



# CDI Restorative Practices

## Case Study 2

How Restorative Practices make a community safer





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Anne Desmond is the Mental Health Support Worker for the Family Resource Centre in Carrigtwohill in East Cork. She coordinates counselling for people suffering from mental health issues and also supports the community by running 'Caring for Carrigtwohill' which is a suicide awareness and prevention group, and also 'Restorative Practice Carrigtwohill' to help build resilience in the community.

Anne went back to college as an adult to do a Degree in Youth and Community. She was introduced to restorative thinking during two work placements in Le Chéile, an organisation providing a mentoring service and Restorative Justice options for young people in trouble with the law. She completed her degree and started working in the Family Resource Centre in Carrigtwohill in 2015.

### *Restorative Practices and mental health – helping vulnerable individuals*

Anne uses RP informally with her clients. She considers that *"it underpins an awful lot of my practice. Because, when I meet with somebody and they have mental health issues, sometimes it's very hard to figure out [the situation], if they're in a very distressed place; the 'what happened' of Restorative Practice is so invaluable and then you can start pulling the threads for them and seeing where they are or seeing how you can actually help them."* It has also helped with regard to dual diagnosis for people who present with addictions: *"It's a chicken or an egg. Does the addiction or the substance abuse cause mental illness or does the mental illness cause the addiction? So, I think the 'what happened' is vital there. And I think if you can start with the 'what happened' in any situation, you can actually look at the person in the centre of it and give them a hand to get to where they need to be."*

### *Restorative Practices to build a safer community*

Through 'Restorative Practice Carrigtwohill,' Anne is working at embedding RP in the community, creating awareness and running trainings. She emphasises how *"it reduces*

*conflict and, even when conflict arises, then it can be managed in a very healthy manner."* For her, it's the preventative aspects of the restorative process that make the community safer and healthier.

Anne also sees the value of the Garda Diversion Programme for young people and early-stage intervention. In the local primary school (Case Studies 8 and 9), students are familiar with RP and she sees it as another positive element to bring safety to the community. *"If these young men can see how they want to be treated and what fairness is, and respect and tolerance and accountability, which is huge, and they can take this into secondary school, I mean, what are we growing? And that's how you make the community safer, because these young men are going to vote, they go out into the community, if they have that grounding, or this philosophy embedded in their nature, then they can see the fine line, they can see the empathy in a situation, they can see the right and the wrong. It doesn't mean that they're always going to make the right choices, but it kind of gives them a fair banking of knowledge and emotional intelligence to make the right decisions for themselves."*

Lastly, Anne sees the benefit of any restorative process for the mental health of individuals who might have engaged in anti-social behaviour because it allows them to deal with the shame and disconnection that follow that type of behaviour. If people who have challenged the community can be dealt with restoratively, it actually has a positive impact on the whole community because, when their mental health is looked after, the whole community is safer.

On a personal level, Anne notes that RP help her stay fair and non-judgemental and helps her reflect on her own practice when she is dealing with people that challenge her values.

To conclude, Anne stresses the value of developing RP in communities at a more 'ground level' working with parents or within community groups: *"I do genuinely believe that it has a very positive impact on people's mental health. And I do genuinely believe that it can make our communities and our whole world much safer."*