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‘Mediating serious crime: an analysis of victim and prisoner mediation’.

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Abstract

The following paper builds on research aimed at examining previous attempts to facilitate VOM and RJ approaches between victims and adult prisoners. This interview-based study located in the United Kingdom, focused upon the perceptions of victims, offenders and prison authorities² and their experiences of VOM in eleven separate cases, involving 31 interviews with participants. The findings of this research, reveal that preparation for, and assessment of, mediation cases is a crucial factor in their success. The victims and offenders interviewed were supportive of the process and recommended it for appropriate cases. There was evidence of delays in some cases and awareness of mediation approaches was lacking among some prison authorities, prisoners and victims prior to their involvement. There was evidence of perceived resistance by some prisons and probation services particularly in the context of austerity. The paper also reflects on the challenges of conducting research during a period of austerity.

This study involved an analysis of Victim Offender Mediation (VOM) in the context of adult offenders serving a custodial sentence in prisons within South-East England. The research examines if VOM when used in serious cases for adult prisoners had beneficial (or other) impacts on the victim and offender. The research also reveals what process factors influenced VOM taking place and, where it did, what issues influenced the experience being a positive one for all the parties involved. The research team examined the VOM process through interviews with key participants (including victims, offenders, mediators and prison authorities). The selection of victims and offenders was conducted through

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² ‘Prison authorities’ in this article refer to prison and probation services.

mediation services, probation and the prison service³. Cases involved prisoners convicted of serious criminal offences, ranging from death by dangerous driving, rape and murder (see figure 1). The cases and parties involved were complex in nature due to the offence severity. This paper reflects an analysis of eleven cases involving VOM in the context of serious crimes concerning adult prisoners.

During the course of this research there have been substantial changes and challenges within the public and voluntary sectors. The United Kingdom has witnessed a change of government with a Labour administration up to 2010 followed by a Conservative-Liberal Coalition and then a Conservative government in 2015. During the early part of the research there was success in securing mediation cases in prisons but as the research progressed the prison and probation services experienced reorganization, staff changes and budget constraints. These changes made it increasingly difficult for services to facilitate VOM and inevitably provided challenges in the supply of cases to the research team. Budget cutbacks became more severe when the Conservative led Coalition came into power in 2010 resulting in a more challenging environment in which to conduct the research.

This paper will provide a brief summary of the literature relating to VOM in a prison context moving onto a description of the research methodology and analysis of the interview data collected before concluding.

Reviewing the literature: Restorative justice and VOM in a prison context

It is well known that the values, principles and practices of modern day restorative justice (RJ) have origins in indigenous cultures throughout the world; Maori, Canadian First Nation and those of Western Africa to name a few. Drawing from such historical practices, RJ is today delivered in a variety of ways and contexts including; conferencing (community/family group), face-to-face mediation, indirect “shuttle diplomacy” mediation, victim-absent discussions with the offender, offender-absent discussions with the victim and sentencing circles led by a judge.

It is worthwhile being reminded of what restorative justice (RJ) delivered with its various modern day approaches is. Marshall (1999) views RJ as a process whereby parties with a stake in a specific offence collectively resolve how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future.

³ The mediation process can be initiated by the offender, victim or through the prison or probation service. The prospects and suitability of both parties is considered between the prison, probation and mediation staff before an assessment by the mediation team is agreed. If the assessment does not reveal any concerns and all parties are willing to be involved then the mediation goes ahead.

For Umbreit and Armour (2010), RJ is grounded in the belief that those most impacted by crime should have the opportunity to become actively involved in resolving the conflict. Whatever the chosen definition, RJ in its broad sense must include active participation from both the victim of crime and the individual responsible for the offending; the desired outcomes and impact will depend upon the approach used.

This study identified that RJ can be incorporated into prison practice through the introduction of a number of different initiatives, such as victim awareness and victim empathy programmes, community reparation projects, victim-offender mediation (VOM) initiatives and conferencing schemes. VOM within the prison environment is the focus of this research, and therefore what follows is an evidence summary of what is currently available in the literature within this area.

Prison focused VOM research

The three restorative justice schemes being the subject of a study which a research team led by Shapland (2008, 2011) have been evaluating since 2001 in the UK; JRC, REMEDI and CONNECT, designed to be primarily for adult offenders, included offenders responsible for committing serious offences and involved RJ at many different stages of criminal justice process. This included those with custodial sentences at prison pre-release stage in the Thames Valley, throughout South Yorkshire and Northumbria. The results of the Shapland led research focusing on direct ('face to face') and indirect (or 'shuttle') mediation, suggest that restorative justice conference/mediation was most beneficial for victims of more serious offences. Similarly, it acknowledged that there was a positive effect on young adult offenders wanting to reform and desist from reoffending. Although Shapland (2011) conceded that there is no means of measuring directly the extent of reoffending by any of those involved in the three schemes, she argued for the extension of restorative justice at the resettlement/pre-release stage, with the aim of reducing recidivism. The findings in the Shapland study (2011) did indicate that there was a *significant* decrease in the *frequency* of reconviction over the two years following conclusion of the trial period.

Shapland's research appears to argue that where victims of serious offences and offenders (serving a custodial sentence) wish to meet, this opportunity should be provided. Shapland's interim report (2008) contends that such initiatives are the minimum requisites to 'put victims at the heart of criminal justice' and would help enhance the remit of Probation Victim Liaison Officers, who currently have few means of meeting such requests. Implementing initiatives of this kind would require trained

facilitators across the country and the willingness of custodial establishments to be supportive (Shapland, 2008).

Previous research (Bagley 2001; Devroey 2003; Liebmann 2007; Umbreit et. al. 1992; Zehr et al 2001; 2013; Allard & Allard 2009; Mullane et al 2014 and Gavrielides, 2014) suggests that participants in victim offender programmes experience more positive outcomes than those who do not participate in such initiatives. For offenders this includes reduced recidivism rates and an increase in the number of restitution agreements for victims. Mullane, et al. (2014) reached this conclusion through meta-analysis of data gathered from 31 VOM studies undertaken in the US prison environment. Their research measured victim process satisfaction; offender process satisfaction; number of restitution agreements and recidivism. The study found that VOM programmes improve the quality of society, teaching responsibility and reducing victimization through empowerment and forgiveness.

