



Restorative Justice Action Plan

ANNUAL REPORT

2025/2026

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Foreword: Karyn McCluskey

At Community Justice Scotland, we're focused on one thing: responding to harm in ways that genuinely support people and communities. This annual report shows what that looks like in practice.

When someone is harmed, the impact runs deep; how they see themselves, how safe they feel, how they connect with others. If our response doesn't recognise that, we risk making things worse. Restorative justice offers something different. It isn't easy, and it isn't meant to be. But it creates space for people to be heard, to understand what's happened, and to begin to repair it.

This past year we've moved from building momentum to strengthening the foundations. The Policy and Practice Framework, the learning from the Test Case Project, the growth of national partnerships – these matter. We are in a stronger position than we've ever been.

But we're also at a turning point.

The national options appraisal now underway will shape how restorative justice is delivered, resourced and sustained. With a new Parliament in place, there is both an opportunity and a responsibility to recognise restorative justice for what it is: a meaningful, human response to harm that should sit at the heart of a modern justice system.

Access is still uneven. The challenges are real. But the direction is clear and the foundation is strong. Practitioners, partners and people with lived experience are shaping this work together. That gives me confidence, I have seen restorative justice in practice in my own work and seen the immense difference it can make.

This isn't about creating a new service. It's about changing how we think about justice. Making space for accountability, dialogue and repair in a system that has too often struggled to provide any of those things.

To everyone who contributed this year – thank you. Especially those who took part in restorative justice themselves. Their honesty and courage continue to shape what this can become.

When we get the next phase right, we'll create something lasting.

Karyn McCluskey

Chief Executive, Community Justice Scotland

Foreword: Fiona Dyer

This year, work to progress restorative justice as a meaningful and accessible option for children who have been impacted by harm, and for those who have caused harm, has reached an important stage. CYCJ's commitment remains clear: to ensure that every development in RJ policy, practice and delivery strengthens children's rights, is shaped by young people's voices, and delivers the outcomes children need to thrive. Children and young people tell us that they welcome the option of restorative justice – that it can help make things better for everyone.

The completion of the Restorative Justice Test Case Project has been central to building the strong foundations needed for high-quality, consistent RJ. It has given us vital evidence about what restorative justice looks like for children in Scotland today—the hope it offers, the barriers they face, and the conditions required for safe, trauma informed practice. In March 2026, the publication of the Restorative Justice Policy and Practice Framework, set out a clear national position rooted in children's rights. As a centre whose vision is for Scotland's approach to children and young people to be rights-respecting, we welcome this commitment.

Raising awareness has been another key focus. This year's engagement work has reached more people than ever, helping communities, professionals and families understand not just what restorative justice is, but why it matters—especially for children and young people whose experiences of harm, conflict or adversity are often misunderstood.

Taken together, these developments show a system becoming more aligned, more confident and more ready for national delivery. Challenges remain, and access is not yet equal. But Scotland now has a stronger evidence base, clearer direction and growing cross sector commitment to ensuring restorative justice becomes a genuine option for every child and young person who wishes to access it.

The imminent options appraisal will offer pathways ahead for what the future could look for RJ delivery in Scotland. As we move into the next phase, decisions about service models and investment will be crucial. What matters most is that we continue to build a system that listens to children, protects their rights, supports their potential and keeps them at the heart of decision making.

Professor Fiona Dyer

Director CYCJ

Executive Summary

During 2025–26, continued progress was made towards achieving the Scottish Government’s vision that restorative justice (RJ) should be available to all those who wish to access it, at a time that is appropriate, and delivered in a consistent, safe and high-quality way. This year represents an important phase in the development of RJ in Scotland, characterised not by rapid expansion, but by consolidation, learning, and the strengthening of the foundations required for sustainable national delivery.

Activity across the three outcomes of the RJ Action Plan has demonstrated a growing level of system maturity

Under Outcome 1, important strides have been made in building the infrastructure, partnerships, and strategic clarity necessary to support availability. The completion of the Restorative Justice Test Case Project has provided critical Scotland-specific evidence on current practice, highlighting both the strong appetite for restorative justice and the practical barriers that continue to limit delivery. These collective and cumulative insights have contributed to the development of the Restorative Justice Policy and Practice Framework, published in March 2026, which establishes a clear national foundation for safe, trauma-informed and rights-based practice. Alongside this, strengthened governance and collaboration mechanisms, including the Restorative Justice Development Forum and the Directory Advisory Group, have improved coordination, supported shared learning, and increased readiness across the system for future implementation.

Progress under Outcome 2 reflects a clear shift towards strengthening the quality and sustainability of delivery through investment in workforce capability. Training provision, practitioner networks and specialist learning opportunities have supported the development of practitioner confidence and competence, particularly in working with complex and sensitive cases. At the same time, early exploration of more strategic approaches to training and accreditation represents a significant step towards addressing inconsistencies in practice and ensuring quality assurance over the longer term. This work has reinforced the importance of a skilled, supported, and reflective workforce as a cornerstone of effective restorative justice and has begun to lay the groundwork for a more coordinated national approach to professional development.

