

LEARNING GUIDE - PSHE

INSPIRED BY THE TRUE STORY

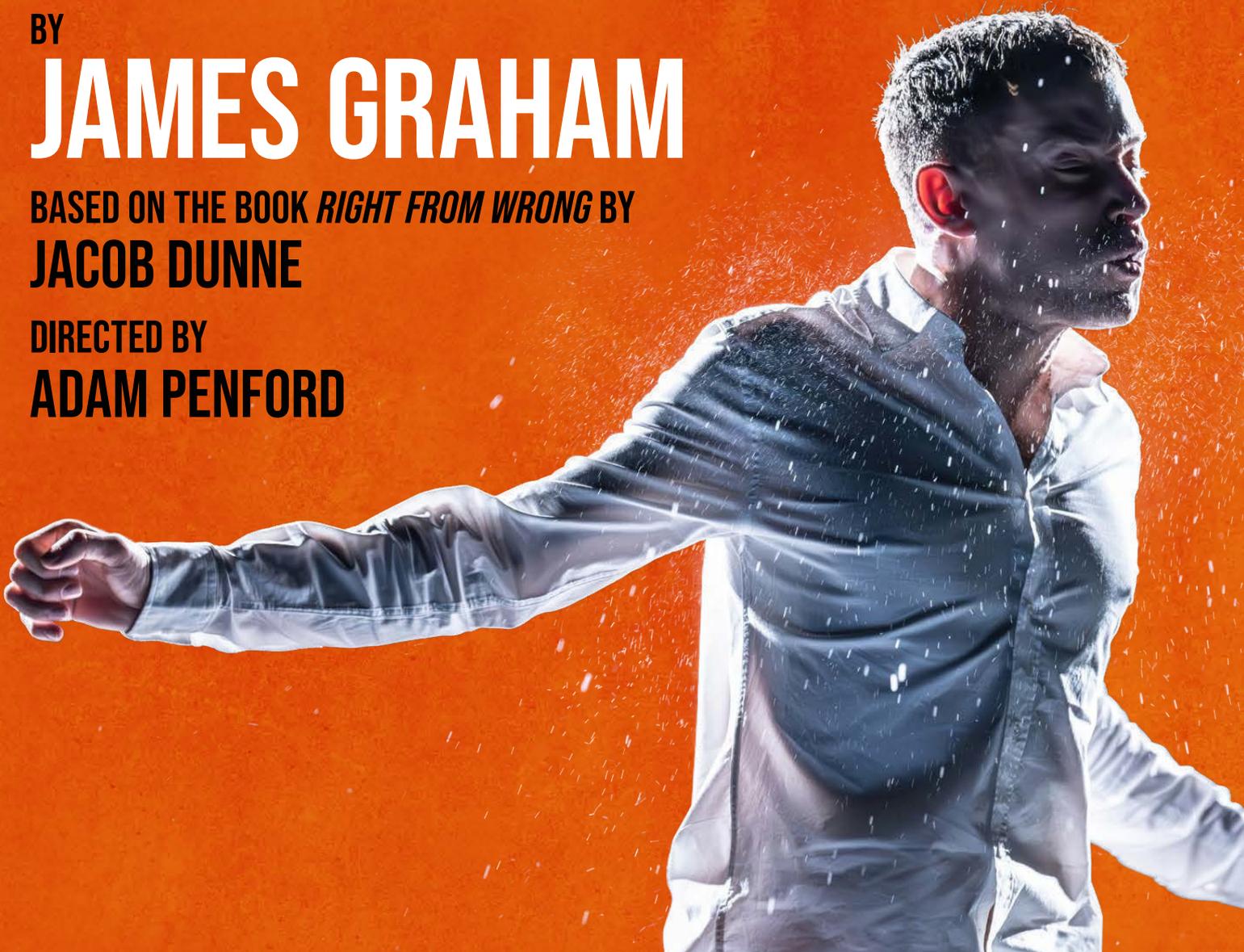
PUNCH

BY

JAMES GRAHAM

BASED ON THE BOOK *RIGHT FROM WRONG* BY
JACOB DUNNE

DIRECTED BY
ADAM PENFORD



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This guide is designed for parents and carers, educators, youth workers and any members of the audience of *PUNCH* who wish to explore the themes, issues and topics depicted in the play. It aims to support users in conversations with the young people in their own settings and provides further information on organisations and resources that can help. Throughout the pack you'll also find quotations and extracts from the play, which offer additional opportunities to discuss specific moments in the production.

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This guide was written by Susie Ferguson and commissioned by the West End production of *PUNCH* which played at the Apollo Theatre from 22 September - 29 November 2025. *PUNCH* was produced in the West End by KPPL Productions, Mark Gordon Pictures and Eilene Davidson Productions, in association with the Young Vic and Nica Burns.

PUNCH was commissioned by and premiered at Nottingham Playhouse in May 2024, and transferred to the Young Vic in March 2025.

With special thanks for their input into this guide: Alec Boaden, Alexandra Fay Braithwaite, Robbie Butler, Jacob Dunne, Anna Fleischle, Nicola Fowler, James Graham, Julie Hesmondhalgh, Tony Hirst, David Hodgkinson, Gavin Hudson, Shalisha James-Davis, Emma Pallant, Adam Penford, Leanne Pinder, Joan Scourfield, and David Shields and everyone who made the production.

