

Restorative Justice In Child Care Institutions

According to the Social Discipline Window, “human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behaviour when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them.”¹

Accountability is at the heart of restorative processes and people are supported to take steps to put things right. It also serves as a diversionary procedure and prevents the entry of children into the formal judicial system as well as criminal records. According to Prof Gillian Schoefield, et.al.,

“Restorative justice in residential care is intended to play a role in both reducing anti-social behaviour through a process of emotional and moral education, but also reducing criminalization of children by reducing the need to involve the police and the court.”²

Restorative Circles can serve as a means of creating a positive staff culture and positive child culture in institutional settings such as child care institutions. They help create a sense of community and interconnectedness, strengthening and repairing of relationships, and the development of empathy. Restorative Circles give everyone an opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings and helps inculcate the ability to listen to others in a safe space that is collectively created by the circle participants based on values that resonate with them. The process can also be effectively used to impart life skills training to children, build community and create a positive culture within child care institutions, while also resolving conflicts that arise.

Enfold also aims to offer socio-legal support and expertise towards the establishment and functioning of Help Desks at Observation Homes, to complement restorative practices.

To initiate this work in your institution or to learn more about restorative practices, please contact info@enfoldindia.org

¹ McCold, Paul and Wachtel, Ted, 2003, In Pursuit of Paradigm: A Theory of Restorative Justice Paper presented at the XIII World Congress of Criminology, 10-15 August 2003, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil cited in Dr. Willie McCarney, “A Restorative Justice Approach to Working with Children in Residential Care, Northern Ireland, p.10.

² Hopkins cited in Dr. Willie McCarney, “A Restorative Justice Approach to Working with Children in Residential Care, Northern Ireland, p.13.