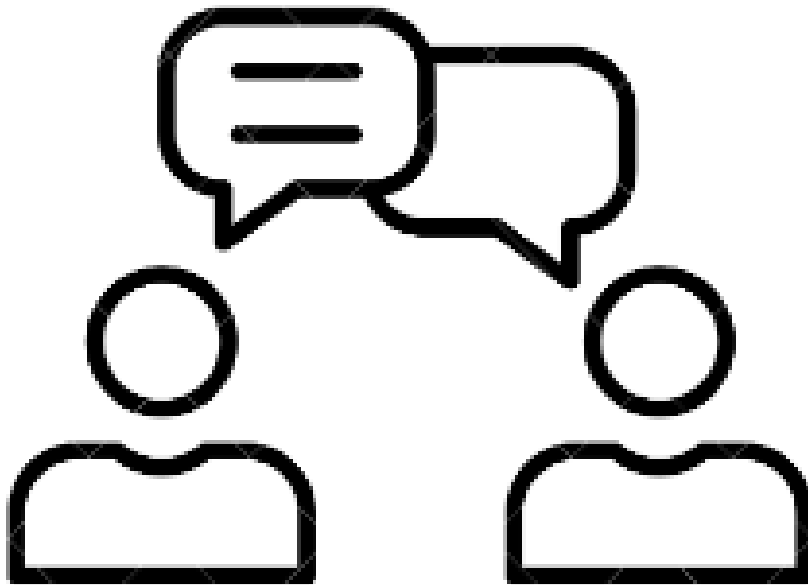


# Relational and Restorative Approaches

## Language



How we use words and how they are interpreted can have a huge effect on how people will respond to us, understand us and make connections with us. The choice of words and the intent of those words can have lasting effects on our connections and can also activate negative lived experiences.

We all have a unique relationship with words and language and how we interpret words and how others interpret them can be profoundly different. Words have varying impacts and can change or influence the messages we send. When working in a *restorative* way it is essential, in order to ensure we are being **fair**, that the language and terms we use are **accessible** and **inclusive**.



**Newcastle  
Children's  
Social Care**

**Child Centred**

**Working Together**

**Family Solutions**

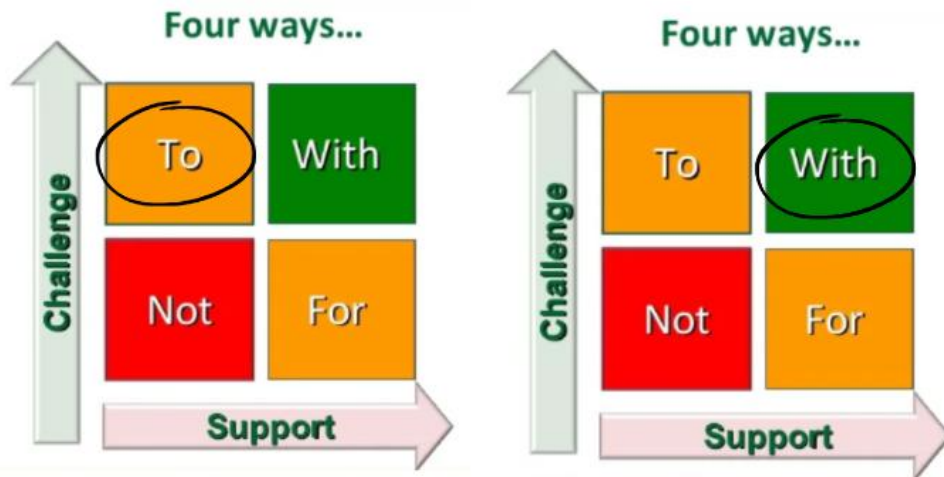
**Safely at Home**

**Balanced Response**

**Challenge and Support**



## Traditional versus Restorative Language



**Traditional language** is centred around punishing/blaming/shaming a person and can therefore result in a person feeling stressed or threatened which activates the brain's fight / flight / freeze / flop response (**see booklet on High Support High Challenge for more information**). Punitive language choices can imply that it was the individual's choice to break the agreed rules. Punishment can then be restrictive, as the discipline is decided by an authority figure who was not involved in the harm and therefore opportunities for reparation missed.