All production photography by Marc Brenner.



PUNCH is dedicated to the memory of James Hodgkinson and all victims of one-punch. James dedicated his life to the helping and healing of others. His 28 years were a testament to his outlook and values - a volunteer, a mentor, a paramedic. He was loved by his family and friends, and gave love in return.

Theatre can and should be a restorative space of empathy, and increased understanding. We hope to honour and do justice to the man James was.

James Graham

PUNCH tells the story of Jacob Dunne, a young man from Nottingham who threw a punch that had fatal consequences for James Hodgkinson, a trainee paramedic from Southampton. Jacob served 14 months in prison for manslaughter. Following his release from prison, he was at risk of reoffending and returning to a cycle of violence, drug use and gang activity.

James' parents, David and Joan, were frustrated with the criminal justice system, and were left with unanswered questions about what had happened, and why. With the help of Remedi, a Restorative Justice (RJ) charity, Jacob's probation officer and Victim Support, Jacob, Joan and David took part in the RJ process. Beginning with a series of questions, communicating through Remedi for over two years, Joan and David eventually met Jacob. The process has not only led to a greater understanding of the events of that night in 2011, but Jacob has also gone on to study a university degree in Criminology and is now an author and campaigner for RJ and wider justice issues. Joan and Jacob continue to raise awareness about one-punch, Restorative Justice, and the social issues that can lead to violence and crime.

James Graham is considered Britain's 'state of the nation' playwright. This means that his plays not only provide drama and entertainment, but they also examine important issues and ideas about the Britain in which we live. *PUNCH* not only tells the story of Jacob, James, Joan and David, but also the impact of budget cuts, limited educational provision, social housing, and the prison system, on society.

The play is based on Jacob's memoir, *Right From Wrong* (2022). Adam had also listened to Jacob's series on BBC Radio 4, *The Punch*, which was made in 2020. Adam Penford, Artistic Director of the Nottingham Playhouse, approached Jacob about telling his story, and James Graham was commissioned to write the play. With the cooperation and involvement of Jacob, David and Joan, and Remedi's Assistant Director and facilitator Nicola Fowler, the play was created and premiered at Nottingham Playhouse in May 2024. It transferred to London's Young Vic Theatre in March 2025 and subsequently transferred to the Apollo Theatre, London, in September 2025.

Joan: Jacob?

(Everything seems to stop, as Jacob turns and looks. With everyone else. At Joan, who is here, looking directly at him.)

Joan: What are you going to do, now?

A beat. Then - blackout.

***PUNCH* by James Graham**

DEFINITIONS, BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Restorative Justice has been in use with Youth Offending Teams, the Police, in prisons and rehabilitation services in various forms since the 1980s and early 1990s. Remedi has worked in the field since 1996.

Participating in RJ is entirely voluntary for all participants. This protects the integrity and honesty of the process. Taking part is an informed choice. Participants need to understand the process and are supported by facilitators throughout.

Although the process appears quick in *PUNCH's* depiction of events, the process for David, Joan and Jacob took longer: there was a period of over 2 ½ years between first contact and eventually meeting each other. The emotional and physical safety of all participants is a top priority, and it is vital that the process is not rushed. Participants can withdraw at any time.

There are two main ways of participating in Restorative Justice.

DIRECT: The process in which participants eventually meet each other face to face. This only happens after extensive work and preparation for all those involved. RJ practitioners are present throughout the meeting(s). Meetings can be very short, in which a perpetrator simply answers some specific questions, or the meeting(s) can be much longer. The approach is very personal and individual to the people involved in each case.

INDIRECT: The indirect process involves exchanges of letters. Facilitators will work with the victims of a crime to identify a series of questions that they wish to have answered, and will then work with the perpetrator to provide answers. Those facilitators can also be a 'go between', providing verbal information (rather than written) between the participants.

You can find out more about the process by watching videos provided by [Remedi](#).

Taking part in Restorative Justice means understanding that there may be some very difficult conversations. The process does not involve avoiding conflict or difficult emotions, but instead finding a way through them. The preparatory work with all participants means that they are ready to be an empowered listener within the process.

"It's fine to show emotion, and the natural feelings of anger and upset are going to be present. How we get that across in the actual meeting, whilst avoiding aggression and physicality, is something we talked about a lot in the lead up to the meeting between Jacob, David and Joan."

Nicola Fowler, Remedi

THE FOUR VALUES OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

According to Dr Belinda Hopkins, Director of the organisation Transforming Conflict, a restorative approach should leave everybody feeling:

- **SAFE** to express themselves honestly and be themselves.
- That they have had an opportunity to speak and be **HEARD** by others.
- **VALUED** even if there was disagreement with what they had to say.
- **INCLUDED** regardless of their age, role, gender, ability, experience etc.

Dr Hopkins also states that the five principles of the restorative mindset are:

- An appreciation and acceptance of individual perspectives.
- The promotion of mutual understanding and empathy. The link between feeling, thought and behaviour should be made clear and explicit to help move towards that understanding.
- A focus on the impact of an action rather than blame and accusation about the action.
- Identifying underlying needs as well as having a commitment to addressing them.
- Taking responsibility for ourselves and others, and being accountable for our actions.

This then helps answer the following questions during discussions:

- What happened from each person's perspective?
- How has it left each person feeling?
- What do people think about what happened and each other?
- What would everybody like to feel moving forwards?
- Who can do what to help make that a reality?