The action research undertaken by Robert and Peters (2003) at KU Leuven into the 'Restorative Detention' project at six Belgian prisons was concerned with aspects of (setting up) RJ awareness and discussion groups on restorative justice. It also concerned restoration/reparation of losses incurred by victims of those offenders within the prisons and the facilitation by mediators of discussions around such issues. Nevertheless, as Aertsen (2012) observes, following a number of evaluative reports, the Belgian Ministry of Justice has implemented the 'Restorative Detention' project in all Belgian prisons. It is Aertsen's view that implementation of such initiatives can contribute effectively towards meeting the needs of individual victims and offenders.

The review of the available evidence of RJ within the prison context conducted by Dhami et al (2009), focused on offending behaviour, victim awareness programmes, community service work and VOM but pointed to a dearth of research in RJ particularly VOM in prisons. Liebmann (2014) considered evidence of RJ in prisons in several countries across the world and included RJ from the viewpoint of prisoners making amends. She acknowledges examples of VOM for serious offences in Belgium (the Restorative Detention' project mentioned earlier), VOM for juvenile offenders in Germany as part of the MEREPS (Mediation and Restorative Justice in Prison Settings) Project, in New Zealand (victim/offender conferencing), and in South Africa (the research by Khulisa published in 2011). Liebmann's literature review reveals little empirical research to lend support or definitive guidance on the benefits or otherwise of VOM in prisons arising from any of the initiatives or projects mentioned.

The findings of the study undertaken as part of the MEREPS Project (Aertsen, 2012) in Hungary, whilst outlining a number of challenges in undertaking such research, suggested some positives in terms of VOM for serious offences. This study probably needs further analysis and consideration longitudinally to determine findings in relation to recidivism for instance. Similarly, Gavrielides (Barabás et. al. 2012) a contributor to the MEREPS Project, has undertaken an impressive mapping exercise of RJ delivery within the prison environment in the UK with some useful empirical evidence provided in relation to the costs benefits of RJ delivery (which includes both direct and indirect VOM). Findings of this research included favourable outcomes in relation to impact upon stakeholders (agencies, families, victims, prison staff and prisoners) and reduction in recidivism including reoffending rates for more violent offences.

In their report to the Council of Europe, Casey and Jarman (2011) make a number of recommendations regarding RJ in relation to the prison environment. These authors seemingly acknowledge that there was a lack of empirical research in this particular area, as they recommended that the Council of Europe should consider further investigation of the contribution of RJ practices to offender rehabilitation. As an indication of their views on the lack of available evidence, Casey and Jarman suggested further research into the implementation of RJ in prisons with a view to sharing good practice and preparing guidelines on its use. These authors also recommended that member states should implement RJ programmes for prisoners, alongside other programmes aimed at the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders. In particular, consideration should be given to the use of RJ (particularly VOM) generally.

In summary therefore, the international research material suggests that the main challenge for the UK appears to be organising and implementing a coordinated approach to restorative justice and particularly VOM in prisons within the system. The Belgian 'Restorative Detention' project and various aspects of MEREPS are examples of what can be achieved. There appears to be sufficient empirical evidence to suggest the benefits of RJ and VOM generally. The successes in the US should indicate to policy makers that there is merit in the Ministry of Justice at least piloting the implementation of coordinated VOM schemes within UK prisons. As Shapland (2011) quite rightly points out, the challenge will be building national infrastructure including the training of facilitators in each part of the country, gaining the support of custodial establishments, and raising awareness training for prison staffing order to implement more ambitious schemes.

Austerity and the contrasting fortunes of mediation services

Since 2010, successive governments have been keen to establish and promote its “Big Society” agenda. Whilst this ostensibly embraces enterprising proposals to reinvigorate communities through greater autonomy, the initiative has in reality been debilitating for some services situated in the voluntary and third sectors that have traditionally relied on funding streams from inter alia local authorities; streams which during the current austerity era have all but dried up (Hetherington, 2013).

In the UK, much RJ has been traditionally provided by local charitable community mediation services. Latterly this has in some parts of the country, been delivered by the police in conjunction with Restorative Justice Council trained mediators provided by community mediation services. During 2013, Restorative Justice Services won the local authority tender to deliver RJ throughout Kent. This has removed RJ work from the community charitable organisations originally responsible for delivering these services in association with Probation Victim Liaison. In effect, this has provided an opportunity for private sector organisations to occupy the space. The Kent Restorative Justice Service for instance describes itself as a new provision delivered jointly by Project Salus and Restorative Solutions, two of the UK’s leading providers of restorative services. This collaborative service brings together KCC’s Integrated Youth Services (Youth Justice), Kent Police and Kent Probation intended to improve services to victims of crime and offenders in Kent and Medway (www.restorativesolutions.org.uk, 2014). Whilst a commendable initiative, it only covers first time youth offenders and there is little evidence to suggest that steps are being taken to develop and expand these kind of initiatives involving the various agencies in terms of delivery of VOM into prisons, either in Kent or nationally.

Shapland’s research (2008, 2011) seems to have contributed to government taking the decision to provide some funding investment for RJ in prisons during 2012 (www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk). It has also led to the Home Office adopting recommendations to create trained facilitators in each part of the country to implement RJ, as mentioned previously by the recent developments in Kent. Whilst the initiative has taken off in terms of RJ conferencing at police stations, it seems not to have gained momentum within the prison environment despite the funding allocation. It is interesting to note that Gavrielides (2008) in Barabás et al. (2012) has argued that the focus of RJ researchers ought to move away from arguments about the paradigm’s superiority towards understanding what actually works. Although inevitably ‘trained’ facilitators would be required to increase the use of VOM nationally, there was considerable unease among some established mediation services in this study on the potential impact of significantly increasing private sector delivery of services particularly in relation to

sustaining the quality and integrity of successful mediation. While any meaningful analysis of this point is beyond the scope of this study, it is worthy of consideration for future research.

Summary of the past benefits and current challenges.

The tension between retributive justice and restorative approaches, together with the perceived benefits of VOM in prisons was a feature in this study. To develop this debate the VOM process yields an accurate evaluation of the offender's personal rehabilitation potential, and enables closure (Halevy, 2001). Latimer et al (2005) have carried a useful review of the literature into the effectiveness of RJ, including prison VOM, by using meta-analytic techniques. This extensive review reveals that research has provided notable support for the effectiveness of RJ projects and confirmed that these programmes have been responsible for increasing offender/victim satisfaction and restitution compliance, as well as decreasing offender recidivism.