Under Outcome 3, activity has focused on increasing public awareness and understanding of restorative justice, recognising that availability is dependent not only on services and practitioners, but also on informed engagement from individuals, communities and professionals. A coordinated programme of digital engagement, national events, education activity and creative outputs has significantly broadened the reach and visibility of restorative justice across Scotland. Importantly, this work is

moving beyond raising awareness in abstract terms, instead centring lived experience and human stories to deepen understanding of the impact and value of restorative approaches. This has been reflected in strong levels of engagement, including a high demand for learning and a consistent flow of enquiries about access to restorative justice across harm types.

Outcome	Focus Area	Progressive Themes	Outputs
One	Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased consistency of provision - Clearer and more coherent referral pathways - Strengthened national and local collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restorative Justice Test Case Project - Restorative Justice Policy and Practice Framework - RJ Development Forum and Directory Advisory Group - RJ Approaches Group - Research activity and learning visits - European Forum for Restorative Justice participation
Two	Quality and Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expanded and diversified training provision - Strengthened practitioner networks and peer learning - Increased emphasis on trauma-informed and rights-based practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RJ Learning Module - RJ and Hate Crime training - Practitioner networks - Education Scotland online resource - CYCJ Annual Practice Guide (Section 12)
Three	Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased communication and engagement activity - Broader stakeholder participation - Growing public understanding of restorative justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RJ Exhibition - “A Day of Reflection, Learning and Action” event - “The Power of Dialogue” event - RJ inputs across educational settings - RJ Awareness Week campaign - Blogs and reflective outputs - Lived Experience short film - “Balancing the Rights...” webinar - EFRJ international seminar presentation

Taken together, progress during 2025–26 demonstrates that Scotland is moving from a position of early development towards greater coherence, alignment and readiness for delivery. While access to RJ remains uneven and significant structural challenges

persist, there is now a stronger evidence base, clearer national direction, and growing cross-sector commitment to embedding restorative justice within the justice system and beyond. The work undertaken this year provides a critical platform for the next phase of development, in which decisions about service models, investment and implementation will be required to ensure that restorative justice becomes a meaningful and equitable option for people across Scotland.

The Scottish Government's vision for Restorative Justice

This report will provide an overview of the progress for the [Restorative Justice Action Plan](#) during the sixth year of delivery: April 2025 – March 2026. The information will be presented under headings related to the three outcomes of the action plan covering the availability of restorative justice across Scotland, the quality of the restorative justice services delivered, and public awareness and understanding of restorative justice. The report will conclude with the next steps toward achieving the outcomes and a summary.

Progress of the Restorative Justice Action Plan

This section of the report will detail the progress of the Restorative Justice Action Plan under subject headings and demonstrate how these activities made progress towards each outcome.

1 Outcome 1 – Restorative Justice is Available Across Scotland

Throughout 2025–26, work under Outcome 1 focused on strengthening the conditions, infrastructure, and system capacity required to ensure RJ can be made available consistently, safely, and sustainably across Scotland. Rather than prioritising rapid expansion, activity during this reporting year emphasised learning from practice, consolidating leadership and governance mechanisms, and informing future national decision-making.

This approach reflects shared recognition among Community Justice Scotland (CJS), the Children and Young People’s Centre for Justice (CYCJ), and Scottish Government colleagues that restorative justice must be embedded carefully within Scotland’s justice and care systems. Ensuring availability requires not only skilled practitioners, but also well-defined referral pathways, strong partnership working, appropriate safeguards, and clarity about roles and responsibilities across statutory and third sector organisations.

1.1 Restorative Justice Test Case Project

A central pillar of progress during 2025–26 was the continuation and completion of the [Restorative Justice Test Case Project](#), jointly delivered by CJS and CYCJ, with funding from the Scottish Government. Building on work initiated in the previous financial year, the project generated Scotland-specific evidence on the current delivery of restorative justice and identified key opportunities and challenges in developing a nationally consistent model of provision.

The project found strong interest and clear potential to expand RJ across Scotland; however, current provision remains limited and uneven, with significant structural barriers affecting delivery. These include underdeveloped referral pathways, inconsistent funding arrangements, and complex information-sharing processes, all of which contributed to many cases not progressing beyond early stages. Practitioners emphasised the critical role of effective partnership working, accurate information at the point of referral, and the need for both robust risk management and flexible, person-centred approaches. While relatively few cases resulted in face-to-face outcomes, the findings highlight that meaningful benefits can still be achieved at

earlier stages of engagement. Overall, the project underscores that delivering a nationally consistent RJ service will require sustained investment in infrastructure, improved awareness and understanding of RJ strengthened data-sharing and partnership arrangements, and enhanced support for practitioner development.

1.2 Restorative Justice Policy and Practice Framework

[The Restorative Justice Policy and Practice Framework](#), developed collaboratively by CJS, CYCJ and the Scottish Government, was published in March 2026, and sets out a national foundation for the consistent delivery of restorative justice across Scotland. The framework outlines core principles and minimum standards for practice, ensuring that services are safe, trauma-informed, and focused on the needs of those affected by harm. It emphasises key elements including accessibility of RJ at appropriate points, robust risk assessment and safeguarding, effective partnership working and information sharing, and the importance of skilled, supported practitioners. It also provides a basis for monitoring and evaluation, supporting quality assurance and continuous improvement as Scotland works towards a more consistent and widely available RJ system.