For more references to Dr Belinda Hopkins' work, please see the references and reading recommendations on page 33 of this guide.

All RJ work therefore operates within firm boundaries and clear intended outcomes. Each case is unique, but the guiding principles remain the same and it's the outline that was followed with Joan, David and Jacob.

DEFINITIONS AND USE IN EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC SETTINGS

Being a restorative practitioner requires training and the development of a range of skills. This guide is not intended to be a training aid, but instead provides a foundation of understanding for anyone wishing to understand the process and use some of the principles in their own professional and/or personal relationships.

With thanks to Nicola Fowler and Gavin Hudson at [Remedi](#), and Jacob Dunne.

The concepts and techniques of Restorative Justice can be applied in other settings. The focus is on listening and communication. We refer to this as Restorative Practice.

This practice can be used in schools and youth settings (between teacher and student, for example) and at home (between a parent/carer and child) or in relationships between partners.

The difference between Restorative Justice (RJ) and Restorative Practice is that RJ is the resolution of conflict between a victim and a perpetrator. Restorative Practice is the use of the restorative skills needed to repair any conflict.

“It’s always got to be an invitation to talk.”

Jacob Dunne

Teacher reflection:

By using the bullet points on page 6 about the four guiding principles, how might you plan a conversation with a student who has disrupted a lesson?

If your meeting involves more than one adult working with one student, how might you organise the space to ensure openness and trust between all participants? Consider physical barriers (desks, folders, laptops) and ways in which to encourage interaction. A circular arrangement is often used in order to create a sense of equality, visibility and openness.

“The key is to focus on keeping our levels of curiosity, care and confidence high”

Gavin Hudson, Remedi

REFLECTIONS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Throughout *PUNCH*'s Nottingham and London runs, adults have been bringing their sons, daughters and other young adults to see the play as a way of initiating conversations about some of the struggles that young people have.

In the play, the character of Jacob experiences a range of emotions and pressures before his assault on James. The influence of peers, gangs and social groups, the perception of masculinity, the need to belong and, for Jacob, the additional challenges of ADHD and autism all combine to influence choices and behaviours of the young people in his life. After serving his prison sentence, Jacob is initially still unable to move past blame, self pity and anger (often aimed at the 'snitch' who gave the Police his name). However, the practices used within the RJ process enabled Jacob to develop empathy and compassion, and to find the sense of purpose and belonging that he needed in order to make changes to his life.

Jacob: at some point, in yer young life... impressing your mates becomes more important than pleasing your mum.

PUNCH by James Graham



Photography by Marc Brenner

OFFERING AN INVITATION TO TALK

When offering opportunities for restorative or supportive talk, we can use language to help support a positive relationship. By trying to avoid emotional labelling (“you seem angry”) or accusation (“you are...”) it is possible to ensure that the person talking to us has agency and control of their own experience.

Phrases such as “something seems to be worrying you” can be a gentle and neutral starting point. Describing the behaviour that alerts you to the feeling, and following it with a supportive question is also helpful. For example, “You seem quieter than usual. Is there something on your mind?” or “I noticed you were crying earlier. Could I ask what happened?” This gives the person agency over what they are feeling, and how they would like to move forward in any conversation.

MEASURING VS HONOURING: THE POWER OF LANGUAGE IN RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

We can sometimes unwittingly close down conversations because of the language we use. In their book *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education*, Dorothy Vaanderring and Katherine Evans identify the difference between measuring vs honouring language.

For example, if a student or child says: “Everything’s rubbish at the moment” a measuring response would be, “No it isn’t, you’ve got lots of things going for you”. An honouring response would be, “I hear that everything feels rubbish for you at the moment. I feel sad to hear that, and would like to help if I can.”

Another example might be if a student says, “Why should I listen to you? I don’t even know you. You don’t understand what it’s like.”

A measuring response would be, “you should listen to me. I’m trying to help” whereas a response that honours what has been said might be, “You just said I don’t know what it’s like and I agree, I’d like to understand more. Tell me what’s been happening.” The second option is an invitation to continue the conversation, whereas the first response could be interpreted as critical, or could create a sense of hierarchy and disempowerment which limits the potential of a longer, effective conversation.

I-MESSAGES

In any restorative context, either at home, school or in the workplace, 'I Messages' can be a helpful way of framing conversations. The following ideas are informed by the work of Dr Belinda Hopkins, who also credits Marshall Rosenberg's *Non-Violent Communication* (2015) for the development of this practice.

- 1: Share your own perspective by explaining what you see or hear. "I hear that..."
- 2: Explain your interpretation and your feelings: "I feel...". Where possible, avoid using "you" so that blame and accusation don't creep into the conversation.
- 3: Invite empathy and consideration: "The way I am affected is that..."
- 4: Explain your own unmet needs: "What I need at the moment is..."
- 5: Request the other person's support so that your needs can be met: "Would you be willing to..."

These phrases are adapted from and informed by page 24 of Dr Hopkins' booklet *Restorative Classroom Practice* and training materials by Remedi.

"Restorative Practice is not a tick box exercise, it's a way of being. It requires experience and training, and a strong understanding of people. Where schools use it within their setting, it's important that it's embedded in the school's behaviour policy and aligned with the school's values.

