



Restorative Justice

Results of Public and Partners Consultations 2016

Introduction

In preparation for a relaunch of Restorative Justice (RJ) services in Kent, and in order to inform the longer term commissioning of RJ services by the OPCC in 2017, two separate consultations were launched by the OPCC. Both consultations ran for a month, between mid-November 2016 and mid-December 2016. One consultation was aimed at the general public and the second consultation at partner organisations. Questions were tailored for the target audience, although there were some crossover questions that appeared in both.

This assessment is divided into three parts; the first looks at the crossover questions that were present in both consultations, and provides an overall assessment for these aspects. The second and third parts deal with each consultation separately and in isolation.

Part One – Combined Questions

Both consultations asked respondents to rate two aspects of RJ on a four point scale; Good, Fair, Poor or Don't Know. The three aspects were:

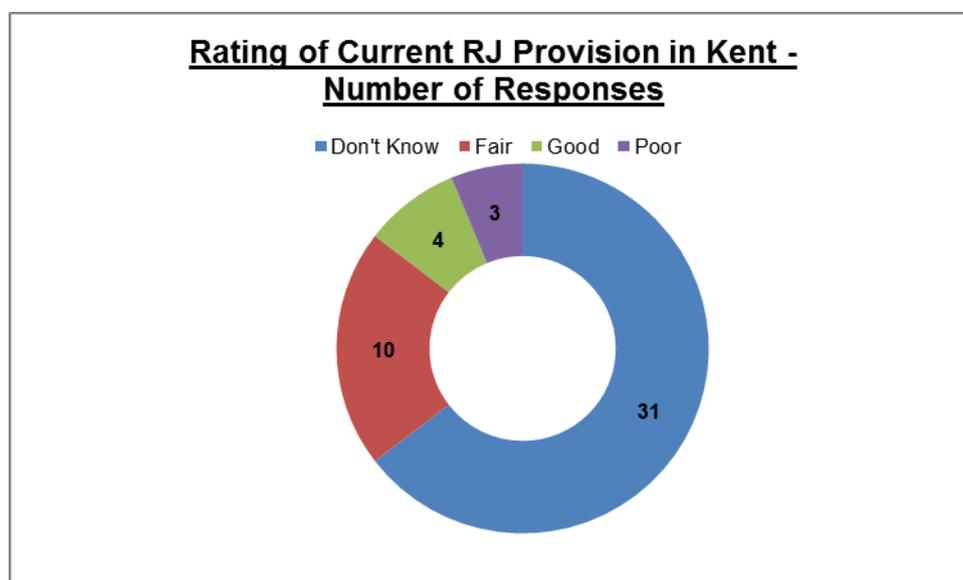
- How do you rate the current RJ provision in Kent?
- How easy is it to access information of RJ interventions in Kent?

Both consultations also asked respondents if RJ services did help them (if they received them) or would have helped them (if they had received them) and whether RJ should be available to victims of all crime types, as a simple Yes or No, with the opportunity to provide additional comments in response to the question.

In total, across both consultations, a total of 56 responses were received, although not every response answered every question. The results are displayed below:

How do you rate the current RJ provision in Kent?