**Restorative language** recognises that problems occur as a result of a breakdown of relationships or unmet needs. The focus is on understanding people's needs, feelings and responsibilities. Solutions are focused on understanding causes of behaviour and offering high support and challenge/structure which separate the deed from the 'doer' to reduce stigmatisation and blame.

Solutions involve direct collaboration with the people involved and give opportunities to understand the effects of negative behaviour, focusing on the future, rather than the past. Open questions are a useful tool to help understand triggers and to explore solutions. Restorative language avoids asking 'why'. The question of 'why' can make us feel defensive and 'put on the spot'; it can trigger a stress response. Restorative language values the importance of seeking to understand before being understood, allowing people to share their perspective and lived experiences to inform how to move forward, recognising that using punitive or blaming language risks activating trauma.

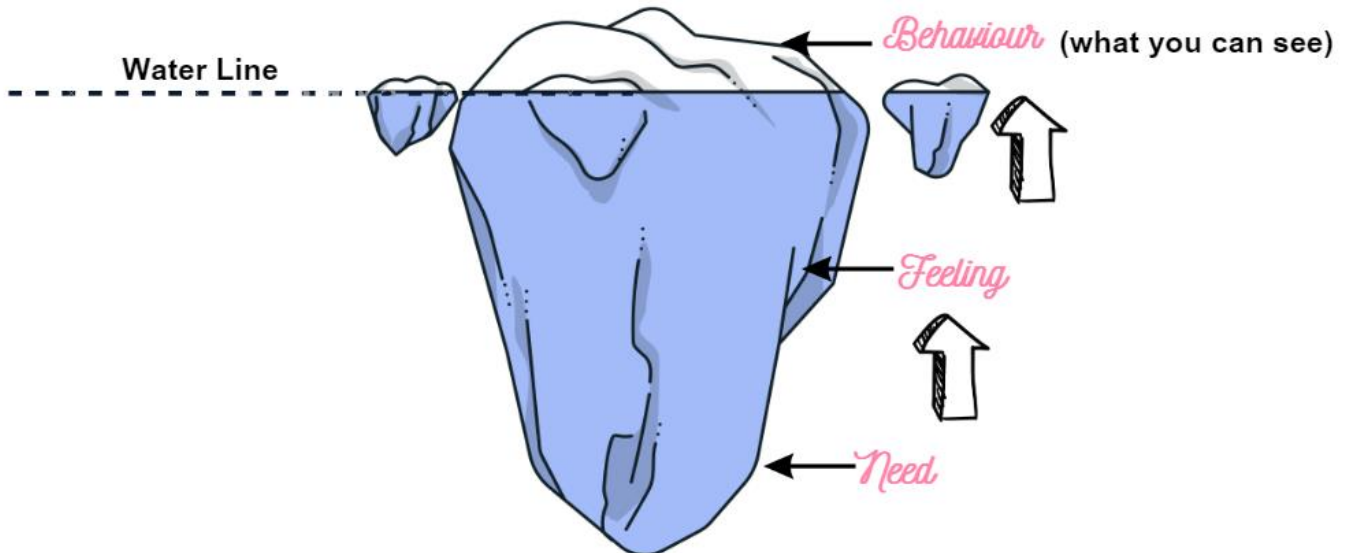


## Difficult Conversations

Challenging conversations are never easy and take courage. Challenging conversations can often trigger a stress response from those involved and so it is important to prepare effectively to avoid this or to mitigate the impact of this. Considering feelings, needs, environment and response ahead of difficult conversations can help keep us regulated.

**Please refer to the High Support/High Challenge Practice Handbook for further information.**

*"A dysregulated person cannot regulate another person"- Dr Bruce Perry.*



## Affective Statements

Affective statements can be used as a non-violent means of early intervention or sharing of observations. They are a way to communicate to another person how they have affected you by their behaviour, this is positive or negative. The language we use makes it non-judgemental and empathetic because we're expressing our feelings, and we're separating the deed from the doer to avoid further shame or guilt or punishment.

### Story/Perspective Phase

Firstly, the story or perspective phase identifies the behaviour, and it is better to be as specific as possible here. For example, "When I see you helping others" is more specific than 'good job' or 'well done' and there is more chance of that behaviour being modelled or repeated. Unwanted behaviour would also be specifically identified, followed by stating the impact by using 'I feel/I felt'. For example, "When the report wasn't submitted on time, I felt concerned as I wanted to share some of the key points from this report". This helps to humanise and show a willingness to empathise and understand, thereby reducing the effects of shame which might be felt in this moment. It may be helpful at this point to avoid using the word disappointed.