Where restorative conversations are held in schools, it has sometimes been the case that students haven't necessarily been given a choice to participate. The young person is disempowered, either through it not being a voluntary process, or by the power dynamic in the room, especially if there's more than one adult involved. Choice is a fundamental part of Restorative Practice."

Nicola Fowler and Gavin Hudson - Remedi

'I' VERSUS 'YOU'

Articulating emotion through language can be very difficult, particularly for young people who may struggle to identify exactly how they are feeling and why. However, by choosing our own words carefully and modelling how to use them, we can demonstrate how to articulate even the most difficult feelings.

Restorative practice often results from one party feeling aggrieved by the behaviour or actions of another. It is very easy therefore, to express the cause and effect through the use of the phrase, "you make me feel...". This phrase is immediately an accusation, which invites argument, denial or counter-accusation from the person it's aimed at. However, our emotions themselves cannot be argued. Therefore, stating "I feel..." removes the accusation but still expresses the emotion.

Example:

"You make me feel so angry when you break that rule"

Vs.

"I feel disrespected and disappointed because that rule has been broken"

Identifying the root of that anger can also be clearer and less ambiguous for the person hearing it.

AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS

Navigating the moods and emotions of teenagers can be extremely challenging. Using the suggestions above, we can alter our language to avoid assumptions and accusations, and instead invite a response.

Example:

"You're deliberately refusing to do what I've asked"

Vs.

**"I get the impression that you don't agree with what I've asked you to do.
Can you tell me about that?"**

"A lot of conflict is caused by assumptions. Starting a conversation with 'you are...' is a projection of our own assumptions or insecurities. However using phrases such as "I don't know if I'm right but..." or "I get the impression that..." is an invitation to talk, rather than an accusation."

Jacob Dunne

PLANNING A CONVERSATION

What do I feel? What do I need?

These are the two important questions to consider before beginning a restorative conversation. If you're unsure of what the answers are, it is preferable to work through those questions a little more - either privately, or with a trusted partner or friend. Having clarity about the desired outcome of the conversation anchors it within the principles of restorative practice: being heard, being respected and being safe.

NOTICING

During the RJ process, Nicola and Jan (the two Remedi practitioners working with Joan, David and Jacob) would pass questions and information between the two parties. However, it was not only the written word that was communicated. As Jan and Nicola worked with Jacob to construct his answers to Joan and David's questions, they would take care to notice his body language, eye contact and emotional state during that time. They would describe this to David and Joan, as you will have seen in the play when Nicola tells them:

So, one of Jacob's defence mechanisms is to avoid eye contact. He may look down at the ground, a lot. But this doesn't mean he's disinterested, or not listening. He's listening. So ...if this happens, you can keep talking.

***PUNCH* by James Graham**

In your own relationship with the young person in your care, simply noticing their non-verbal responses rather than judging them can be a very helpful way of maintaining a supportive, and safe environment in which to express feelings and needs. Assuming that eye contact means lack of interest or engagement might lead to conflict, whereas gently noticing it without judgement (or comment) can be helpful.

A PLACE FOR TALK

Restorative conversations need to take place in an environment which feels safe for all participants. Consider the following points:

- **Seating.** Any perceived hierarchy or power dynamic can dramatically alter the outcome of a conversation. Circular or semi-circular arrangements are the most helpful configuration, with all seats at the same height.
- **Interruptions.** Restorative conversations require a sense of privacy and priority. Phone calls, visits from other people or other interruptions should be avoided, and participants should be aware that conversations need space and time.
- **Privacy.** Choose a room which will enable a sense of privacy for all participants.
- **Choice.** At all times, restorative conversations should be voluntary. They are an invitation to talk, rather than a demand to talk. Finding ways to communicate this is important.
- **Practice.** Using restorative approaches takes time and practice, particularly if we have not experienced those kinds of conversations in our own lives. It may not always go as intended, but committing to and developing this approach helps to strengthen relationships and support young people in feeling heard and valued. A helpful analogy is that when we go to the gym we get stronger by repeating exercises and developing strong technique. It's the same with conflict resolution: it requires perseverance and regular practice.



In 2023, Jacob was interviewed by LadBible and you can find the interview here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZouPjZhUVNs>.

Before showing this video, make sure that you provide content warnings about bereavement, violence, mental health and prison/criminal justice. You may wish to provide some prompts to guide and support students whilst watching this 60 minute video:

- What does Jacob tell us about his childhood?
- How does the environment of The Meadows influence some of the outcomes of Jacob's story?
- How does Jacob describe his ability to confront the impact of his crime on other people?
- Who are the figures that Jacob identifies as positive role models?
- Jacob also identifies some negative influences. What are these and how did they affect the way he behaved?

After you have watched the video, allow time for reflection and questions surrounding the story. These may centre around the length of the prison sentence, the delay between the incident and Jacob's subsequent arrest, or the process of meeting James Hodgkinson's parents through the Restorative Justice process. Students may also need time to reflect on their emotional responses to the story: it can be helpful to provide a period of quiet reflection time, and use additional adults to support students who may need to relocate to a different space to aid their processing.



Photography by Marc Brenner

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Jacob: So I'm spinning back and stepping in. Always. Always, with a mate. No matter where, no matter what. That was expected, and understood. Y'always step in.

PUNCH by James Graham

"Unmet needs are the reason most people are in prison, the reason for most domestic violence in relationships, and the reason for most violence in general: the need to be heard, the need to be seen, the need to belong, the need to be loved or feel loved."