Through her extensive work in the prison community Toews (2006) has concluded that RJ initiatives within prisons can help identify the justice needs of everyone connected with the crime including the ability to restore prisoners' sense of humanity through accountability for their offending behaviour. Zehr (2013) on the other hand sounds a note of caution and is somewhat more circumspect about RJ principles. He maintains that RJ claims to be responsive to the needs of various individuals and stakeholders, including victims, offenders and communities. However, he suggests that RJ creates at its best an arena in which people can sort out, within limits, what justice means in their situations. Commentators such as Zehr therefore resist promoting VOM as some kind of restorative panacea for any criminal justice system.

The Supporting Offenders through Restoration Inside (SORI) project focused on VOM, using a five-day RJ awareness course in seven prisons in England and Wales. Using psychometric questionnaires, Beech and Chauhan (2012) found that participants with an enhanced concern for victims were more motivated to change their offending behaviours, and were more willing to take responsibility for their actions, after completion of the course. No change was found in participants who perceived themselves as being in control of their actions/environment.

Similarly, the qualitative research undertaken by Crocker (2014), whilst not specifically associated with VOM in prisons, used anecdote circles and face to face interviews undertaken when reviewing the 'Partners in Healing' project operating in three Canadian prisons. Crocker's research revealed that having restorative justice programmes in prisons can, by allowing inmates the opportunity to restore

relationships, help alleviate some of the pains of imprisonment, a process outcome perhaps not previously recognised through empirical research.

When considering the obstacles, resistances and influencing factors associated with the effectiveness of prison-related VOM, Zehr (1994) identified a number of features including; resistance and mistrust of prison staff and prisoners, the priority given to security measures which always conflict with other projects, the limited participation of prisoners and the lack of adequate information about the principles of restorative justice, as being the main influences. RJ measures in German prisons have shown that the training of prison staff members accompanied by well-prepared model projects are vital components for successful delivery of such initiatives (Hartmann et al. in Barabás et al. 2012)

Guidoni (2003) experienced tensions and ambivalent feelings during an Italian project which introduced RJ into the Turin prison, taking the view that there is a confluence within a single role (prisoner, staff) of contrasting pressures, tensions, obligations, and working procedures. He articulates this by explaining that on the one hand there are the goals and rules guiding a restorative process; on the other, there is the total institution with its rules and constraints, often clashing with the goals of the restorative process. From studies of prison related VOM undertaken in Norway, Albrecht (2011) identifies the issues of inmates' psychological state as being an influencing factor on the effectiveness of such initiatives. He found that a significant number of inmates were suffering from depression or had anti-social personality disorders, which made for a lack of empathy and remorse on the part of the offender, which frequently rendered the VOM intervention ineffectual.

Gavrielides in Barabas et al. (2012) cites Guidoni's (2006) six identifiable structural obstacles to the successful implementation of RJ in the prison environment as being; competition with the disciplinary regime of prisons, conflict over destruction of the self because prison culture can erase identity and this conflicts with RJ principles, the tension between non-violent conflict resolution and prison disciplinary action, the difference between stated and perceived goals, the denial of autonomy due to the nature of prison culture impeding prisoner empowerment and lastly the poor social conditions in prison which deny prisoners the ability to reflect upon the harm done to others.

One of the biggest challenges to the development and implementation of RJ in prisons however would seem to be convincing the policy makers that RJ, including initiatives involving VOM in the prison environment, is beneficial in terms of positive outcomes for both victim and offender. Indeed, Llewellyn, Archibald, Clairmont, & Crocker (2007), Presser & Van Voorhis (2002) in Crocker (2005), all

observe that some commentators have noted that evaluations of, and research about, restorative justice have failed to adequately measure the aspects of restorative justice that make it different from other mainstream approaches. Furthermore and more relevant to this study, without compelling empirical research, Dhami et al. (2009) maintain that the limited research into RJ in prisons makes it difficult to convince policy makers and prison authorities to buy into the idea.

In terms of practical implementation, Shapland et al. (2008, 2011) lend support to the contention that logistical challenges exist, suggesting that organising the scheme and creating a well-trained corps of facilitators would be challenging. However, she acknowledges that this had been achieved in a relatively short time-frame in Northern Ireland and evaluation of the implementation of the youth conferencing service in that part of the UK by Campbell et al. (2005), was progressing well and continues to do so by all accounts. Shapland (2011) also takes the view that there is a need to integrate the results into sentencing policy (though there are already relevant decisions from the Court of Appeal) and to sort out accountability mechanisms.

In countries where RJ has been introduced with government support there have been mixed results. For instance in France, institutionalisation of RJ and VOM according to Faget (in Aertsen et al. 2013) remains unfinished, maintaining that economic precariousness of mediation providers in the absence of constructed identity and of a general professionalization of penal mediators, maintains a condition of dependency. The findings of Gavrielides' (2014 b) small-scale study into RJ in UK prisons indicated that the prioritization of funding resources for specific parties of crime affects the sponsoring of RJ schemes. This is mainly due to the fact that restorative principles place equal significance on all communities of interest. For example, funding specifically allocated to rehabilitating offenders may not consider RJ schemes appropriate. Likewise, funding for victim support programmes may treat RJ as something just for the offender and maybe dangerous for the victim. What the existing literature and available evidence suggests, is that widespread introduction of RJ in prisons including VOM will depend not only on its perceived benefits and practical feasibility, but also on widespread support for its principles and practices.

Research design and methodology

This research examines the use of VOM in serious cases for adult prisoners, with an aim of exploring the impact mediation has on the victim and offender. The research also reveals the process factors that influenced a positive experience for the parties involved in the VOM process.

The interview strategy adopted involved semi-structured interviews for all participants. These were selected as a primary method of data collection to allow respondents freedom to discuss their experiences of RJ without the restrictions of a rigid set of questions. Although initially the research was aimed at a few prisons, the difficulty in securing cases led to expanding the geographic parameters of the study to the South East and London where other mediation services could be approached to support the research with additional cases.

The research team approached victims, offenders, mediators, offender managers and offender supervisors to obtain their views of the mediation process. Of the 48 people approached for an interview, 31 agreed to do so. The interviews took place from 2009-2014. The interviews that were not completed were due to participants declining or not responding to requests for an interview. Interview questions were based upon a standard script containing open questions while allowing participants to digress. Mediators and victims were the most responsive participants to the study. This was due to good contact with the mediation services and the access mediators provided to victims. Inversely, the low numbers of responses from probation and prison staff resulted in difficulties in accessing offenders. The mediation services involved in the research were; Canterbury and District, Swale, Medway, Maidstone and CALM.