### Solution Focused Phase

The solution focused phase identifies the preferred action and best way forward, still reminding people of expectations, but in a more appropriate way. For example, "When the report wasn't submitted on time, I felt concerned as I wanted to share some of the key points from this report. What I need/What I'd like is for us to meet and have a conversation about what's going on for you and how we can help get reports submitted on time".

Story Perspective

*'When I see / hear / notice'*

Impact

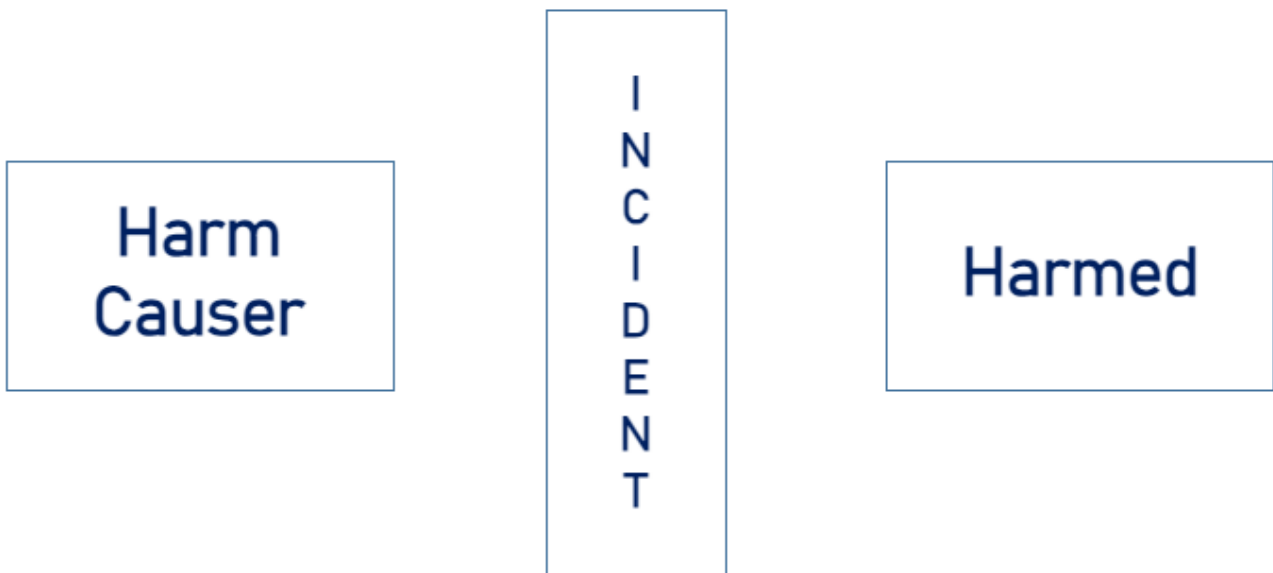
*'I feel'*

Solution / Way Forward

*'What I would like / What I would need is...'*

## Understanding and Identifying Needs

It is important to understand that for a restorative resolution to be achieved **all needs of all parties** need to be met. A key component of working restoratively is working with people when a relationship has broken down or has been damaged and we look to repair. Affective statements can help us to repair harm in the moment, however sometimes a more involved process is required. The process and values remain the same, allowing all affected individuals involved to have their voice heard, their needs met and to reflect and honour their concerns and worries. It is important to reflect and to consider whether we are looking to repair collective harm or looking to support an individual on a one on one basis.



Whether the harm causer or the harmed, discussing feelings, trauma and lived experiences can be difficult so we must ensure that both parties feel they are being treated fairly and heard. **All** parties have their right to have their voice heard and to have their needs met.

It's not about control. It's about understanding.