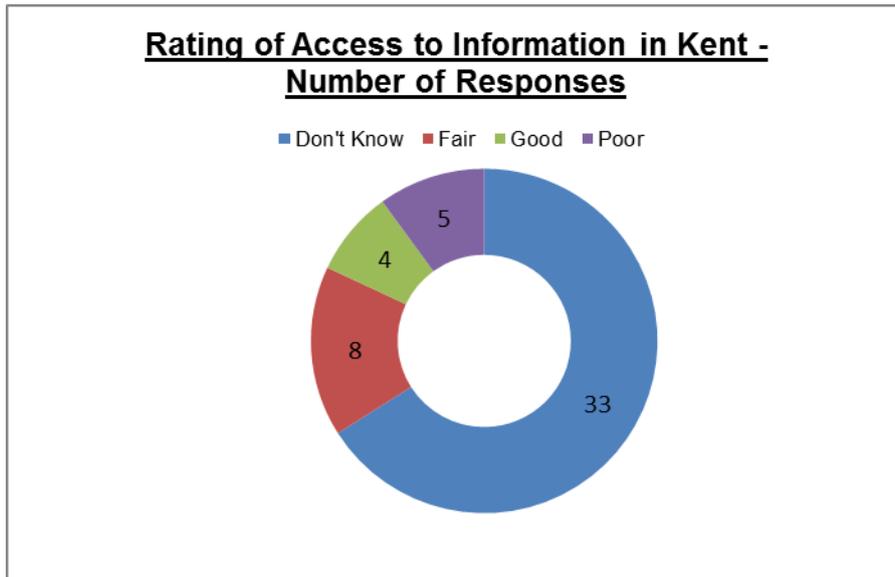
Total responses 48



- Nearly 65% of the respondents answered 'Don't Know'.

How easy is it to access information of RJ interventions in Kent?

Total responses 50



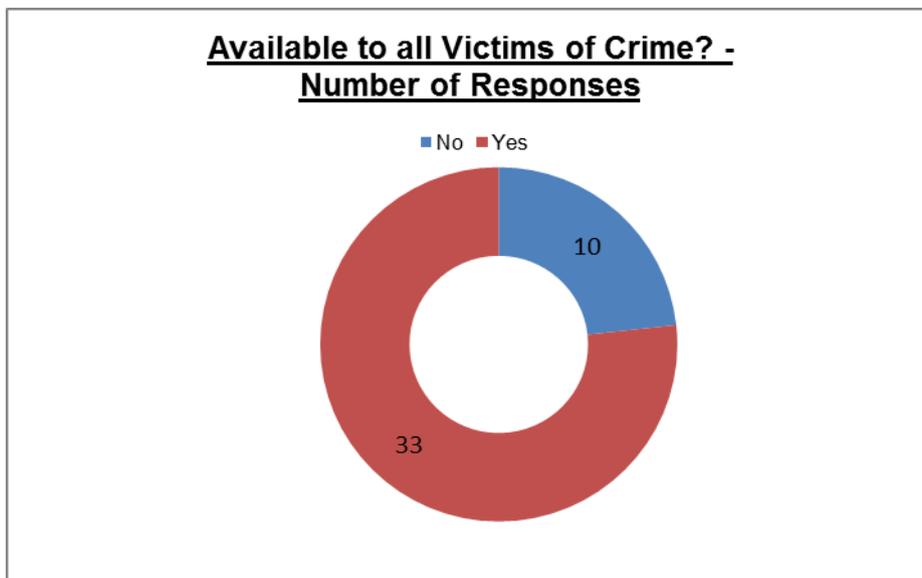
- 66% of respondents answered 'Don't Know'.

Did RJ services assist or would they have assisted?

Combined there were 35 responses to this question, with seven respondents indicating that RJ services may have been of benefit to them. No information was available regarding those who actually had received services.

Should RJ be available to all victims of crime?

Total responses 43



- Nearly 77% of respondents answered 'Yes'.

The overwhelming conclusion from the first three questions is that there is a significant lack of knowledge on behalf of the respondents regarding RJ services in Kent. Most respondents felt that they did not know enough to be able to rate

any of the three aspects. Where a rating was provided the most common response was 'Fair', with responses for 'Good' or 'Poor' fairly evenly split.

Respondents did not have the option in response to the question regarding all victims having access to RJ services to answer 'Don't Know', which may explain the slightly lower response rate to this question, with respondents choosing not to answer it at all rather than give an opinion based upon little or no information. Of those that did provide an answer, the overwhelming response was 'Yes', although in the comments section concerns were raised regarding the appropriateness of RJ for victims of certain crimes, notably domestic abuse/violence or sexual offences.