Jacob Dunne

Conversation points for parents and educators:

Thinking back to the play, what are the external factors that encouraged or led to violent behaviour? James Graham's play highlights a number of social issues ranging from the need to have a reputation, to the architecture of The Meadows which was an obstacle for police tackling any form of anti-social or criminal behaviour.

Jacob: Marching into town, all walking together, the mandem , 20 men strong, look at us! Getting the looks, no one'll touch us. Feeling invincible. Belonging...

PUNCH by James Graham

What does belonging feel like? What do young people need in order to feel like they belong?

Nan: You've got to have a 'stake', in this world. If you don't have something, anything, to call your own then you'll pass through life feeling like you don't belong anywhere. You've gotta belong.

PUNCH by James Graham

The play opens with Jacob in a talking circle, explaining his actions and feelings. He admits that he has had to learn to use words like 'present'. What do young people feel can be done by the adults in their lives to help encourage communication, which in turn might reduce the reliance on violence?

"Violence is not the answer. If there's an issue, try and talk through it. We know in our situation, Jacob was in a gang situation, so there were obviously the drink and drugs and lots of other factors, but talking is very important."

David Hodgkinson

How can we encourage young people to develop healthy attitudes towards alcohol, and to be well-informed about drug use?

At the Pitcher & Piano.

Jacob: Massive old church, now a pub. Drink's the new religion,
 pulling birds the new faith.

PUNCH by James Graham

How prevalent is peer pressure in our lives today? How can we develop a sense of the consequences of following our peers or resisting their pressure?

"Young people have got to learn to stick to their guns and not do what's wrong just because sometimes they're pulled in the wrong direction by their peers. They've got to go by what they feel is right, not just join in with everybody else for the sake of it or because of peer pressure."

Joan Scourfield

What's the alternative? The script below depicts the moments before Jacob throws the fatal punch. What alternative actions, taken by whom, could have avoided the outcome:

- i) During the phone call?
- ii) One hour before the phone call?
- iii) One day before the phone call?
- iv) One year before the phone call?

The music, and the ecstasy and the light...a hopeful moment, briefly.
When, his phone rings.

Raf: Jacob!

Jacob: Yeah Raf, where are ya!

Raf appears, on the other end.

Raf: Jacob, we've got some action, mate, where are you!

Jacob: Well, where are you?!

Raf: Yates's.

Jacob (hanging up).
Market Square -
He runs. Is running...

Jacob: You always step in...always...your mate, my mates,
my people... always...

He arrives on...Market Square.

Jacob: Slab Square, teeming, Maccie D's, next to it, Yates's, people spilling
out, I can see it, and I don't pause, don't think, just run. Run into it - to my group
circling some other group, some lads, these lads, one lad, and I don't think.
I just go in ...

Time slows. Jacob raises his fist back, and begins to swing in one painfully long
moment...

Lights fade.

PUNCH by James Graham

A PSHE LESSON

AIMS

To explore the impact of crime on offenders and the people around them.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to understand and articulate the short and long term impacts of a custodial sentence.

Students will have developed their understanding of life within the criminal justice system and be able to articulate their attitudes towards rehabilitation and punishment.

Students will understand what a Restorative Justice meeting might look like, using an example of burglary.

BACKGROUND

Jacob was convicted of manslaughter and served a custodial sentence of 14 months. He was originally taken to HMP Nottingham, and then transferred to Glen Parva - a prison and youth offenders institution in Leicestershire. Glen Parva was closed in 2017 and replaced with HMP Fosse Way which opened in 2023.

Jacob was imprisoned with young men of a similar age at Glen Parva. He found himself surrounded by people who had committed crimes - some of them violent - and who shared his sense of injustice, negativity and resistance to rehabilitation. Since leaving the prison and gaining a First Class Honours degree in Criminology, Jacob is a campaigner for prison reform and Restorative Justice and he frequently works in prisons, offering educational opportunities and mentoring to young people who are at risk of reoffending.

In James Graham's play *PUNCH*, we see the potential of Restorative Justice (RJ) to develop accountability and responsibility, develop compassion and change the course of the rest of Jacob's life. For David and Joan, the parents of James Hodgkinson who died as the result of a single punch, the process has enabled them to gain clarity and understanding about the events of one night in July 2011. As a result of the restorative process, Joan and David have worked with Jacob to raise awareness of one-punch, RJ, and violence reduction.

EMOTIONAL IMPACT

Jacob experienced an increasing sense of isolation. He was not visited by the people he had considered friends from The Meadows. He was also encouraged by other inmates to seek revenge on 'the snitch' - the person who had identified Jacob to the police which then led to Jacob's arrest and conviction.

Jacob was also separated from his mum and brother. Their relationship deteriorated and the experience had a profound effect on his mum's mental and physical health. There were very few positive role models within Jacob's time in prison.

Paired task: Ask students to create two columns, one entitled 'Practical impact' and the other 'emotional impact'.

In each column, students should write down all of the practical and emotional impacts they think prison may have on a young person. Prompts might include lack of free time, lack of being able to make decisions about how you spend your time. They might also consider the stigma that can be attached to having served a prison sentence, and the impact on future relationships - romantic, professional, family or social.

Once students have had ten minutes to complete their lists, share them in a group discussion, creating a visible summary either on a whiteboard or computer/projector.