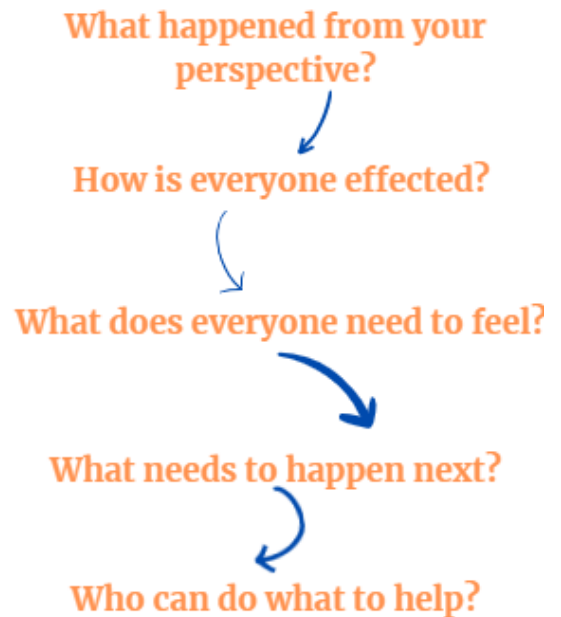
# Traditional and Restorative Approaches to Repair Harm

## Conventional Model

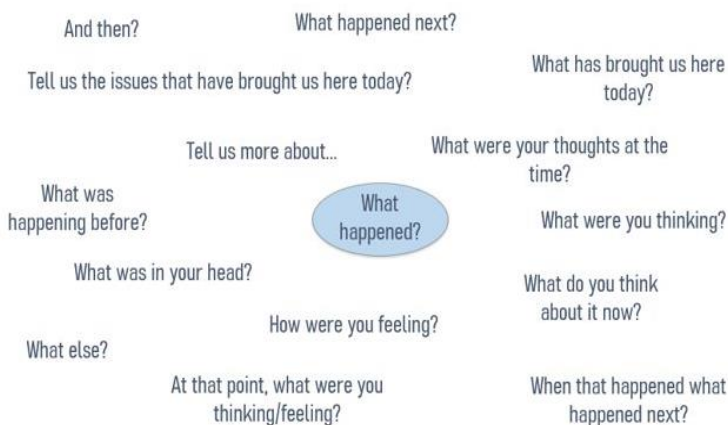


In

## Restorative Model



restorative practice, we strongly advocate that we ‘seek first to understand, then to be understood’. Stephen R Covey quoted that ‘we achieve this by asking restorative open questions in a clearly defined process driven way.’ This timeline/structure is taken from Restorative Justice to help repair harm/conflict but the actual question phrases can be used proactively in day to day practice. These open questions encourage reflection and help to gather richer information:



We start in the **Past** at the **Story Telling Phase** - It is important that we engage with both the perceived harm causer and perceived harmed in the same manner, to ensure a fair process, and to ensure that all parties voices are heard. This is because everyone has a unique perspective and all parties need an opportunity to express this in order to feel respected,

valued and listened to. It is important that we validate people’s feelings and not tell them how they should feel as this is part of their unique perspective. We can challenge from OUR perspective but cannot say others’ feelings are wrong! It is important that people feel heard and understood and not corrected.

We then look at the **Impact** phase in the **Present**, to see how those actions affected people involved. This requires empathy and consideration which can be supported by the restorative approach, and it also helps to identify any underlying or unmet needs of all people affected. For example, parents arguing but not thinking about what the child is overhearing. Often the needs of the victim/perpetrator are the same e.g., support network, clarification going forward, chance for discussion and the traditional approach separates these needs whereas a restorative approach brings people together.



What else needs to happen?  
 Tell us more about...  
 What would that look like?  
 When will it be done?  
 How does that leave you feeling?  
 What do you think about what has been suggested?