Part Two – Public Consultation

In total, 44 responses were received in relation to the Public Consultation document, although some responses were received from partners who completed the Public Consultation in error. Not all responses answered all of the questions.

Question 1: What is Restorative Justice? Please explain your understanding.

The first question was a free-text answer and asked respondents to give their understanding of what RJ is. Although each response was unique, some themes emerged from the 33 respondents who answered the question. In the other 11 responses the question was either left blank or the response was 'Don't Know'.

The first theme to emerge was who respondents believed to be the focus of RJ. In nearly half of responses (16/33) the respondent's understanding of RJ centred upon the anticipated or hoped-for impact upon the offender. In most cases the respondent believed that the main point of RJ was the impact of the process upon the offender, creating empathy for the victim, or remorse. Respondents believed that rehabilitation of the offender was the primary function of RJ. In nine of the responses the focus was on the impact on the victim, with RJ seeking to help victims understand why they had been targeted, and given them an opportunity to achieve some closure in regards to the incident, by contact with the offender. This victim impact was believed by these respondents to be the main focus of RJ. The final eight responses included both the impact upon the offender and the victim, and did not ascribe a greater importance to one over the other, emphasising instead that RJ was equally focused on both victims and offenders.

The second theme to emerge was the method of RJ employed. The majority of respondents (22/33) believed that RJ involved a face-to-face meeting between the victim and the offender. This is only one type of RJ, yet most respondents appeared to be unaware of alternative methods and thought of RJ solely in this context.

The final theme to emerge was a belief in some respondents (10/33) that RJ involved some form of direct reparation from the offender to the victim. This may be in the form of financial compensation, or more often work undertaken by the offender to 'make good' the damage to the victim or the wider community.

Question 2: Have you been a victim of crime in Kent?

Question 3: Were you offered a restorative intervention?

Question 3a: If yes, by whom?

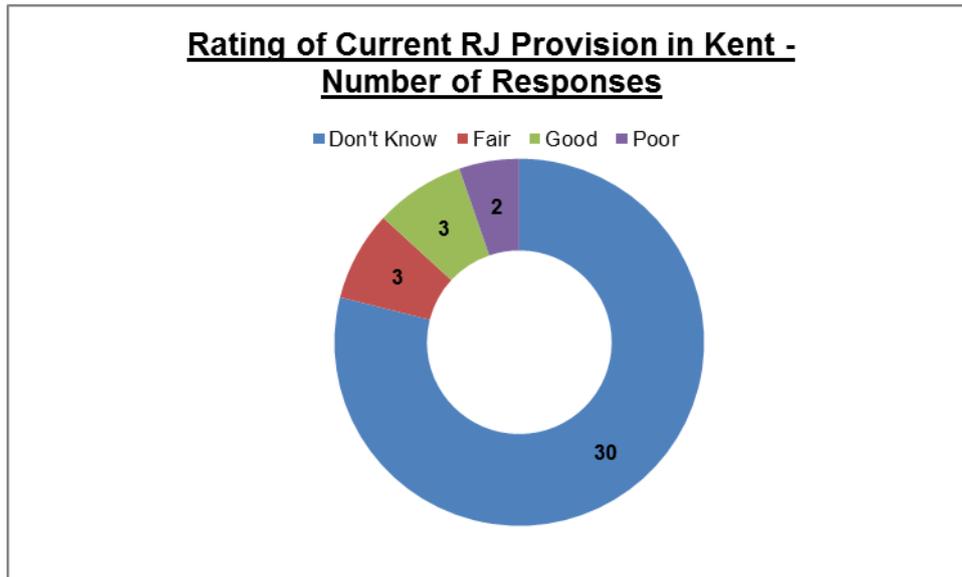
Question 3b: What type of intervention took place?

43 respondents answered question two, with the answers split 50/50 between those who had experienced being the victim of a crime in Kent and those who had not (22 No and 21 Yes).

