



RJ Suitability Assessment Guidance

Assessment of suitability for RJ is considered a joint process between agencies. Suitability is dynamic and needs to be assessed and reviewed throughout the restorative process in light of information gained and in line with the Best Practice Guidance for Restorative Practice. It is essential that risk information is gathered and shared between Facilitators, the Offender Manager (OM) or Offender Supervisor (OS), Prison Service, Police, Victim Support, Sussex Pathways and any other agencies involved, in order to prevent avoidable risk issues emerging which could lead to safety concerns or re-victimisation.

Suitability Assessment should be recorded on the checklist on the RID and uploaded to the RJ Case within E-CINS for suitability to be further monitored and discussed between agencies.

Directly prior to any face to face conference, facilitators must review suitability and any risk management measures in place. Post-conference, facilitators should arrange support for those involved as required e.g. post-conference welfare calls to participants or referrals to support services.

There could be a raised risk of self-harm after a conference, which should be taken into account.

Wrongdoer/s

- Suitability assessment will include the nature and level of risk of harm the wrongdoer/s could pose to the harmed person/s, staff and him / herself.
- Offence information must be considered, including Police papers / Pre-sentence Report (PSR) / relevant sections of their computer system OASys.
- Risk information from the OM / OS is be sought – e.g. previous knowledge of the wrongdoer/s, previous threats or intimidation against the harmed person/s. This should also include assessment of the wrongdoer/s response to stressful situations and any previous history of self-harm.
- The facilitator must explore the wrongdoer/s level of motivation, remorse and acceptance of responsibility.
- The facilitator needs to be alert to signs of possible re-victimisation during the process: e.g. changes in account of the offence, shift of blame to the harmed person/s.
- If there are any concerns regarding the suitability of any person involved in the RJ process, the facilitator should seek advice / support from the Divisional RJ Panel.

Harmed Person/s

- Suitability assessment will include the nature and level of risk of harm the harmed person/s might pose to the wrongdoer/s, his / her supporters and to staff.
- If the harmed person/s wishes to engage in the RJ process, the facilitator needs to accurately assess their motivation. Wishing to express anger, for example, is understandable and appropriate as long as the harmed person/s is able to manage their anger appropriately within the conference setting.
- Where the harmed person/s is themselves known to Criminal Justice agencies, information available should be gathered with their permission. The views of any professional involved with them should be sought and taken into account. The risk of self-harm should be included as part of the assessment.
- The facilitator needs to take into account issues that may lead to an imbalance of power within a conference, e.g. vulnerability, language issues, mental health, prior contact with the wrongdoer/s, disability, emotional resilience.
- In the case of young people up to the age of 18, the harmed person/s's parent or guardian must be contacted at the commencement of the process and give their permission to take part. Young people should only be contacted through their parent or guardian. Parents or guardians will be involved in the decision as to whether the young person (and themselves as supporters) will take part. Facilitators must have regard to the young person's age, level of maturity and degree of parental or other support when seeking to engage them in face to face RJ processes.



Protectively Marked - Restricted once completed

- Prison rules in relation to the admission of children / young people must be taken into account when the participation of those under 18 is being planned.

Harmed Person/s & Wrongdoer/s Supporters

- Suitability assessment will include the nature and level of risk of harm the supporter/s might pose to the other participants and to staff.
- The facilitator needs to assess the motivation to attend and how attendance may affect the conference. If supporters are known to Criminal Justice agencies, action as stated above is to be taken.

Venue

- The facilitator will risk assess the proposed conference venue by considering its location, accessibility and any links to the wrongdoer/s / harmed person/s that might lead to an imbalance of power and increase of risk within the conference setting.
- Where the venue is a prison, arrangements must be discussed with the prison management team and the names of all participants disclosed to the prison in advance.

Facilitator/s

- Assessments relating to participants and supporters should be checked for any indication of risks to facilitators and appropriate action taken depending on what is revealed. Contact with the harmed person/s may present risks because of the need to undertake home visits (see below).

Home visits

- Contact with the harmed person/s is likely to be at their home. Prior to a home visit the harmed person/s details should be checked on police databases and if there are potential risk issues, a decision should be made as to whether the visit should be at a more protected venue, such as a public place, police station or probation office.
- If a home visit is made, facilitators should comply with their organisation's relevant home visit procedures.