1.3 Restorative Justice Development Forum

The Restorative Justice Development Forum, established and jointly chaired by CJS and CYCJ, continued to play a key role in supporting the development of RJ across Scotland during 2025–26. Meeting bi-monthly, the Forum provides a national platform for leaders from statutory and third sector organisations to share learning, exchange practice, and collaboratively address common challenges. Over the year, engagement remained strong, with over 50 members registered and consistent attendance from a broad range of local authorities and partner organisations.

Across the reporting period, the Forum evolved in both content and delivery, responding to practitioner need and growing interest. Early sessions focused on shaping the Forum’s purpose and structure, while subsequent meetings explored practical approaches to developing services, including initial steps in establishing restorative justice provision and insights from experienced practitioners. Later sessions incorporated learning from the Restorative Justice Test Case Project, providing an opportunity for members to reflect on emerging evidence and consider implications for local and national development. Additional inputs from guest speakers highlighted a range of practice models, including work with those affected by harm, youth restorative justice services, and targeted interventions such as hate crime prevention.

The Forum has increasingly been recognised as a valuable space for peer learning, reflection, and sector-wide collaboration. In response to sustained demand and positive feedback, session lengths have been extended to allow deeper discussion

and knowledge exchange. Overall, the Forum has strengthened connections across the restorative justice landscape, supported shared understanding of key challenges, and contributed to building capacity and momentum towards a more consistent and accessible model of restorative justice in Scotland.

1.4 Restorative Justice Directory Advisory Group

During 2025–26, progress was made towards the development of a national directory of restorative justice service providers for both adults and children in Scotland. This work began with the co-production of a scoping paper by CJS and CYCJ, which identified clear stakeholder demand for a national tool to improve visibility and access to RJ services.

Following consultation with the Restorative Justice Forum Scotland, a short-life Directory Advisory Group was established, co-chaired by CJS and CYCJ and comprising representatives from key national partners including the Scottish Government, Sacro, Police Scotland, Victim Support Scotland, the Restorative Justice Forum Scotland, the Scottish Network for Restorative Justice Researchers, and the Restorative Justice Council. The group has met regularly to guide the development process, supported by wider engagement with additional stakeholders such as the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service.

Throughout the year, the Advisory Group has led stakeholder consultation to identify user needs, define essential criteria for the directory, and explore potential delivery models and hosting options. This has included co-hosted engagement events and collaborative input from partners across the sector. The work has provided a strong foundation for the development of a national directory, with options and recommendations being prepared for submission to the Scottish Government to inform next steps.

1.5 Restorative Approaches Group

The Restorative Approaches Group, chaired by CYCJ, has continued to play an important role in strengthening collaboration and promoting consistency in RJ across Scotland. Bringing together key partners including Mediation Scotland, Education Scotland, the Violence Reduction Unit and The Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution, the group has expanded its reach and influence over the year.

Through regular meetings, the group has provided a valuable platform for sharing learning, identifying gaps, and developing joint approaches to restorative practice across sectors, particularly within education. A key achievement has been the collaborative development of a [national online resource](#), hosted by Education

Scotland, which brings together training opportunities and materials to support practitioners.

The group has also contributed to national awareness-raising activity, including co-hosting a well-attended webinar during Restorative Justice Week which focused on restorative and relational practice in Scottish education.

Ongoing work to develop and refine shared resources, alongside plans for further events and practitioner engagement, continues to support a more coherent and accessible approach to restorative practices across Scotland.

1.6 Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout 2025–26, CJS and CYCJ undertook a wide-ranging programme of activity to raise awareness of RJ and support its development, integration and embedding across Scotland. This work was underpinned by sustained engagement with Scottish Government colleagues, local authorities, third sector organisations, and a diverse range of national and international stakeholders, all contributing to the promotion of a consistent, trauma-informed and rights-respecting approach to restorative justice for both children and adults.

A central focus during the year was contributing to the Victim Support Scotland (VSS)-led development of a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) service, aligned with the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024. CYCJ played an active role in shaping this work through participation in mapping, blueprinting, and theory of change processes. This included supporting consideration of how restorative justice can be effectively and meaningfully embedded within the SPOC model, while ensuring that the rights, needs and experiences of both those harmed and children in conflict with the law are central to its design.

Alongside national policy and service development, CJS and CYCJ have continued to prioritise local implementation and sector-wide capacity building. This has included ongoing support for the multi-agency Edinburgh Hate Crime and Restorative Justice Project, as well as targeted engagement with Community Justice Partnerships, youth justice teams, and Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) practitioners across a number of local authority areas, including Highland, Dundee, South Lanarkshire and East Renfrewshire. In Highland, this engagement contributed to increased stakeholder awareness and collaboration, culminating in a multi-agency event, [*Restorative Justice: Exploring a Highland Model*](#), which has already led to new partners joining the local working group and early plans to pilot a restorative justice service.

