

<b>Programme</b>	<b>BBC Breakfast</b>
<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	<b>29.10.09 (06.40)</b>
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Prison Reform Trust Scheme</b>

CHARLIE STAYT

Offenders in England and Wales should apologise to their victims to help reduce the likelihood they'll commit more crime. The Prison Reform Trust says the idea, called restorative justice, has halved the reoffending rate in Northern Ireland. Alice Chapman is head of Youth Justice Agency in Northern Ireland and joins us this morning. Give people a sense of how successful, (unclear) the statistics how successful it's been in Northern Ireland?

ALICE CHAPMAN

This is a very good news story for victims of youth crime. It does what it says on the tin. (Unclear) the most used disposal of the courts, it's the lowest reoffending rates for all community disposals in Northern Ireland, it's got high satisfaction rates from victims and it's much, much lower than a custody, so it does exactly what it says it's going to do.

CHARLIE STAYT

So bringing the victim face to face with the perpetrator, the person who, whatever the crime may be, has a dramatic effect. It's to do with people understanding the cause and effect, is that principally what happens?

ALICE CHAPMAN

Well what happens is, with a trained facilitator we bring together young offenders, somebody aged 10-17, their parents or a responsible adult, a police officer, the victim, the victim's supporters and the victim describes to the offender the exact impact the crime has had on him or her, and it can be for any offence. And the young person will then describe to them why they

did it and the victim is able to look at the young person, in the eyes, and make their assessment, are you really sorry for what you did? Are you remorseful? And they then can have a significant contribution with the young person to say, well here's what I want you to do to make amends to me.

CHARLIE STAYT

Presumably you must have sat in on some of these sessions, have you, I mean could you give me an example of a situation and how the two parties reacted? On the face of it, one could imagine that the victims might be reluctant, they would be, may be some people would be naturally reluctant to do that, so can you give me an example of something that you've seen?

ALICE CHAPMAN

Well we are mindful victims can be reluctant and most victims are embarrassed or worried coming into it, so we will always offer them a range of meetings. They can be face to face or they can do it via video link or a phone conference. But take an example of your house has been burgled and maybe somebody in your street has also been burgled, so there's a lot of fear in that street. You may wish to bring those neighbours with you as a support to you to describe, look, when I came back to my house and found it completely dishevelled and things belonging to me were missing, which is of sentimental value as well as monetary value, here's what it was like for me and here's what it was like for my children and here's what it was like for me going out every day and wondering were you going to come back and do this again. And what I really want you to tell me is, are you genuinely sorry for what you've done and if you are I want you to show to me that you're prepared to do something back in my community or for me to make amends?

CHARLIE STAYT

Well you can see why that would work. Now just clarify a couple of things for me. Is it expensive, number one, and in terms of rolling it out more generally, does the perpetrator, the person whose committed the crime, do they have the right to say, no, I won't do it, I don't go face to face?

ALICE CHAPMAN

They do have the right to say no, and if they say no, I won't go face to face, they then will be dealt with through the traditional way, through the court. The cost of it, it is very effective, it is significantly cheaper than custody and the conference itself is good value for money because the other thing that we do, apart from the conference, we say to the victim, what do you want them to do? And usually they say I want you to do something voluntary in my community or make up with something. We've been able to source that at very, very little cost in local neighbourhoods.

CHARLE STAYT

Well it's very interesting. Alice Chapman, thank you very much for joining us this morning.