Figure 1: Case and Interview selection

Case	Offence	Victim	Offender	Mediator	Stakeholder (Offender supervisor/manager)
1	Death by driving	√	√	√√ ⁴	√
2	Death by driving	√		√√	
3	Murder	√	√	√√	√
4	Murder		√		√
5	Death by driving	√	√		√
6	Sexual offences	√	√	√	√
7	Rape	√	√		
8	Death by driving				√
9	Death by driving			√	

⁴ Indicates two mediators present at VOM and subsequently interviewed.

10	Murder	√		√√	
11	Actual bodily harm	√		√	

Adult Victim Offender Mediation: An analysis of eleven cases

This analysis was conducted using interview transcripts from victims, offenders, mediators and prison authorities who had been involved in the mediation. The participants were identified by case and where possible all parties were interviewed. In order to make analytical sense of the transcripts, an inductive approach was applied, coding the raw data. A coding framework was formulated using the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and the data was thematically categorised. MAXQDA software was used for the analysis to facilitate the coding, the exploration of the data and to enable subsequent comparisons of themes.

The themes addressed in the following part of the paper concerning the analysis of the interview include: challenges to the delivery of VOM in prisons, the factors influencing the VOM 'experience' in prisons, perceptions of mediators, perceptions of VOM in prisons from service-users, victims and offenders' perceptions of VOM, Stakeholder perceptions of VOM and challenges in the conducting research.

Challenges to the delivery of VOM in prisons

A number of inconsistencies in relation to the process of the delivery of VOM were highlighted in this research indicating that VOM in a prison context was not standardised or normalised. The implication of this meant that potential mediation opportunities were missed from the start.

Victims were told about the RJ mediation process in most cases via the Victim Liaison Service (VLS). Once the victim had made their decision to be involved, they were passed to the mediation service who then managed the process. Some victims who had personal awareness RJ and its potential benefits, initiated involvement themselves by proactively approaching the police to make a 'self-referral' for mediation. For example, one victim said:

'...I really wanted face to face and to decide for myself whether he really felt any remorse for his actions, because I had worked with the criminal justice system with youngsters and one of the first things we have always taught them is that you write a letter of apology whether you mean it or not, because of course they are then more lenient on you. So I suppose I had a bit

of inside knowledge which was useful to have and so that was my way of you knowing if he's really sorry then let him tell me to my face...' (Victim – case 1).

This personal process awareness was coincidental though and a result of the victim's individual professional background, rather than it being knowledge based on a standardised part of victim support offered by the criminal justice system.

Inconsistencies regarding how victims are initiated into VOM with prisoners indicate the lack of a standardised approach and the potential for mediation opportunities being missed. This was made particularly problematic when the research team needed additional cases from a wider range of prisons in the South East of England (some of which had not engaged with RJ approaches), with prisoners moving between prisons, changes of prison staff and restructuring. Where awareness of VOM was evident, there was success in encouraging victims to pursue mediation as an option. This highlights the importance of maximising the benefits of the service through raising awareness amongst the victim community more consistently, a factor which Zehr (1994) identified as being important.

All of the referrals considered for this research were victim-led. All of the offenders were approached by mediation services to take part in VOM. The majority of whom had no prior awareness of RJ and once the process was explained to them, they all agreed to participate. For example:

'...before they [the mediation service] approached me I didn't even know they did it [mediation]. You know what I mean, you know, when they sent me a letter and came and saw me and explained to me about getting together with the lady [the victim]...' (Offender – case 1).

Where previous knowledge was evident, offenders described negativity about the process amongst other inmates. One offender recalled:

'...Because I've met too many blokes in here who have laughed and joked about this and there are a lot of callous people in here...' (Offender – case 6).

Addressing the lack of knowledge about the aims and purpose of VOM within the prison context may reduce the potential deterrent effects on offender engagement. Dhimi et al (2009) argued that normalising this process and raising the profile of RJ for offenders in prison may facilitate this. Additionally as Albrecht (2011) highlights, there can also be cultural barriers when instigating RJ in a

prison context by suggesting that prison is shaped by a sense of toughness and talking through personal issues and matters that relate to remorse may conflict with informal “codes of prison subcultures” (pp: 329).

A lack of practitioner awareness in facilitating the VOM in prisons was identified as a factor affecting the potential to deliver an efficient and supportive mediation process. All prison authorities interviewed were contacted directly by a member of the mediation team about the relevant victim’s wish to participate in VOM with the offender. Analysis revealed a lack of awareness about the existence of VOM and for many participants this was their first experience of mediation. Consequently, they had limited expectations. For example:

‘...Before I did not have any [knowledge of mediation]. I thought it [mediation] would be supportive counselling... I had not heard of it before XXXX [the mediator] contacted me [it was the] first case for [XXX] Prison...’ (Stakeholder – case 5).

Whilst some prison authorities were pro-active at facilitating mediation and offered staff familiarisation workshops, others were unfamiliar due to the lack of supportive infrastructure and knowledge about the options. Some prisons had no dedicated role to deal with mediation. For example:

‘...It is something that should be expanded but it is difficult with time. Perhaps a designated role would be helpful. It can transform people’s lives but it is difficult to quantify in cost savings or tick a box because it provides long-term benefits. If it was made more available offenders would make more sense of themselves...’ (Stakeholder – case 3)

Lack of infrastructure to deliver mediation meant it had no official ‘place’ and training options were non-existent in some prisons. Prison authorities had confused and inconsistent perceptions of the process, uncertainty regarding the role they were required to fulfil and felt ill equipped to manage the process efficiently. As Gavrielides (2014) argues, understanding how the “principle of restoration can function with the punitive and top-down structures of the estate” (pp: 489) is important. Unless RJ becomes embedded as a normality within a prison setting it is likely that prison staff will continue to see this as outside of their normal working role. Without the relevant training there is a risk of the process having detrimental effects on the victim/offender. Gavrielides (2014) further states that the inconsistency and fragmentation of approaches to RJ in prisons can mean that those involved can get

different levels of service in different institutional settings. This finding evidenced in the research here, highlights further the lack of both knowledge and subsequent integration of RJ within prisons.

Resistance to mediation at a management level resulted in process delays. Interviews with victims, offenders, mediators and prison authorities highlighted the perceived lack of support for VOM within prisons. Prison authority personnel experienced a lack of support from their management, reporting that they had to 'convince' their governors for the approval to move the process forward.