Of the 21 respondents who had been the victim of a crime, only four stated they had been offered a RJ intervention, and only two of these went to give details of who provided it (the police in both cases), and the type of RJ intervention (one letter of apology and one 'other').

Question 4: How do you rate the current RJ provision in Kent?

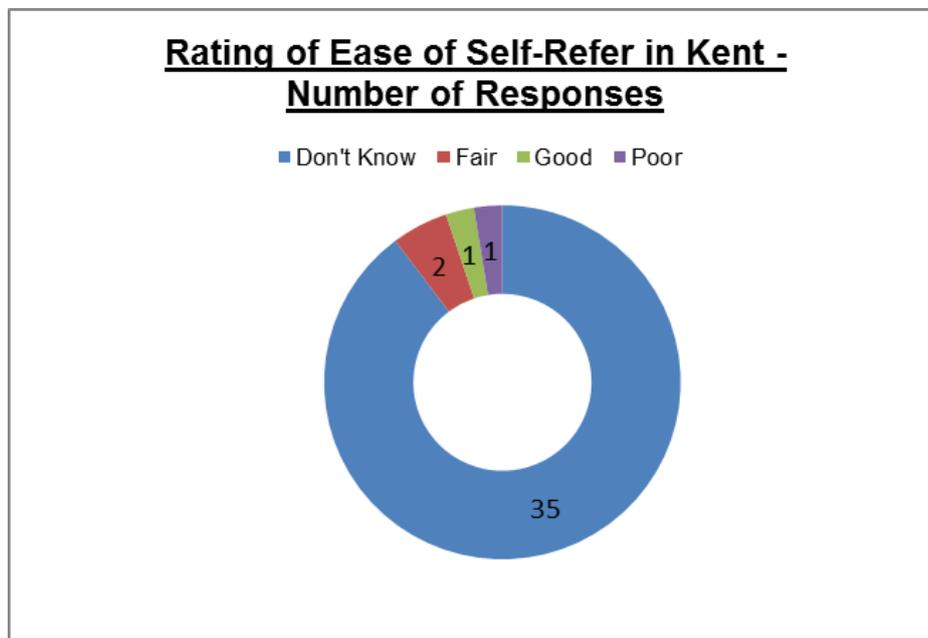
Total responses 38



- Nearly 79% of respondents answered 'Don't Know'

Question 5: How easy is it to self-refer in to RJ provisions in Kent?

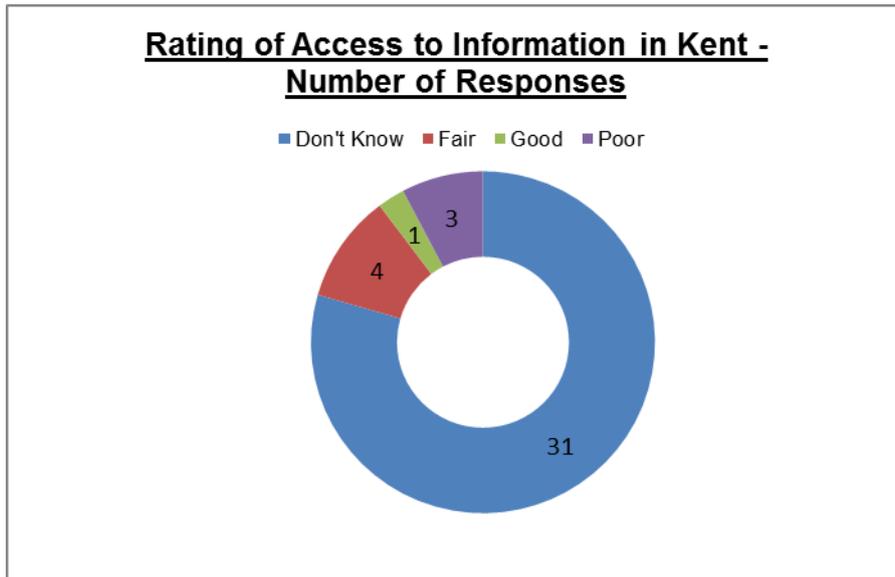
Total responses 39



- Nearly 90% of respondents answered 'Don't Know'

Question 6: How easy is it to access information on RJ interventions in Kent?