Engagement throughout the year has extended across a broad range of sectors and contexts, including secure care providers, NHS services, the Retail Crime Task Force, and specialist organisations supporting those affected by harm. Through this work, CJS and CYCJ have supported exploration of how RJ can respond to different forms

of harm, including retail-related harm and sexual harm, and how awareness and access can be improved for both adults and children. For example, an input by CJS to the Rape Crisis Scotland National Group provided an opportunity to explore the role of RJ in cases of sexual harm. The session focused on sharing learning about RJ, including insights from survivors' experiences and needs within restorative processes, and invited reflection on its potential application in this context.

In June, CJS met with the [Centre for Good Relations](#) to explore shared priorities, particularly the intersection of community mediation and RJ. Discussions focused on opportunities to collaborate in supporting community dialogue around sectarianism in Glasgow.

As part of the [Interfaith Restorative Justice Project](#), CJS contributed to the training of restorative justice facilitators and the establishment of community listening circles in Glasgow. Project partners—[Faith & Belief Forum](#), [Interfaith Glasgow](#), and [Why Me?](#)—subsequently published a report, [Restorative Responses and Interfaith Instincts](#), outlining key findings from this work, alongside wider research on how individuals and communities across the UK experienced and responded to the summer 2024 unrest. Both CJS and CYCJ have delivered a wide range of inputs to professional networks, practitioner forums and strategic groups, including the EEL Practitioner Forum, the Community Justice Peer Network, and the Scottish Quakers Community Justice Network. These contributions have supported increased understanding, confidence and interest in RJ across the workforce, while also identifying areas where further development and support are required. This activity has been complemented by ongoing involvement in the Scottish Network for Restorative Justice Researchers, helping to strengthen connections between research, policy and practice, including planning for future learning opportunities such as a trauma-informed restorative justice webinar.

CYCJ and CJS have also contributed to wider system reform and policy discussions over the course of the year. This has included engagement with the Children's Hearings Redesign, where opportunities were identified to strengthen awareness and understanding of RJ through enhanced training and guidance for panel members and Chairs. Contributions to the National Youth Justice Conference and the publication of blogs and reflective pieces have further supported the sharing of learning and promotion of the transformative potential of RJ.

In February and March 2026, the CJS team carried out a series of fact-finding visits to RJ services across the UK and Ireland. The visits explored costs, accreditation models, referral pathways and delivery approaches, helping to inform the forthcoming options appraisal for RJ in Scotland. Visits included meetings with services in Shetland, Northumbria, Dublin, Wexford, and Belfast, including third-sector organisations, probation services and police-based victim support teams. Alongside these visits, CYCJ colleagues also engaged in discussions with international partners — including

in the Netherlands – to explore comparative models and approaches to delivery. Several visits have been followed up through online meetings, with further learning visits planned in the coming months. We are grateful to all the organisations who generously shared their time, experience and insight.

Collectively, this programme of work has strengthened partnerships, increased awareness and understanding of RJ across a range of sectors and supported the development of both local practice and national infrastructure. It has also laid important foundations for expanding equitable access to RJ and embedding consistent, trauma-informed and rights-respecting approaches across Scotland. Close collaboration between CJS, CYCJ and partners will remain essential as this work progresses into the next phase of development.

1.7 European Forum for Restorative Justice

CJS continued to contribute to the [European Forum for Restorative Justice](#) through its Training Committee, Communications Committee and Gender-Based Violence Working Group, supporting international knowledge exchange and raising the profile of Scotland's restorative justice work. In December, CJS participated in a planning meeting for committee chairs and co-chairs in Leuven, Belgium, which focused on shared challenges, collaborative solutions and strengthening engagement. Held alongside the Restorative Justice and Arts Festival, the event also provided creative inspiration for public engagement through arts-based approaches, which was later reflected in a published blog.

CJS also contributed to the landmark publication [Restorative Justice and Human Rights](#), co-editing the magazine, shaping its key themes, and providing a featured article exploring the links between RJ and human rights. Alongside this, ongoing work within the Forum includes reviewing training standards to support sustainable provision and advancing the development of specialised approaches to RJ in the context of gender-based violence.

2 Outcome 2 – High Quality Restorative Justice Services are Delivered by Trained Facilitators

During 2025–26, progress under Outcome 2 focused on strengthening the quality, consistency, and sustainability of RJ delivery by investing in training, professional networks, and strategic workforce development. CJS and CYCJ continued to work closely to support RJ practitioners working across statutory and third-sector contexts, recognising that the availability of RJ is intrinsically linked to the confidence, competence, and support of those delivering it.

CYJC produce an annual practice guide, called 'Children and young people in conflict with the law: policy, practice and legislation', which is aimed at practitioners and managers who work with children and young people who are at risk of, or come into conflict with, the law. The guide is also valuable for academics, policymakers, educators, students and anyone else with an interest in youth and criminal justice. There are nineteen sections, including [Section 12: Restorative Justice](#), which offers 24-pages of current legislation, policy, research and practice relating to RJ with children and young people in Scotland and beyond. The guide is renewed every year to ensure information is relevant, meaningful and accurate with the latest version published on June 15, 2026.