'...Convincing governors to let it go ahead in first place – the initial meeting etc...awkward getting all parties together...' (Prison authority – case 4).

Victims and offenders reflected on the impact that this lack of support had on time taken from initiating the mediation to actually undertaking the first session. Victims reported resistance to the mediation process from some agencies, ranging from the organisation of the meeting and having to cross '...a lot of hurdles...' (Victim – case 7) to having planned mediation sessions 'pulled'. One victim, (who had her mediation session cancelled at the last minute) felt that the Governor did not want the scheme. She said:

'...We were given a reason,... basically, well the only reason we were given was that the Governor had pulled it at the last minute.... I suppose [s/he] didn't want this scheme going ahead in [his/her] prison, so yeah it was just pulled and that was it..'(Victim–case 2).

Having mediation sessions cancelled was upsetting, as the following victim described: '...I just felt let down...' (Victim – case 2). This particular victim's account highlights the importance of ensuring that buy-in from all agencies involved is obtained prior to initiating the process with the victim.

Given that victims can feel that closure has already occurred for them via the court process (Albrecht, 2011), any time delays may compound their concerns about opening up previous feelings around the case. A predominant aim of RJ is to increase victim satisfaction and involvement in the criminal justice process and delays may cause anxiety to the person involved unless kept up to date about the process (Keenan, 2009). The importance for victims of being provided with information about the progress of their case has been observed in victimological research associated with broader aspects of the criminal justice system. Research into informational justice has found that individuals may be more confident that decisions were based on fair proceedings if they are provided with explanations. Such research has revealed that keeping victims informed about the developments in their case regarding

prosecution and information about their rights, is positively associated with their satisfaction with the procedure (Shapland et al., 1985; Greenberg, 1993; Wemmers et al., 1995; Laxminarayan et al. 2013). Furthermore, the need for prison authorities to challenge resistance and to facilitate a smooth process for the victim is paramount. Without this challenge there is a risk that victims may feel further victimised or let-down by the criminal justice system. One victim said:

‘...They [mediation team] found a way round seemingly three insurmountable problems and as a victim that was very important to feel that you weren’t going to be abandoned yet again...’
(Victim – case 7).

The factors influencing the VOM experience in prisons

The research identified a number of factors, which influenced the VOM experience in prisons. These included; mediation being undertaken at the ‘right time’ for victims was found to be an important factor; having professional and experienced mediators to facilitate and manage the process whilst understanding the longer-term ramifications of VOM for the parties involved and, the need for VOM to be robust as a process but flexible enough to address the needs of the parties involved.

Whilst it was common for victims to feel that the process was lengthy between stating their wish to take part in mediation to actually receiving it (a minimum of 12-18 months), many recognised that having some distance between the court proceedings and the mediation was beneficial. They felt that they had got more out of the process due to the time delays and that it gave them the ability to *‘...look at things more clearly...’* (Victim – case 2). Another victim said:

‘I think I probably got far more out of it and have been able to be more positive about it probably as it has gone on a little bit because my whole process of healing has gone that one stage further’ (Victim – case 1).

It is unclear from the victims’ accounts to assess how much influence they had on specifying the ‘right time’ of the mediation to suit their individual needs. However, analysis indicates that the time delays were often a result of the mediation teams and prison authorities having to manage bureaucracy and resistance from within probation and prisons, influencing factors highlighted by Gavrielides in Barabas et al. (2012) and Guidoni (2003). Furthermore, the benefit this unplanned time delay had on the victim was secondary and an unintended consequence. This highlights a need to provide an individual bespoke process for victims as expectations and needs will differ within and between victim types.

This is a finding peculiar to the prison context, as without the constraints of additional stakeholders, notably the prison authorities and the associated bureaucracy, VOM outside the prison setting is arguably less constrained; the timing of meetings can be managed more easily and facilitated with less difficulty.

The process of RJ follows the mediation referral and the initial work involved in contacting the parties as well as ensuring there is buy-in from the practitioners to support the mediation. The evaluation and analysis revealed factors that facilitated a successful mediation process. The two main enablers were; having professional and experienced mediators in place to manage the process and, a model for mediation that is robust for the process to be efficiently managed but is flexible enough to be victim-and-offender led. For this to operate effectively however, it was necessary for the prison authority to provide unfettered support, and this was not always provided, thus making the process less flexible than VOM conducted between a victim and an offender not in custody.

All of the participants interviewed in this research recognised that the mediator role was crucial. For victims, this was in relation to feeling informed about the process and having his or her expectations set. This issue of victims being provided with information about the progress of their case is mirrored in other research on victim satisfaction (Shapland et al., 1985; Greenberg, 1993; Wemmers et al., 1995; Keenan, 2009, Laxminarayan et al. 2013). It was important that mediators had experience of how to manage these processes within the parameters of mediation.

All of the victims interviewed felt sufficiently informed about the mediation process. They felt their mediation officer had comprehensively explained the procedures to them. This involved setting expectations in terms of the consequences if either party withdrew from the process. For example:

'...I had quite a few meetings with XXX and XXX [mediators] where we talked through the process, what I hoped to gain out of it and that I may not get what I was looking for, and ... you know, I was made very aware that we might not get there, one or the both of us might change our minds about seeing each other it might be too much, yeah, no. It was very good and they spent a long time talking through things with me...' (Victim – case 1)

Whilst victims felt informed about the mediation process, expectations about what to expect from the meeting were generally less certain. One victim said: *'...we were not allowed to expect too much...'* (Victim – case 10). The same was true for offenders, the majority of whom had no particular expectations, but were sometimes briefed to prepare for the mediation not working. For example:

'...It was, this is a risk, see how it goes...' (Offender – case 6)

Participants went into the mediation with no pre-conceptions in terms of outcomes. Whether victims or offenders, they all viewed the mediation positively and felt it achieved much. This shows that the lack of prescriptive guidelines within the VOM process provides some flexibility so that the parties own the dialogue and achieves the process aims of providing a voice.

Perceptions of mediators

Many of the victims had heightened emotions and were specific in recalling feelings of apprehension, nervousness and anxiety in relation to the initial encounter with the prisoner. This in turn affected the mediators; they often recalled the challenges around preparing victims for mediation. This largely related to meeting the emotional needs of the parties, managing the preparation and the logistics of the meeting, as well as facilitating the mediation itself when anxieties and emotions are intense.