Total responses 39



- Just over 79% of respondents answered 'Don't Know'

As would be expected, the results follow a similar pattern to those described in part one of this report, with public respondents answering 'Don't Know' to each question in slightly higher proportions than the combined results. Amongst the few ratings provided, 'Fair' was the most common, with 'Poor' marginally outranking 'Good'.

Question 7: Identify any current gaps in the current RJ service. How do you think RJ can be improved in Kent?

This question was answered by 30 respondents, although a number of the responses were simply to state 'Don't Know'. Amongst more detailed responses the main theme was that RJ provision needed to be much better advertised or publicised, reflecting the low level of knowledge regarding RJ amongst the public respondents. Respondents who had previously identified the focus of RJ to be the impact on the offender raised concerns about the effectiveness of it, citing issues with RJ replacing more traditional sentences and criminal justice outcomes and being a soft option.

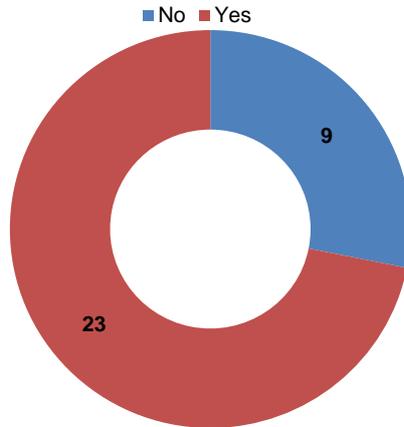
Question 8: If you have been a victim of crime please explain what experience you had with RJ and how this could be improved or if you were not offered RJ, do you think RJ would have helped your recovery.

A total of 29 responses were received to this question, although the majority consisted of either N/A or similar. Of the remaining responses most stated they had not been offered RJ, with six respondents indicating that they may have benefited from RJ. Only two respondents were offered RJ, neither of which ultimately took place, with little or no explanation as to why.

Question 9: Do you think RJ should be available to victims of all crime types? Please expand and tell us more about your views here.

Total responses 32

**Available to all Victims of Crime -
Number of Responses**



- Nearly 72% of respondents answered 'Yes'.

Support from the public respondents was strong for RJ to be available to victims of all crime types, although slightly down on the combined figure. Amongst the comments, concerns were raised about victims of certain crime types, sexual offences and domestic abuse/violence and the suitability of RJ for repeat offenders (confirming for some respondents the primacy of the offender impact in the RJ process). Other respondents emphasised that RJ must be voluntary for victims of crime and that RJ should be available for victims of anti-social behaviour as well as crime.

