that this should be delivered on a service specific basis. In reality, this may be difficult to facilitate as it would be potentially mean that services would find it difficult to free up staff to attend. In addition, there is an argument that by delivering the training on a service specific basis, participants would miss out on the opportunity to gain insight into the views / challenges faced by stakeholders from other service areas. It seems likely that people responded from their local perspective, rather than considering what would make good engagement for larger staff groups as a whole, such as SPS and Police Scotland.

Newsletters were the most popular medium for stakeholders to receive updates from the project team, with an almost even number of respondents feeling that monthly or quarterly updates would be most beneficial. The project team currently produces a quarterly report on progress toward the RJ delivery plan. This has recently been changed to a more accessible newsletter style. More work is required to ascertain what information the Sheriffdom stakeholders would like to see in a newsletter (distinct from the quarterly report for SG), whether this be monthly or quarterly.

It seems that developing a specific form / route to allow stakeholders to feed back to the project group is desirable, and this should be taken forward and agreed with the stakeholder group. An agreement would need to be made as to whether this should be sent to the CJS RJ national team on a planned or ad-hoc basis. Both options have merit and challenges, including the benefit of getting into a routine of providing feedback on a regular basis, whilst acknowledging the additional workload for stakeholders. If feedback is provided on an ad-hoc basis, it may be forgotten.

Limitations

Despite being sent to 60 stakeholders for completion / circulation, the survey only generated 19 responses, and most of these were attributed to the Edinburgh City area. This may mean that the results are not reflective of all of the Lothian and Borders Sheriffdom.

The small number of responses could be attributed to a number of reasons, including a feeling of general apathy towards the RJ test project within the area. Anecdotally, feedback from stakeholders has centred around lack of clarity and confusion with



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regard to the initial test project from Scottish Government – e.g. funding, resource, timelines and referral pathways, all of which have the potential to impact on stakeholder 'buy in'. Another reason for the low response rate may be linked to conflicting demands on stakeholders time due to competing workload commitments.

Recommendations

1. Reissue the survey to national stakeholders to see how responses compare and whether more indirect, inclusive options for raising awareness might be necessary.
2. Ask stakeholders via the development group what additionality would be needed in the quarterly report to aid further, improved understanding.
3. Re-visit the previously agreed awareness raising proposal and update accordingly, to include the design a series of webinars / events on RJ to raise awareness in the Sheriffdom.
4. Design agreed feedback route for stakeholders.
5. Consider with SG how to improve communication in light of ongoing financial and resource issues across Justice and wider government

Alice Dillon – RJ Development Officer – Community Justice Scotland

8th December 2022