'...It felt like a really worthwhile piece of work to do so I mean it was great to be able to give them that opportunity to come together really and talk and I think they both got a lot out of it. I mean, it was very emotional, at one point I thought 'Oh my goodness, I must not cry here' but...it was very, very emotional and I think for the first hour and a half of the meeting either one or other of them was crying or both of them were crying so it was difficult to handle all the emotion and keep thinking 'Right, let's just keep the process moving. Is everybody getting a chance to say what they need to, where are we going?' so, yeah, at times keeping that...your facilitator hat on and not being drawn into the emotion can be a bit challenging...' (Mediator – case 9)

These challenges were accepted by mediators as being part of their role and their experience and training helped them in providing this service.

Mediators expressed awareness that mediation is a life experience for those involved and not a process just for the 'here and now'. The future impact was considered critical, as was the role of reflecting on the past. For the mediator getting this right was also a critical concern. This highlights the importance of having the 'right' mediator employed to undertake the process. All of the mediators interviewed had relevant work experience and had in most cases worked in the mediation environment for a number of years. This experience was crucial for complex VOM where custodial sentences had been given due to the severity of the case.

'...I think that one of the things that we've experienced at [Mediation service] is, oddly, it seems that, when we first started out, people always said, yes, this would work well on minor cases and thought that very serious cases where there was violence involved and murders etcetera would be too much for restorative justice but actually in reality we've found that people who have been very badly harmed and have had a child murdered or something like that are the people who need the most help and are more likely...and those conferences are more likely to go ahead. That's been our experience and when we've been trying to...when we got more minor offences referred to us for criminal damage, damage to cars, damage to buildings etcetera...often people were annoyed about it or wanted the things repaired or wanted compensation but weren't so emotionally affected and so didn't say yes to conferences...'
(Mediator – case 11).

Mediators highlighted that the more severe cases tend to achieve greater success with mediation, as deeper emotions generate the need for mediation. However, as these cases are far more challenging for mediators, being equipped with the necessary skills is vital for the success of the process.

Mediators also presented knowledge and experience of having the ability to manage the whole process of mediation, which is intricate, time consuming and can involve meticulous preparation in order to ensure effectiveness. It is important to have a robust process for mediation that is flexible enough to be victim and offender-led. In order for the mediator to achieve a victim and offender-led mediation it is critical that they understand the motivations of why parties are involved, recognise that the motivation is strong and meaningful to the parties and ensure the dialogue is flexible enough to recognise all of these components within the mediation.

Perceptions of the VOM in prisons from service-users – what's in it for them?

There were a number of perceptions presented by victims and offenders that indicted their motivations as to their involvement in VOM and what they sought to achieve from the mediation. This often related to seeking answers to unanswered questions, closure for victims and a chance to apologise from the offender perspective. What the analysis revealed was that victims needed very different things from the process depending on the experience they had when their case proceeded through the criminal justice system emphasising the importance of a robust but flexible VOM process.

The motivations victims reported in relation to why they wanted to be involved were consistent throughout the research. They all wanted to take ownership and perceived their involvement as taking control and 'shifting the power balance' of what had happened to them, this took many forms.

Having a 'safe' environment for victims and offenders was important for two reasons: firstly, it enabled victims and offenders to rationally articulate their messages to their offender in the safety of having mediators present, for example one of the offenders said: *'...Actually on the morning I was sick - at first couldn't get words out properly- the mention of revenge etc. I felt safe in the mediation...'* (Offender – case 4); and secondly, for some victims it pre-empted an unforeseen sighting on the street (on release from prison). For example:

'...I wanted to see him in a controlled environment, and because he's local, I didn't want to see him in the street or anything like that, you know, because if I saw him in the street I would probably scream and shout and cry at him, and I wouldn't be able to get across actually what I wanted to say to him and I really wanted to sit down and let him know what he has done to us and our family...' (Victim – case 2).

Additionally, one victim described their perpetrator as being a 'monster' and another described them as very dangerous, so providing a safe environment is important.

Other authors have acknowledged that the formal criminal justice system does not always meet the needs of victims or offenders (Zehr, 2002). This research found that seeking answers to unanswered questions and understanding certain circumstances of the case that were not provided by the formal criminal justice system, was particularly important to the victims. They needed to know why the offender chose them (or a close relative). For example:

'...why me? The usual things about being a victim, you know, what are your plans? What made you commit such a thing?' (Victim – case 7).

Seeking this clarity was also important for the victim to be able to articulate to people around them about what happened. For example: one victim, who lost her husband as a result of the crime, has to explain events to her daughter when she is older, so it was important for her to ask all of the questions that were not clear to her throughout the formal criminal justice process.

For some offenders, their motivation for participating in the mediation was to provide those answers to help the victim, for example:

'...I am not looking for forgiveness, brownie points or early release. I think the family deserve a reason and I hope I have helped in giving answers...' (Offender – case 3)

It mattered to offenders what the victim thought of them. They wanted to put their story to the victim so that they would understand and feel less negatively about them.

Victims were most commonly motivated to partake in VOM as they saw it as part of the healing process through which they could achieve closure. Receiving an apology from the perpetrator was very important to them as well as being able to assess for themselves whether or not the offender had taken ownership for the crime.

For some victims, being empowered with the ability to have a voice within the process was very important. They perceived this to be in contrast to the formal criminal justice process where they felt let down and had no control. The VOM process allowed them to validate their experiences by asking direct questions to their offender.

Some victims' family and/or friends tried to dissuade them from being involved in RJ for a number of reasons:

- they did not want the victim to endure any more pain by seeing the perpetrator;
- they did not want the victim to feel sorry for the perpetrator;
- sometimes, the victim acts on behalf of other family members.

Despite these misgivings from close family and friends/supporters, these victims still participated in the VOM process. The support from the process and the mediators within it, gave them approval. This subsequently validated their participation and confirmed that someone understood how the process made sense to them, why they were doing it and enabled them to appreciate the wider benefits (e.g. assisting with confidence, taking ownership and seeking answers only the perpetrator could give).