You could also extend the discussion and ask students, 'Which of these might be the biggest deterrent for people committing crime?'

PRACTICAL IMPACT

Many jobs require a DBS Check (Disclosure and Barring Service) which means that some career opportunities are not available to someone with a criminal record. As mentioned in the play, Jacob cannot work as a Parole Officer, for example, and also found it difficult to access some university courses because of the stigma and discrimination caused by having a criminal record. Although such discrimination is illegal, Jacob has encountered the barriers of prejudice and misconception as a result of his criminal record.

Jacob's mum was an Ofsted registered childminder. After Jacob's conviction, she was unable to continue this line of work because of her relationship to an offender who had lived at her address (which is also where she looked after children).

Prison did not prepare Jacob for life beyond his sentence. He left with no education or qualifications, and still did not have a sense of perspective or remorse for the crime that he had committed. As identified by his parole officer Wendy, and later by Joan and David themselves, Jacob was at high risk of reoffending and becoming trapped in the criminal justice cycle, or dying prematurely. Jacob credits David, Joan and the Restorative Justice process for saving his life.

Task: Using this [document](#) from the Prison Reform Trust, work with students to discuss the limitation that prison imposes. For example, time available in open air is a minimum of 30 minutes per day, but with potential to be restricted for safety or weather-based reasons. Showers and bathing has a minimum of once a week, and library access, whilst all prisoners have a right to access, does not have a minimum threshold that prisons must meet.

Some of the other issues surrounding serving a prison sentence include:

Inconsistency of resources and access to education. If an offender is moved from one prison to another, there is no guarantee that they will be able to access the same courses, resources or teaching as they previously had. People trying to sit GCSE courses, for example, might find that they are suddenly not available as a result of being moved to a different institution.

If an offender is moved to an institution a long way from their home town, it can cause difficulties for people who wish to visit them. This can lead to further feelings of isolation, resentment and frustration for both the person in prison, and their loved ones.

It can be difficult to find positive role models in prison and so changing habits and attitudes can be very difficult.

Consider how frustrating it can feel during a school day, when it feels like every decision has been made for you, and not always in consultation with you. This includes what you eat, what time you sleep, when you can relax and what you can do during that time. It can also feel like every day is exactly the same. Therefore, you have no autonomy in your life during your time in prison.

“The prison population has been rising, and the public are losing trust and faith in our criminal justice system. Nothing’s been improved for a long time. To tackle rising crime, all we’ve been doing is putting people in prison for slightly longer. The prison population has been rising, but victims still don’t feel safe, so the public don’t feel safer. Nobody in prison is actually getting much out of it or being rehabilitated and so we have a crisis in our criminal justice system.”

Jacob Dunne



GROUP WORK OR WHOLE-CLASS DISCUSSION, DEPENDING ON YOUR SETTING:

- We often hear the phrase 'tough on crime'. What does that mean, and what do you think it should or could mean in future?
- How can adults work with young people to try and reduce crime rates?
- What are the issues in your local area that you think should be tackled in order to reduce crime?
- What ideas do you have that might support the rehabilitation process?

Note: According to the [Youth Endowment Fund](#), prison awareness programmes can have a harmful effect on efforts to reduce violent crime. It is therefore imperative that discussions do not simply involve deterring young people from going to prison, but instead explicitly and purposefully deepen awareness of wider social issues and how these might be addressed.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE:

Watch this [video](#) of a woman who was the victim of a burglary.

Using the same columns in the task on page 19, ask students to consider the practical and emotional impact of this crime on the victim. Consider, too, the woman's comment at the end of the clip when she prepares to meet one of the perpetrators that "it will maybe be an uncomfortable experience for him, and therefore not one that he would want to repeat."

Jean is going to take part in a Restorative Justice meeting in which she meets one of the people who committed the crime. She will have the opportunity to ask questions and explain the impact that the crime has had on her. It is important to remember that a lot of preparatory work will have taken place before the meeting, including risk assessments, discussions and conversations with both the victim and the perpetrator, and careful thinking about what each person wants to say during the meeting.

Both the victim and the perpetrator are entitled to support within the meeting. As well as the two facilitators, Chris (the perpetrator) is supported by his foster carer.

Individual task: Imagine that you are the woman who is going to meet the person who burgled her house.

- How would you describe the impact of the crime to the perpetrator?
- What questions would you ask the perpetrator?
- What do you think you would want the outcome of the meeting to be? Do you see it as a punishment, or a way of trying to create something positive for both people?
- What assumptions have you made about the person who has committed the crime?

Remember that participating in Restorative Justice is a voluntary activity and anybody can withdraw from any time. It is therefore not possible or helpful to insist that perpetrators always take part in RJ. However, what benefits do you think both parties might find as a result of participating in the process?

Now watch the following [video](#) which demonstrates the process of an RJ meeting. You will see the facilitators set the ground rules, following introductions of everyone in the room.

- How do the participants create a respectful environment during the meeting?
- What information does the perpetrator give to the victim?
- How does the facilitator ask questions without it sounding like he's reprimanding the perpetrator?
- Compare your list of questions that you would have asked, to those that the victim asked. Were there any questions that surprised you?
- Was there anything that Chris (the perpetrator) said in the video that surprised you?