Part Two – Partners’ Consultation

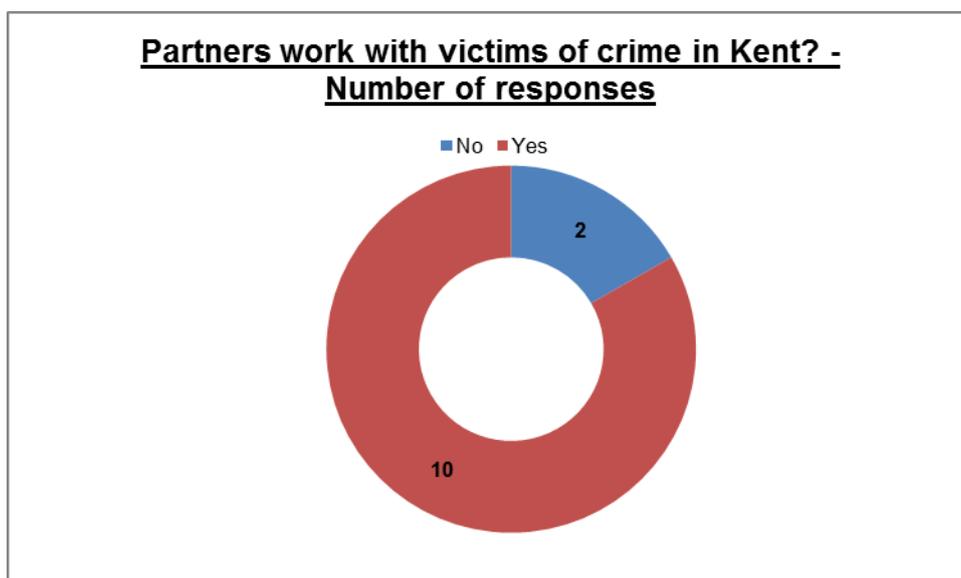
In total, 12 responses were received to the partners’ consultation document, although not every response answered every question and one response appeared to be from a member of the public who completed the wrong consultation.

Question 1: Does your service deliver elements of RJ? If so, please explain more here.

A total of 10 responses were provided in answer to this question, although only five responses confirmed an involvement in RJ in some capacity. Of those five, two were involved with RJ services in prisons and one each with youth to parent violence, youth cautions and youth offending panels.

Question 2: Do you work with victims of crime in Kent?

Total responses 12



- Over 80% of respondents indicated that they worked with victims of crime in Kent.

Question 3: Do you complete RJ referrals for the victim?

Question 3a: If yes, to whom?

Question 3b: Which of these RJ interventions do you think is most effective?

A total of 12 responses were received for question three, of which five partners indicated that they completed RJ referrals for victims. A number of options were provided in the consultation for organisations that partners may refer victims to for RJ:

- Kent Police
- Victim Support
- KCC
- Project Salus
- Kent Mediation
- Probation (National)/CRC
- Kent YOT
- Other (insert name)

The responses showed that out of the list above:

- One respondent referred to all organisations listed
- One respondent referred to Kent Mediation only

- One respondent referred to Kent Police, Victim Support and Kent Mediation
- One respondent referred to Kent Police, Victim Support and West Kent Mediation
- One respondent referred to Kent Police, Project Salus and Probation

In regards to question 3b, a number of options were provided:

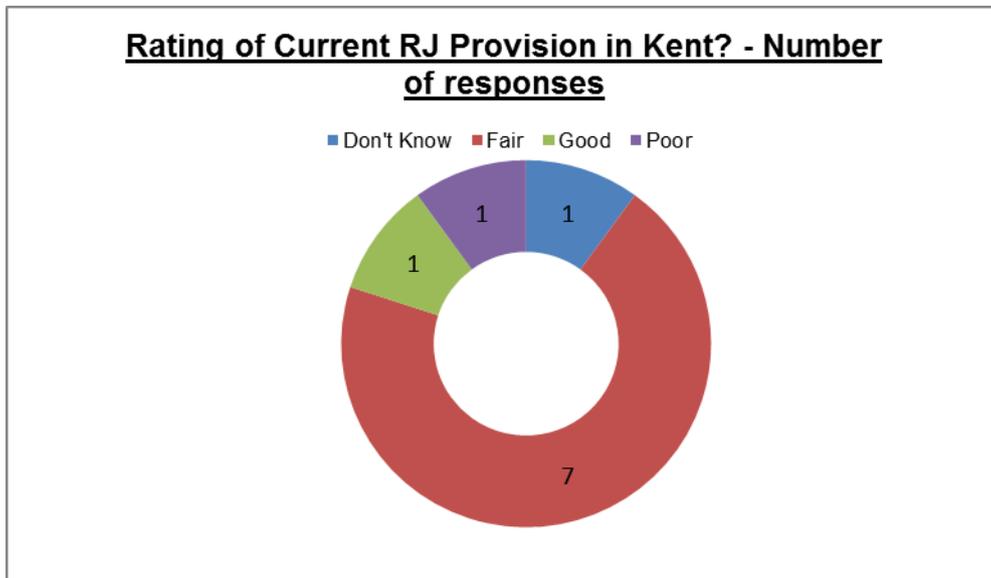
- Face-to-Face
- Letter of Apology
- Conference
- Shuttle
- Other