Victims and offenders perceptions of VOM - mediation as a 'positive' experience

All respondents within this research reported that the VOM process was a positive experience. Victims felt empowered and they had a greater sense of ownership following the mediation. They benefitted from the opportunity the process provided to ask questions, to articulate feelings and obtain feedback directly from the offender. Hearing the offender's account helped victims process the events and provided validation of what had happened to them. It was particularly important for the victims to receive an apology from the offender, for example:

'...to actually see how it affected him and how actually he was....that has helped me as well because if he was someone who actually didn't care.....you know, I wouldn't feel like I feel today,.....so I wouldn't want to see anyone suffering,....but in a way I am glad he is upset and he is remorseful, and I can clearly see that...' (Victim – case 2)

Research by Crocker (2015) found that offenders who went through the RJ process learned that their crimes had wider effects than those experienced by the direct victims. Similarly, in this research, for offenders, hearing the victim's story was often described as 'harrowing' (or in similar terms). However, it enabled an understanding and realisation of the harm they caused to their victim and the victim's family.

'...Accepting just how devastating the effect had been on my victim. Actually seeing her upset and having to deal with that...' (Offender 2 – case 6).

VOM gives the offender to chance to reflect on their offence, thinking about the consequences:

'...has given me a chance to change the way I think about my offence." Giving an insight into the consequences of the crime, which I would not had if I had not gone through this...' (Offender 2 - case 6).

Furthermore, VOM reversed some of the perceptions that the victims had regarding as to why the crime happened to them, by providing an opportunity for the offender to 'explain' their perspective on events. This enabled victims to understand that they were not victimised as a result of a personal agenda. For example:

'... it's very easy to kind of internalize it and think it's something about you, isn't it, and I guess to hear that confirmed from the person who was involved that it wasn't and to realise that,

actually, it was as you say a kind of thuggish type of random event, it's quite confirming for one..?’ (Victim – case 11).

Victims often viewed mediation as a way to ‘move on’ from the offence and all of the associated feelings. The majority of participants felt that one mediation session was adequate. However, one victim felt mediation had been helpful to an extent, but had on the other hand revealed another set of questions. This highlights the importance for mediation and mediators to manage the ‘ripple’ effect and any unintended consequences.

Such issues highlight the point that VOM provides a forum for the victim to actively participate in the criminal justice process. The validation that victims seek as part of the mediation may indicate that there is a perceived lack of justice achieved from formal criminal justice procedures, and that not all of the questions relevant to victims were answered. VOM provided that opportunity to get the answers they needed.

Prison authority perceptions of VOM

The majority of the prison and probation officers interviewed perceived that mediation was beneficial for both victim and offender. However, prison authorities were able to see the benefits directly with the offenders they managed and referred to this in the interviews. One officer, for example, mentioned when receiving feedback about the mediation session from the offender involved, that the offender said:

‘...He [the offender] has mentioned it to other prisoners and said it would be good. Some serious offenders wish they could turn the clock back but then they can't do anything at least with mediation they can do something...’ (Prison authority – case 3).

This is an unintended (but positive) consequence of the mediation process and such messages from the offender could help challenge some of the attitudes towards mediation held by other inmates, given the issue of a perceived negativity towards mediation amongst prisoners. Additionally, victims also reported feeling a sense of responsibility to do everything they could to safeguard any potential future victims. It was important for the victim to feel that the offender had been rehabilitated due to the RJ mediation process.

The prisoners who were moved to prisons where there was less RJ familiarity were unlikely to be supported in any inclination to be involved in VOM. Some prisons had RJ awareness programmes and it may have helped facilitate the VOM process had more prisons engaged in such awareness and/or training. Whilst the findings of the research did not clearly establish this as a research outcome, the research team can nevertheless draw inference from this through the responses received from other stakeholders. The view of the researchers is that the lack of RJ awareness and the VOM process in some prisons, was an important factor in making it more difficult to recruit prisoners for participation in the research. The following response from this prison officer tends to be supportive here:

‘No. I didn’t get any awareness [of mediation] if anything unfortunately. On the odd occasion that they did come I was on annual leave and Joanne [the mediator] couldn’t make it...And on the second occasion when I could make it, I had about 5 minutes due to traffic so I had a cup of tea so I wasn’t lucky enough to have any information about it whatsoever’. (Prison authority – case 1).

The interviews with prison officers revealed overwhelmingly positive responses about the process and the appropriateness of VOM in the cases where it had been used and with which those prison officers were associated, for instance;

‘I thought it was something that was very positive and constructive and should be expanded. It is something that should be expanded but it is difficult with time. Perhaps a designated role would be helpful’. (Prison authority – case 3).

When asked what was found to be most challenging about the mediation (if anything) one prison officer suggested that;

‘convincing governors to let it go ahead in first place – the initial meeting etc...[it was] awkward getting all parties together’. (Prison authority – case 4).

It is important to note that the research was designed to consider cases where RJ had been used, so those interviewed were prison authority practitioners who had sound process awareness and had been closely involved with RJ cases within their facility. The findings may have been more variable had the focus of the research been different and prison staff not associated with RJ practices been interviewed.

Challenges in conducting the research

The research team secured 11 cases (including 31 interviews). The primary challenge to the research was the difficulty in the number of VOM cases being generated. At the beginning of the research it was anticipated that there would be a regular supply of cases and the research team would have the opportunity to approach participants for interviews. However, early in the research project the collapse of the economy followed by a period of austerity correlated with the number of cases not materialising. This resulted in the research team expanding the scope of their research to include additional mediation organisations, prisons and probation services with the intention of attracting more cases. It was clear through meetings with prison authorities and the lack of responses from individual prison authority staff, that increasing workloads and priorities were creating a more challenging environment for practitioners. Low morale and pressing workloads of prison and probation staff affected their ability or willingness to respond to requests for interviews and inevitably the research team's access to offenders. The research interview requests that were most successful involved victims. This success was due to the ability of researchers to establish a good relationship with mediator organisations and through these links secure interviews with victims.

Some services made RJ awareness workshops available to staff, some were well attended, but other services had no engagement with RJ awareness or initiatives at all. The inconsistencies between services were particularly clear when prisoners were moved. Some organisations were unfamiliar with RJ initiatives and reluctant to consider requests, other organisations or individuals simply failed to respond. Access to the offender was dependent on probation or prison staff gatekeepers, if the gatekeeper did not respond to researchers' requests, access to the offender was not achieved. Although researchers established good relationships with some prison and probation staff, the size of organisations involved and the movement of prisoners made it particularly difficult to promote involvement with the research across the various prisons and probation offices. In the authors' experience, while prison and probation organisations were structured geographically, the research team's established relationships with some prison or probation staff did not always assist with approaches to their colleagues in other parts of the organisation. Contact and communication was more easily developed with the smaller mediation organisations. While researchers or prison authorities did not foresee many of these challenges, it was clear that the economic slowdown, associated austerity measures and varying levels of support for VOM/RJ initiatives across prison authorities, had a significant impact on this research.