In the final two minutes of the video, Jean asks Chris to think about his own future, and making himself a good life, rather than repeating his crimes. This is very similar to Joan and David's hope that Jacob did not reoffend, and it was their question, "what are you going to do now?" that spurred Jacob's efforts to re-enter education and change his life's path. Has it surprised you that the victims of the crime are often more concerned about the perpetrators than themselves? Why do you think that is? Consider the quote below when discussing your responses.

"Opening the door into the room where both David and Joan were waiting was the hardest thing I've ever had to do in my life, but I knew how important it was that I looked them in the eye and told them how sorry I was."

Jacob Dunne



Photography by Marc Brenner

"I think for me, when Jan and Nicola (from Remedi) were first coming to us, one of our big things with Jacob was that we didn't want him to go out and do the same thing again. That was one of our big messages. We asked "what's he going to do next?"

What was so important for me, when Nicola and Jan came, when we asked the question, they didn't just tell us the answer. They told us what Jacob said, but also that he was upset, and what his emotions were. That means a lot, because you then get a feeling of what sort of person someone is. Nicola actually said, "Oh, he got upset" and "he struggled. It took a little while for him to answer that question". Things like that made a clearer picture of him, because we'd only had that mug shot beforehand and that was quite frightening, really.

You're building a picture in your mind, not physically, what the person is going to look like, but what he's going to be like as a person.

I think that gave us hope, really."

Joan Scourfield

PLENARY ACTIVITY:

Using Post-It Notes™ or slips of paper, ask students to write down their reflections on what they have learnt during the session(s) on the criminal justice system. Depending on your cohort, you could provide some sentence starters, or invite students to ask further questions or express their thoughts and opinions about the content of *PUNCH* and the lessons it has inspired. We have provided some prompts on the following page. Invite anonymous responses if this feels appropriate.

You may wish to use these anonymous responses to inform future PSHE and SMSC provision in your setting.

Activity: Being the person I can and want to be.

This activity is provided by Gavin Hudson at Remedi, and is an adaptation of Sidney Simon's '[I Am Lovable and Capable](#).' The activity asks participants to reflect on the influences that affect the way they feel about themselves, and how they can self-regulate and ensure a healthy self-perception.

Resources:

- Flipchart paper or a large whiteboard.
- A4 paper, or figure-shaped templates (A4 or A5 size if possible).
- These can be paper or cardboard.
- Pens.

STEP ONE:

Draw the outline of a person on your flipchart paper or whiteboard. Alternatively you might use a Powerpoint slide with the outline of a person (or gingerbread person shape).

This is your 'person I can and want to be.'

Ask the young person or group; "If you were to be your best self, what would you like to feel or be and what would you like to help other people feel/be?" Aim for one or two word answers, for example, "safe", "respected", "liked". Write suggestions inside the outline or gingerbread person. Explain that if we can imagine being this person, it's who we already are but there are things that can happen that get in the way of that. Ask your group members to write in their own outline using their own ideas, as well as the ones that are shared on the board.

STEP TWO:

Ask the participants to suggest things, big and small, that prevent them being the person they can and want to be. For each suggestion, also probe into the underlying feelings. If someone says anger/frustration, ask, 'what else?' or 'what are you worried about?' to identify more feelings.

For each element that is identified, ask participants to rip the amount of their paper figure off representing how much they are affected. As the figure is ripped up, reflect upon the idea that the less of our outline we have, the harder it is to be the person we can and want to be. Discuss how we react/behave when our sign is ripped up.

STEP THREE:

Ask the group what small things we can do for ourselves in the moment that we experience those negative influences, and what others could do for us, to put the paper person back together. Ask participants to write these on the back of the paper pieces and tape the sign back together. You are left with a positive identity on one side and a simple self regulation plan on the other. The participants can share what they have created, or keep them private, as is appropriate to your group.



DISCUSSING THE PRODUCTION

The story of *PUNCH* is likely to have had a strong impact on the young people who see it. It is not only a story about Jacob, but also about James and his family, and the wider social issues that contributed to events that took place. A debrief can be helpful shortly after your students or young people have seen the performance.

The prompts below can invite conversations and allow everybody to articulate their responses. Before you initiate the conversation, use the information elsewhere in this pack to help you feel confident and equipped to provide answers to any questions that arise.

- How have your views about people who commit crimes changed as a result of seeing *PUNCH*?
- What have you learnt about the Restorative Justice programme and process? Have you ever heard of it before?
- What questions do you have as a result of seeing this production?
- One of the themes of the play is forgiveness. What thoughts or responses did you have during the play, particularly towards the end during the conversations between Joan, David and Jacob?
- How might you use some of the principles of restorative practice in your own relationships?
- What five words would you use to describe the production and/or the story of *PUNCH*?

Additional resources to support audiences in researching and exploring *PUNCH* can be found on pages 30, 31, 32, and 33 of this guide.

Masculinity: Information for educators and practitioners.

The information below is intended to provide starting points for educators, practitioners and senior leaders working with young people when tackling the topic of masculinity. A full list of references and resources can be found at the end of this section.

It is important to recognise that impactful educational workshops, lessons and interventions cannot be offered as one-off sessions. Instead, educators and policy makers need to commit significant time and resources to working with their cohort for as long as possible, using the data provided here to aid informed and effective provision. For schools, for example, this may require careful planning of a PSHE curriculum throughout a full key stage. The information below is intended to provide a foundation for planning the appropriate interventions in your setting.