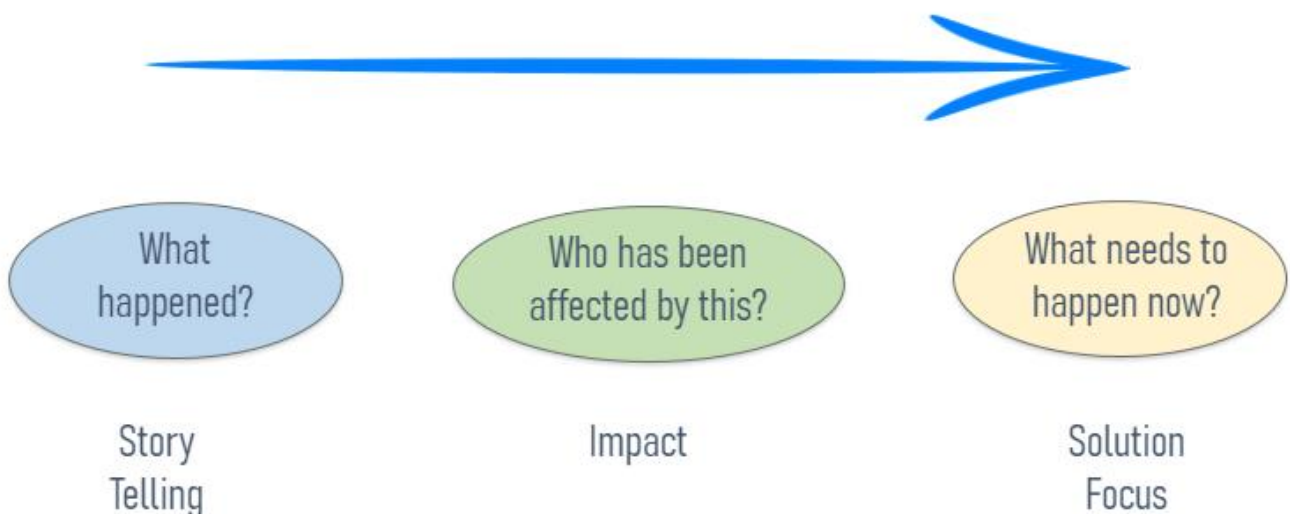
What do you need to move on from this?  
**What needs to happen now?** (highlighted in a yellow oval)  
 Anything else to add?  
 What will it look like when it's done?

Do you all agree with that?  
 Are you okay with that?  
 What will help you to move on from this?  
 If you can't do that, what can you do?

We then most importantly focus on the **Future** with a **solution focussed** lens, trying to understand how to resolve the problem. It is important that although the people directly affected should make the final decision, the facilitator should have an idea beforehand of the solutions which could be appropriate and how change can be brought about. If the

victim/perpetrator take ownership of the solution then it promotes accountability and responsibility, and the conversation moves away from blame.

**Timeline of restorative questioning**





# Restorative Cultures

5 Core Beliefs for a Restorative Culture		
Core Belief 1:		Everyone has their own unique perspective on a situation or event and needs an opportunity to express this in order to feel respected, valued and listened to.
Core Belief 2:		What people think in any given moment influences how they feel at that moment, and these feelings inform how they behave.
Core Belief 3:		Empathy and consideration for others is crucial to the health and wellbeing of us all.
Core Belief 4:		Unmet needs drive our behaviour. If our physical and emotional needs are met, we are able to function at our best. If they are not met, we are under-resourced and less able to cope.
Core Belief 5:		The opportunity to engage in empathic collaborative problem-solving affirms and empowers people.

Hopkins (2015) on building restorative organisational cultures

## Restorative Questions

**What happened?**

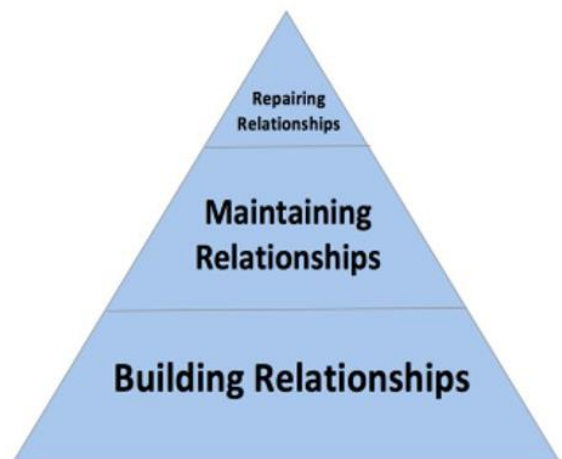
**What were you thinking when it happened?  
What did you feel inside when it happened?**

**How are you now?  
Who else has been affected?**

**What do you need to feel better?**

**What needs to happen to put things right?**

*It's all about relationships, and it all starts with a conversation*



For more information on Relational and Restorative Practice please visit:

[Relational and Restorative Practice - Newcastle Safeguarding](#)

or contact the

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If you're interested in some bespoke Relational Training for your setting, please contact

Relational Practice Trainer

[Lyndsay.Gates@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:Lyndsay.Gates@newcastle.gov.uk)