Recommendations: Implementing VOM in prisons

Findings suggest that there are several contributing factors to a 'successful' (or otherwise) prison VOM process. The process will be facilitated by ensuring the following factors are in place:

- *Awareness and good communication amongst all agencies regarding the role of VOM:*

This will ensure that the process is promoted and offered to victims more systematically once the case has been passed to the National Probation Service: the research revealed inconsistencies with referrals and that not all referred cases come from the VLOs. Consequently, it is unknown whether referrals are missed due to a lack of awareness or substantial workloads. Embedding RJ as the norm in prisons and developing, for example, a role profile (dedicated or part of an offender management responsibility) to facilitate the logistical requirements of mediation whilst supporting the offender through the process and across all prisons. Good communication with the handover process as well as facilitating the requirements within and between prisons for the offender are important factors for continuity and navigation of the VOM process. This can involve offenders moving between prisons and probation services across regions throughout the UK as they serve various parts of their sentence.

- *Considering the appropriateness of mediation for individual cases:*

Mediation Services can work with referring agencies to ensure that initial assessments are undertaken with victims concerning the appropriateness of mediation for the individual. This will further assist with developing strategic support systems for the victim during and after the mediation process. Where mediators were asked about whether **all** cases should be referred to mediation, the response was variable. One mediator pointed out that there are some benefits of making mediation mandatory. One of the perceived positives of prison mediation was that it is a voluntary process for both parties and not the result of 'having an arm twisted'. Active willingness to participate in mediation, from both parties is particularly important, the offender to show remorse and the victim, to feel ready to meet the offender. If the process was made mandatory, it could have the reverse effect as it would potentially take away the choice of involvement from both parties.

- *Undertake meticulous preparation and ensure that frequent meetings are undertaken with both victims and offenders to understand the 'ripple effect':*

Explaining the process and presenting the benefits and risks will assist with those involved discussing their concerns. This will enable the mediator to address them where possible; and, to undertake accurate risk assessments with both parties.

- *Providing a safe and comfortable environment for the mediation is critical for all parties to facilitate a victim and offender-led conversation:*

All of the parties needs must be identified from risk assessments undertaken in preparation for the process. In addition, facilitating the flow of the conversation and balancing the dialogue where appropriate is vital for providing a safe place for mediation. In order to do this mediation needs to be neutral. Mediators should not attempt to have expectations nor to set expectations amongst victims and offenders.

- *Flexible approaches are vital:*

One of the reasons why mediation might 'work' is because the process is flexible and both parties are equally involved in decision-making. Mediators need to resist building prescriptive expectations and driving the conversation and/or outcomes they consider best for participants. Our research suggests that mediators need to limit their interjection in the process which was often when the mediation was considered most successful.

- *Further research*

Further research should be conducted to enhance our understanding of the use of VOM in a prison context. Key themes for future research would include (1) the long term benefits or otherwise to the use of VOM; (2) the impact of various modes of mediation service delivery in the context of changes in funding and private sector involvement; (3) the effectiveness of cross service partnerships in the delivery of VOM and (4) appropriate measures of effectiveness to reflect the costs, benefits and impact of VOM as an organisational tool.

Conclusion

This paper has presented research conducted with practitioners, victims and offenders. When undertaking RJ within a prison context, it is important to acknowledge that while some prisoners were supportive of RJ initiatives, others were less willing to support mediation approaches. The prison and probation service have experienced substantial reform and budget constraints during the lifetime of this research and, partly due to this, access to cases proved difficult on occasions. As the research struggled to find VOM examples, the search for more cases widened. As prisoners were moved, more prisons and probation officers were approached for assistance, increasing the number of potential gatekeepers. For a number of reasons, from workload demands through to reluctance to assist, the

number of offenders is lower than the victims interviewed as part of this study. RJ was also a relatively new initiative for the prison service and in the context of delivering many changes to other parts of the prison service, these challenges presented yet more change. The findings must therefore be considered in line with the challenging context in which the data was collected.

The findings in this study have concurred with many of the findings raised in previous studies referred to in the literature review. This research identified that the infrastructure and knowledge base of RJ mediation processes needs enhancing amongst practitioners to enable more systematic access to a potentially valuable experience for all parties concerned. VOM methods need to be normalised as part of the formal outcomes of a criminal justice process for both victims and offenders. This would help to ensure that the option is offered more systematically, opportunities are not missed and that the benefits of RJ are realised. 'Buy-in' is required from the prison management to integrate mediation from the top-down. There remains some perceived resistance within some of the prisons about the use of RJ and it is worth noting that this causes delays to the process and has subsequent impact on the victim. RJ should be encouraged from the top of the establishment and processes put in place to support its delivery. By developing a more systematic approach, awareness would be raised. This needs to be matched with an internal infrastructure to assist with the delivery of mediation. For example to:

- provide accessible training to ensure that mediation delivery is systematic;
- formalise the stakeholder role profile within prisons to raise the profile of RJ;
- enhance the management of the practical logistics of the mediation process;
- publicise the benefits for inmates in order to challenge the negative perceptions of RJ amongst staff and prisoners.

It is important to encourage all involved to enhance a flexible approach to the process which is developed in collaboration with the needs of the victim and the offender. Whilst the research would support the development of an infrastructure to further formalise the process of RJ in prisons, it is also clear from the findings that there is no standard model to delivering the process itself. Issues such as intended outcomes, information provision and feedback on the process need to be led and developed with the parties involved. The needs of victim and offender are paramount and will differ from case to case. Given one of the perceived aims of RJ is to enhance victim involvement, being prescriptive around expectations and outcomes is likely to limit the empowerment that victims can experience as part of their involvement in this process.

Further research could examine the potential support for mediators and prison authorities involved in delivering the RJ process from one another and the hierarchy within their own organisations. While some mediation services do collect their own post-mediation feedback, it would be useful to have a longitudinal perspective on victim and offender satisfaction and deterrence against re-offending. Utilising the offenders involved could have a positive impact upon RJ in prisons given the perceived negativity in some aspects of the prison environment and the impact this could have on developing a sustainable RJ prison initiative. Finally, the funding changes and impact of the shift in the delivery of RJ services from community and third sector mediation services to private sector organisations should be examined and evaluated to ensure that effective models of VOM are supported in prisons.

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