The year represented a shift from primarily establishing introductory learning opportunities toward deepening practice, exploring strategic approaches to training and accreditation, and supporting practitioners to navigate complex and sensitive cases within a trauma-informed and rights-respecting framework.

2.1 Restorative Justice Online Learning Module

[The Restorative Justice Online Learning Module](#), developed by CJS and authored by Professor Tim Chapman and Tania Nascimento, continued to play a central role in building foundational understanding of restorative justice during 2025–26. Available through the [CJS Learning Hub](#) and associated online platforms, the module provides an accessible introduction to restorative justice principles, values, processes, benefits, and risks.



Throughout the reporting period, the module was widely utilised by frontline justice staff, practitioners from related sectors, individuals new to RJ practice, and stakeholders seeking to develop their contextual understanding. Monitoring of uptake and user feedback confirmed its ongoing value as a core learning resource, while also highlighting growing demand for opportunities to develop knowledge and skills beyond an introductory level. This feedback has informed early considerations for future updates to the module, as well as the development of complementary training

provision aligned with the Restorative Justice Policy and Practice Framework and emerging workforce needs.

In parallel, CYCJ began exploring opportunities to develop RJ content within its own [e-learning](#) platform. This work aims to ensure alignment with youth justice and children's rights perspectives, while contributing to a more coherent and joined-up learning offer across both adult and children's RJ contexts.

2.2 Restorative Justice and Hate Crime Training

Throughout 2025–26, CJS continued to deliver Restorative Justice and Hate Crime training, recognising both the complexity of harm associated with hate crime and the specialist skills required to support safe restorative processes in this context.

Training programmes delivered during the year included four-day courses attended by justice practitioners from a range of local authorities, including Edinburgh, the Highlands, Dumfries and Galloway, West Lothian, the Borders, and other areas. Participants included criminal justice social workers, youth justice practitioners, and community justice staff working with diverse populations.

The training focused on:

- the specific harms and impacts associated with hate crime
- centring the needs and safety of those harmed
- applying restorative principles within complex and sensitive contexts
- supporting accountability while avoiding re-traumatisation

Grounded in RJ theory and practice as taught by Professor Tim Chapman, the training equipped participants with practical tools to assess suitability, manage risk, and facilitate restorative interventions where appropriate.

Feedback from participants throughout the year indicated strong demand for this specialist training, reinforcing its importance within wider workforce development planning.

2.3 Restorative Justice Practitioners' Network

CJS continued to chair and coordinate the Scottish Restorative Justice Practitioners' Network throughout 2025–26, providing an essential national space for peer support, shared learning, and professional development.

The Network remained open to:

- current RJ practitioners
- individuals awaiting training or practice opportunities
- those with a general professional interest in restorative justice

Meetings held during the year explored a range of practice-relevant themes, including:

- partnership working and risk assessment
- Outcome Agreements and proportionality
- creative approaches to preparation stages
- managing complexity and safeguarding within restorative justice cases

Participation in the Network continued to grow, with members representing statutory services, third-sector organisations, and emerging local provision. Practitioners consistently highlighted the Network as a vital forum for reducing isolation, sharing challenges, and maintaining reflective practice in an area of work that can be emotionally demanding.

Alongside this, CYCJ continued to respond to individual practitioner enquiries throughout the year, providing signposting to training opportunities, networks, and practice guidance, and supporting connection across the RJ community.

2.4 Strategic Development of Training and Accreditation

A key development during 2025–26 was the progression of strategic scoping work on restorative justice training and accreditation in Scotland. CJS and CYCJ worked collaboratively to explore potential models for developing a more coherent national approach to training, recognising the need to balance accessibility with consistency, quality assurance, and long-term sustainability.

Engagement throughout the year included ongoing dialogue with the Restorative Justice Council, particularly following its work supporting Northern Ireland's new model of accreditation, as well as with international partners through the European Forum for Restorative Justice and practitioners and service leads across Scotland. These discussions explored the potential benefits of accredited training pathways while also considering the risks associated with over-formalisation, including possible impacts on workforce capacity and equitable access to training opportunities. Consideration was also given to how any future approach aligns with the Restorative Justice Policy and Practice Framework.

While this work remains ongoing, it represents an important step towards ensuring that restorative justice training in Scotland develops in a planned and evidence-informed way, strengthening practitioner confidence and supporting public trust in RJ services.

3 Outcome 3 – There is a Public Awareness and Understanding of Restorative Justice Across Scotland

During 2025–26, CJS and CYCJ continued to prioritise work under Outcome 3, focusing on strengthening understanding and engagement with RJ across Scotland. Activity during the year reflected a growing recognition that developing RJ is not only about building services and workforce capacity, but also about shaping how it is understood, communicated and experienced by a wide range of audiences.

Work in this area has therefore centred on deepening knowledge and confidence among individuals, communities and professionals, while supporting more informed and meaningful engagement with restorative approaches. Efforts have increasingly moved beyond introductory awareness-raising, instead placing greater emphasis on lived experience, storytelling and practical insight to illustrate how RJ operates in practice and the value it can bring.

