

# London Borough of Sutton Restorative Practices

## Bitesize Briefing For Professionals



### What are Restorative Practices?

Restorative Practices (RP) are a range of approaches that are used in order to help support families and provide them with the tools they need to achieve successful outcomes. Working restoratively with families has a proven track record of achieving sustained positive outcomes and reducing the need for statutory interventions.

Research tells us that the process of engaging and empowering families to make decisions and plans for their own family members' well-being leads to better outcomes, less conflict with professionals, more informal support and improved family functioning. Offering restorative approaches to parents and carers at an Early Help stage or children in Need, helps parents and carers develop the skills they need to diffuse conflict and manage situations themselves without the need for statutory intervention and support.

#### The Restorative Approaches we adopt in Sutton include:

##### Mediation

Restorative mediation seeks to support family members to reach their own resolution in partnership with a neutral facilitator to find ways to restore relationships, provide balance and resolve conflict.

##### Shuttle Mediation

Shuttle mediation is simply the process of mediators assisting the parties involved in a conflict to reach agreement without them being present in the same room at a mediation meeting.

##### Restorative Conversations

Practitioners will use restorative language and questions to allow children, young people and their families to understand the impact of their behaviours.

##### Family Group Conference

A Family Group Conference is a family-led planning meeting to bring the family network together to address an issue or concern and create a family plan.



### When might I consider a Restorative Approach?

- When there has been a family breakdown in relationships and/or communication
- Where there is parental conflict
- Where there are issues around contact with the child
- Where there may be a need to restore communication between family members in order to reach the point of a Family Group Conference
- Where support from the wider family could help create and sustain improvements, reduce or deescalate concern
- Where a child or young person meet two or more Early Help criteria
- Where there is a risk of a child coming into care
- Where an Initial Child protection Conference is being considered



## What type of work is offered by the Restorative Family Coaches?



### Restorative Conversations

A restorative conversation can happen between two or three people bringing them together in a calm and open space where open questions are asked of those directly affected by conflict. It can be an intervention or a piece of work, helping the individual to understand the impact of what they have done and/or identifying what they could do to repair the situation. It could also work as a preparation meeting for a future restorative approach, discussing the situation and what a meeting might be like or could achieve.



### Mediation & Shuttle Mediation

Mediation is an informal process and aims to facilitate conversations between family members to help mediate the situation and develop a plan. It usually takes place across two or three sessions and is ideal for a family network of two - three people. The conversation could happen all together at the same time or, be a process of Shuttle Mediation with the worker acting between the family members to gather thoughts and feelings. On some occasions, Mediation can be a formal process with the family drawing up a family plan as a result of the conversations and mediation. Some families may benefit from mediation work prior to a Family Group Conference in order to help forge relationships before the wider family network come together.



### Restorative Conversations

This voluntary process is led by family members and is an opportunity for the wider family to come together and talk about issues or concerns, identify solutions and create a family plan to resolve them. There is no limit for the number of family members, friends and network that may be involved, the worker is entirely led by the family's wishes. The worker is independent and will visit all identified family network members during the planning and preparation stage, gathering information that will be taken forward to the conference itself. It is a 6 week process resulting in a formal plan that has been devised by the family. There may be some families that will require a restorative conversation or mediation approach prior to the conference taking place to help build relationships in order to come together.



## Accessing Restorative Practices & Further Information

Family meetings and restorative approaches can be accessed via the 'Children's First Contact Service (CFCS) Referral Form. This is an online Google referral form to access support and services from Children's Social Care for families within Sutton. You can access the form here: [Children's First Contact Service Referral Form](#)

Cases are also allocated via the Early Help and Prevention Panel (EHPP) or by the completion of an Early Help Assessment Tool (EHAT).

To find out more information or to discuss a case you feel may be appropriate please contact the Children's First Contact Service (CFCS) Team on 020 8770 6001 or [childrensfirstcontactservice@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:childrensfirstcontactservice@sutton.gov.uk).

Related Bitesize Briefings are available including 'Children's First Contact Service', 'Early Help Assessments', 'Early Help and Prevention Panel' and 'Restorative Family Coach'. Further information can also be found at [www.sutton.gov.uk/earlyhelp](http://www.sutton.gov.uk/earlyhelp)