The 10 responses to this question break down as:

- Seven respondents indicated that all the options were effective
- One respondent selected face-to-face and conference
- One respondent selected face-to-face and letter of apology
- One respondent selected face-to-face and shuttle

Question 4: How do you rate the current RJ service provision in Kent?

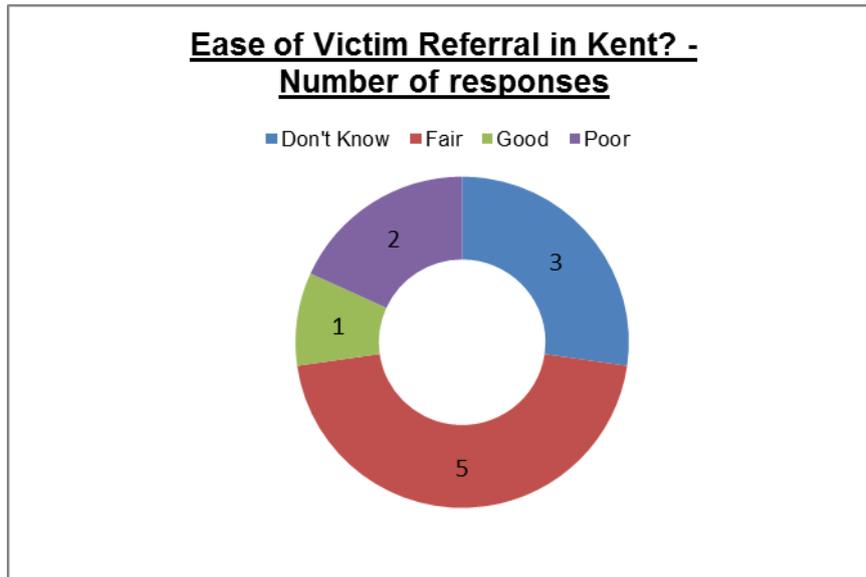
Total responses 10



- 70% of responses rated provision as 'Fair'

Question 5: How easy is it to refer a victim of crime into RJ provisions in Kent?

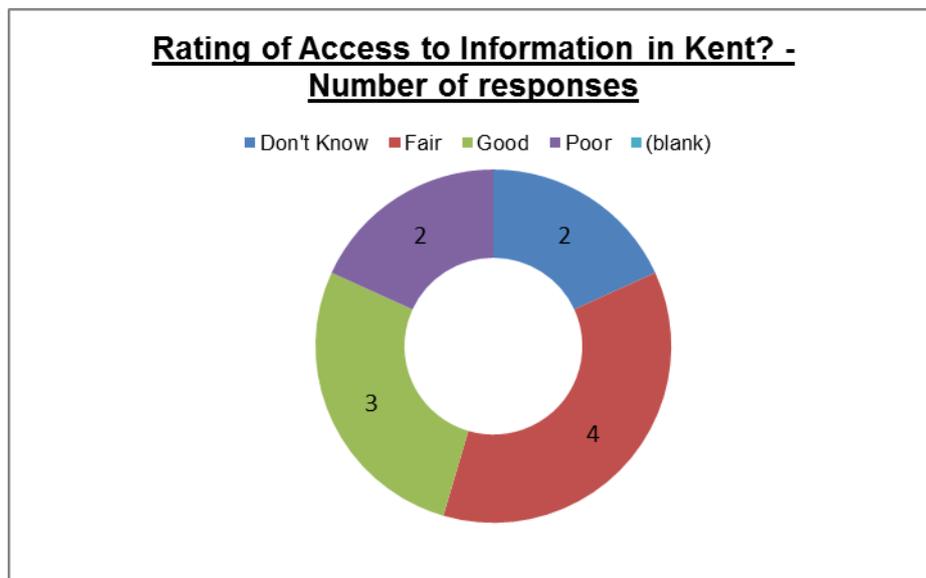
Total responses 11



- Nearly half of respondents rated this aspect as 'Fair'.