Activity throughout the year has engaged diverse audiences, including members of the public, people affected by harm, practitioners in adjacent sectors, policymakers, students and international partners. Across all activity, a strong focus has been maintained on ensuring that messaging is accurate, trauma-informed, rights-respecting and aligned with the Restorative Justice Policy and Practice Framework, supporting a more consistent and mature understanding of restorative justice across Scotland.

3.1 Digital Engagement and Online Presence

Digital engagement remained a key channel for awareness-raising during 2025–26. CJS and CYCJ continued to use websites, blogs, social media, and digital resources to share information on RJ, promote events and learning opportunities, and disseminate insights from practice and research.

Notably, digital engagement activity increasingly highlighted the human dimension of RJ, moving beyond abstract explanations of process to include reflections, lived-experience narratives, and practitioner perspectives. This approach reflects growing recognition that understanding RJ requires appreciation not only of its structure, but also of its relational and emotional dimensions.



3.2 Engagement with Educational Institutions

Throughout the year, CYCJ responded to requests from school, college and university students—providing information and contributing to academic interviews to enhance learners’ knowledge of RJ and its wider policy and practice context—while CJS contributed to research, training, and awareness-raising across Scotland. This included supporting postgraduate research into the use of RJ in domestic abuse cases in Scotland.

In partnership with CYCJ and Education Scotland, CJS also worked with Northfield Academy in Aberdeen to strengthen restorative practices, delivering facilitator training to teachers to support conflict resolution and difficult conversations within the school. In December, CJS delivered introductory presentations on restorative justice to Advanced Higher Modern Studies students at the George Watson’s College Crime and Justice Conference, alongside showcasing the national Restorative Justice Exhibition to support further learning and engagement.

3.3 Restorative Justice in Scotland: A Day of Reflection, Learning and Action

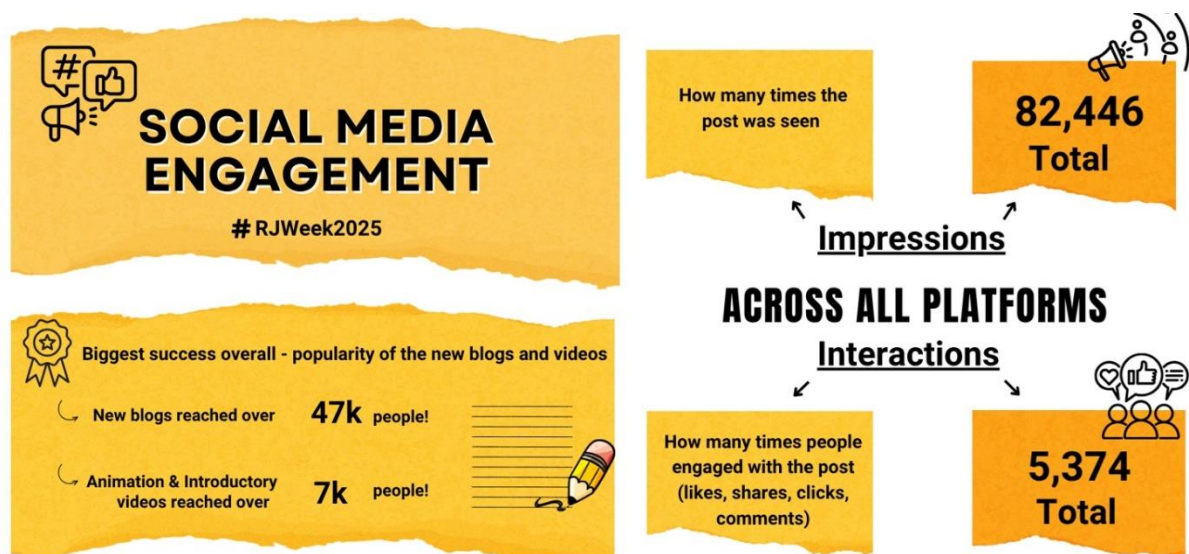
A key milestone in 2025–26 was the delivery of the national stakeholder event, [*Restorative Justice in Scotland: A Day of Reflection, Learning and Action*](#), held during Restorative Justice Week in November. Hosted by CYCJ with support from the Scottish Government, the event brought together 80 participants from across statutory and third sector organisations, with demand significantly exceeding available places.

The event provided a valuable platform for reflection, shared learning, and co-design, with a particular focus on RJ for children and young people. Through presentations, facilitated discussions and a structured design exercise, participants contributed insights on current practice and future development. Feedback was highly positive, and the event generated a notable increase in enquiries. Learning captured from the discussions is being analysed to identify key themes, opportunities and barriers, and

will be published in a report, as well as inform future policy and practice development, including a forthcoming national options appraisal.

3.4 Restorative Justice Awareness Week 2025

Restorative Justice Week 2025 (16–22 November) marked a significant milestone in coordinated awareness-raising, with CJS, CYCJ and Sacro delivering a shared campaign to maximise consistency and reach. Under the theme “From Question to Principle: Embedding Restorative Justice in Human Rights”, the campaign positioned RJ within a rights-based framework, highlighting its role in promoting dignity, participation and access to justice. A diverse range of multimedia content—including blogs, videos, illustrations, webinars and learning resources—was shared across platforms, reaching over 82,000 people and engaging both existing and new audiences nationally and internationally. High-performing blog content alone reached over 47,000 people, benefiting from targeted promotion and achieving global visibility. Beyond digital impact, the campaign drove meaningful engagement, including increased public enquiries about access to restorative justice services, leading to the establishment of a dedicated enquiries function within CJS. Complementary activity, such as practitioner training delivered by Sacro, further extended the campaign’s reach and impact, reinforcing Restorative Justice Week as a key driver of awareness, engagement and sector development.



3.5 Restorative Justice Exhibition

The Restorative Justice Exhibition continued to play an important role in raising awareness and engaging diverse audiences during 2025–26. Showcased at Community Justice Scotland’s national event [In the Age of AI, can Justice be Smarter?](#), the exhibition featured graphic illustrations developed from discussions with people

affected by harm, including both those who experienced harm and those who caused it. These visual insights explored what a trauma-informed, humane and person-centred justice process should look like, and have contributed to shaping Scotland's emerging Restorative Justice Policy and Practice Framework. The exhibition was widely praised for making RJ concepts accessible, centring lived experience, and prompting meaningful reflection on the limitations of traditional justice processes. It also stimulated dialogue among practitioners and decision makers and generated strong interest in sharing the materials more widely, supporting continued engagement and impact beyond individual events.

3.6 The Power of Dialogue: Human Stories of Restorative Justice

In March 2026, CJS hosted [The Power of Dialogue: Human Stories of Restorative Justice in Edinburgh](#), an in-person event exploring the role of RJ in responding to harm and supporting accountability, learning and connection. The event brought together lived experience, practitioner insight and creative reflection to illustrate the human impact of restorative approaches. Contributions from Jacob Dunne—author, educator and leading advocate for restorative justice—and Lynn Burns, victims' rights advocate and expert member of the Scottish Sentencing Council, offered powerful personal reflections on harm, responsibility and the possibilities created through open and honest dialogue. Their testimony was complemented by practitioner insight from Gael Cochrane, Learning Development and Innovation Lead at CJS, and excerpts from the acclaimed stage production *Punch*, inspired by Jacob Dunne's own story. Together, the speakers highlighted the importance of centring people, creating safe spaces for dialogue, and recognising RJ as a meaningful and humane response, even in cases of severe harm. The event was attended by a broad and diverse range of stakeholders, including justice social workers, third sector partners, Sheriffs, academics and practitioners, with approximately 95 attendees in total.

3.7 Insights and thought leadership

Across the 2025–26 quarterly reporting period, a range of blogs were used to capture learning, amplify practitioner insight, and support awareness-raising of RJ across Scotland and internationally. Early in the year, reflective pieces from CYCJ and partners highlighted restorative justice's transformative potential and its growing relevance across contexts, including ["You might not yet know the question... but the answer is probably restorative justice"](#) and ["More Than a Process: The Life-Changing Potential of Restorative Justice,"](#) alongside an international reflection on restorative justice practice with children on the move. As activity progressed, blogs increasingly focused on local implementation and system development, including reflections from the Highland event (["Strengthening Communities Through Restorative Justice in Highland"](#)), illustrating how RJ can be embedded within community justice partnerships and inspire service development.

During the latter half of the year, blogs played a key role in disseminating insights from international collaboration and national engagement. These included reflections from the European Forum for Restorative Justice ([“Reflections from Leuven: Sharing Ideas, Shaping Practice”](#)) and pieces linking RJ to wider human rights principles, such as [“Restorative Justice and Human Rights: a Facilitator’s Perspective”](#) and [“Making the Case for Embedding Restorative Justice in Human Rights.”](#) Additional blogs—such as [“Why Restorative Justice Matters”](#)—further broadened the narrative by incorporating perspectives from partner organisations and lived experience, collectively generating significant reach and engagement during Restorative Justice Week.

3.8 Lived-Experience Short Film

Building on the Restorative Justice Test Case Project, CJS supported the development and production of a short narrative film based on a restorative letter written by a person harmed during a facilitated RJ process. The film explores the emotional journey and impact of restorative justice in an accessible and sensitive way. Developed in partnership with Media Education, and shaped collaboratively with the individual involved, the project progressed from initial concept to completed production over the course of the year. The finished film will be used as an awareness-raising and learning resource across education, justice and community settings, supporting greater understanding of the human impact and potential of RJ.

3.9 Balancing the Rights of Children who Harm and those who are Harmed

On 10 February, CYCJ chaired and hosted a webinar, [Balancing the Rights of Children who Harm and those who are Harmed](#). Judy Warburton (SCRA) presented recent research exploring how the needs and experiences of individuals harmed by children can be better understood and supported. The session also examined how the rights of both children who cause harm and those who are harmed can be fully realised within Scotland’s youth justice system, highlighting evidence of support for RJ among victims and young people. The event attracted the highest number of attendees to a CYCJ webinar to date, reflecting strong interest in this area.