Question 6: How easy is it to access RJ information in Kent?

Total responses 11



- Responses were divided with 36% rating this aspect 'Fair', 27% 'Good' and 18% either 'Poor' or 'Don't Know'.

Question 7: Identify any current gaps in the current RJ service. How do you think RJ can be improved in Kent?

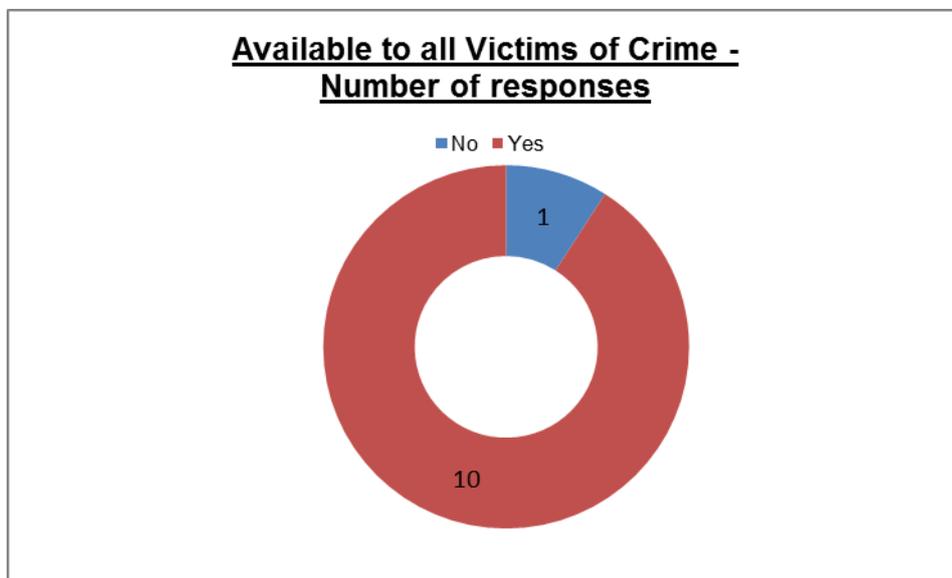
A total of 11 respondents answered this question. A variety of issues were highlighted, however weaknesses in communication both between organisations and with victims were identified, as was a lack of information about RJ services. In the view of some respondents RJ in Kent was in its 'infancy' and not 'in the DNA' of organisations. All these aspects impacted negatively upon the efficiency and effectiveness of the current RJ service provision.

Question 8: If you have been a victim of crime please explain what experience you had with RJ and how this could be improved or if you were not offered RJ, do you think RJ would have helped your recovery.

Six responses were received regarding this question, although all bar one simply stated N/A. That one response stated that RJ would have assisted the respondent, which was indicative of a public consultation response, although an organisation name was provided in the consultation.

Question 9: Do you think RJ should be available to victims of all crime types? Please expand and tell us more about your views here.

Total responses 11



- Over 90% of respondents answered 'Yes'.

Amongst the overwhelming support for RJ services to be available for victims of all crimes, the one dissenting voice cited victims of sexual offences and domestic abuse/violence as not being suitable for RJ services, with concerns raised by other respondents along similar lines, with great care needing to be taken if victims of these offences are to receive RJ services. Ensuring that there were suitable trained and experienced facilitators for these circumstances was emphasised by a number of respondents.