3.10 International Engagement

Across the reporting period, CJS and CYCJ have maintained active engagement with international RJ networks to support shared learning and inform developments in Scotland. This has included ongoing participation in European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ) activity, alongside contributions to international knowledge exchange. Notably, CYCJ presented at the [EFRJ International Seminar](#) in Athens, highlighting Scotland’s progress in embedding a child-centred, rights-based approach informed by UNCRC incorporation and the Independent Care Review. In December 2025, CJS also contributed to a strategic meeting in Leuven, strengthening international collaboration and helping to shape shared priorities across the field. Collectively, these

engagements have supported ongoing knowledge exchange and ensured that emerging policy and practice in Scotland continue to be informed by international evidence and experience.

Next Steps

Building on the progress made during 2025–26, the next phase of delivery will focus on translating the strong foundations established through the Restorative Justice Action Plan into clear, evidence-informed decisions about the future model of restorative justice in Scotland.

A central priority for the National Restorative Justice Team will be the completion of a national options appraisal, undertaken in line with the HM Treasury Green Book approach. This work will draw together learning from across the programme to assess the costs, benefits, risks and feasibility of different models of delivery, and will provide recommendations to the Scottish Government on one or more models for the sustainable delivery of RJ across Scotland. The appraisal will be informed by Scotland-specific evidence, stakeholder engagement activity, and comparative learning from services across the UK and internationally.

Alongside this, work will continue across the three outcomes of the Action Plan to ensure that momentum is maintained, and further progress is made in key areas:

- **Strengthening availability and system readiness (Outcome 1)**

This will include continued development of national infrastructure, including progressing proposals for a national service directory, strengthening referral pathways, and supporting local areas to build capacity and readiness for implementation. Engagement with key partners will continue to ensure RJ effectively embedded within wider system developments, including the Single Point of Contact and children’s hearings redesign.

- **Enhancing quality, consistency and workforce capacity (Outcome 2)**

Activity will focus on further developing approaches to training and accreditation, informed by ongoing scoping work and engagement with national and international partners. Existing learning opportunities, practitioner networks and reflective spaces will continue to be strengthened to support a confident, skilled and supported workforce, aligned with the Restorative Justice Policy and Practice Framework.

- **Increasing awareness, understanding and engagement (Outcome 3)**

Efforts to raise awareness of restorative justice will continue through coordinated communications, events, and digital engagement, with an increasing focus on strengthening awareness and understanding among key stakeholders. This will include closer engagement with policy makers to highlight the potential of restorative justice for people harmed in Scotland, supported by the appointment of a Policy and

Public Affairs Officer to strengthen political awareness, engagement and understanding, and to help drive forward the implementation of a national restorative justice model. This will be undertaken while maintaining a commitment to lived experience, human stories, and rights-based messaging. Together, this will support more informed engagement and contribute to building the conditions necessary for equitable access.

In parallel, the National Team will continue to build on and expand the learning generated through the Restorative Justice Test Case Project, including exploring further opportunities for test cases across a wider range of settings, such as prisons, secure care, health services and community contexts. This will support a deeper understanding of what works in practice, the conditions required for effective delivery, and how barriers can be addressed. This work will be complemented by continued engagement with research, policy and practice developments both within Scotland and internationally, ensuring that future decisions are grounded in a robust and evolving evidence base.

Taken together, these next steps represent a shift from evidence generation and system development toward decision-making, model design and preparation for implementation, ensuring that restorative justice can become a meaningful, accessible and high-quality option for people across Scotland.

Conclusion

The progress made during 2025–26 reflects a growing confidence and maturity in Scotland’s approach to restorative justice. What is increasingly evident is that this is not the work of a single organisation or sector, but a collective effort—shaped through strong partnership working, shared learning, and a common commitment to doing things differently. The continued collaboration between Community Justice Scotland, the Children and Young People’s Centre for Justice, the Scottish Government, and partners across statutory and third sector organisations will remain essential as we move into the next phase of development.

Restorative justice is grounded in values of respect, participation, accountability, and repair. It seeks to place people at the centre—ensuring that those who have been harmed have a voice, that those responsible are supported to understand and take responsibility for their actions, and that processes are safe, trauma-informed and meaningful for all involved. The work undertaken this year has reinforced both the importance of these principles and the need to embed them consistently within Scotland’s justice landscape.

Looking ahead, there is a shared ambition to see real, tangible progress in making restorative justice a reality across Scotland. This means moving beyond foundations and evidence-building toward decisions and action that will enable restorative justice to be available, accessible, and of high quality, wherever people live and whatever their circumstances. It also means continuing to listen—to practitioners, to partners, and critically, to those with lived experience of harm—ensuring that development remains responsive and person-centred.

By maintaining a collaborative, evidence-informed and values-driven approach, Scotland is well placed to realise its vision: a justice system where restorative justice is not an aspiration, but a genuine and meaningful option for all who wish to engage in it, at a time that is right for them.