GENDER NORMS

Ideas around masculinity remain influential in the behaviour of boys and young men. The UK Government's report 'Changing gender norms: engaging with men and boys' (Burrell et al. 2015) included the following recommendations:

EDUCATION

Masculinity for boys and young men is often established as the norm through a focus on sporting success, being 'cool' and treating schoolwork with a casual attitude. Males are also under pressure to appear 'hard' or 'tough'. The report notes that "away from peer group pressures, boys can be much more reflective". The report also states that there is "considerable variation among boys at school" and that "social class and ethnicity are frequently more influential on achievement than gender."

Some of the recommendations include:

A greater reflection on, and learning about gender norms and inequalities throughout the school curriculum.

Training for all teachers on the influence of gender stereotypes and the potential benefits of challenging those norms.

Ensuring that literacy programmes are mindful of the influence of gender norms. It warns that "it is not enough for them to be gender neutral if they are aimed at raising the literacy levels of boys and young men."

The report provides a wide range of recommendations, too numerous to mention here. The full report can be found at: [Changing gender norms: engaging with men and boys - GOV.UK.](#)

EMPLOYMENT

It is still the case that organisational structures, cultures and practices tend to be based on assumed masculine norms that male employment is life long, full time and continuous. Many organisations still embed 'masculine' values through gender pay gaps, sex discrimination, sexual harassment and a 'workaholic' culture.

The report states that

- Employers, trade unions and careers advisors should take a more proactive approach to challenging gender stereotypes in employment and training choices.
- Initiatives designed to engage men around the health issues such as mental health should be established within the workplace.

MEDIA

Men and masculinity are frequently represented in print, TV, film and digital media in unrealistic ways that perpetuate stereotypes. Young people have increasingly easy access to pornography, in which men are routinely shown as dominant and women are objectified. The report states that “the media can also be powerful in generating a more positive debate when they challenge accepted ways of thinking and behaving.”

The way in which gender is portrayed, and how media can be interpreted and analysed critically should feature more explicitly in educational initiatives, particularly those targeted at young men.

Relationship and sex education (RSE) should explore ways in which harmful gender norms are perpetuated in relation to pornography. The report calls for development of media literacy for young people and efforts to strengthen the filtering of access to pornography online, particularly for under 18s.

The report calls for men who are in positions of power to provide “high-profile and proactive support for gender equality and encourage other men to play their part”. It advocates that these high profile males should lead by example in leading a healthy, positive male lifestyle.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Finally, the report notes that men and boys should not be considered as one homogeneous group. Instead, other factors such as social class, age, sexuality, disability and ethnicity should also be recognised as factors which influence each person’s identity and lived experience.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Wales Without Violence - a violence reduction initiative involving a range of Welsh social and academic organisations - use the following rationale for their work in reducing male perpetrated violence:

1. Any work to prevent violence must engage men and boys, because it is frequently (but not exclusively) men who enact violence.
2. Harmful constructions of masculinity and related social norms and attitudes can encourage violent behaviour.
3. Men and boys have a positive and constructive role to play in preventing violence.
4. Through a trauma-informed approach, we can recognise that many boys and men have lived-experience of harmful gender norms, and even violence. Acknowledging this enables a compassionate and constructive conversation about the role of men and boys as change-makers, allies and ambassadors.

A SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS WHEN WORKING ON VIOLENCE PREVENTION INCLUDES:

- The importance of sessions being delivered by positive, empathetic and enthusiastic staff who can be a positive role model for participants.
- Empowerment: by focussing on the skills of each participant, and establishing how they can become an ally acting against violence can engage and sustain engagement.
- The learning environment should be a creative one. Time should be given to ensure that participants are able to reflect, and also accept accountability.
- Careful use of language is imperative. Using words such as 'ally' and 'role model' avoids the more negative connotations of 'perpetrator' and 'offender'.
- Include members of the community with whom you are working in the design of your curriculum. This ensures cultural relevance, and an immediate connection with the environment in which the cohort spends their lives.
- Consider the environment in which your programme takes place. A positive, creative and safe space is vital for engagement.

The full report can be found at: [Engaging men and boys in violence prevention.](#)

YOUNG VOICES

The Manchester Centre for Youth Studies and the Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) published their report 'Young People's Engagement with the Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit's Strategy 2023/2024' in 2024. The report was informed by interviews with 70 young people in Greater Manchester to inform the 'Greater Than Violence' strategy for the region.

In a series of ranking exercises, young people identified that:

Masculinity was the greatest cause of violence, followed by pride, anger and social media.

Violence is perpetrated by adults, and then young people (mostly boys). These were then followed by the government and the police. Gangs featured further down the list. Schools, and the media (newspaper, TV, radio) were also listed in the lower ranking.

Violence was ranked as taking place most regularly on the streets, followed by public transport (buses and trams).

When asked what made respondents feel safe, 'home' was the highest ranking answer. Within the quoted responses, consistent adult presence and role models was highlighted as being important. The police were ranked most highly as making young people feel unsafe. Schools also featured on the list of places where some young people do not feel safe.

Plan UK provide a resource pack, '[Exploring Positive Masculinity, Gender Stereotypes and Anti-Violence With Young People](#)'. It contains a comprehensive set of activities and notes for use with young people.

DEFINING GENDER ROLES AND GENDER NORMS

Plan UK define gender roles and norms as follows:

"Gender roles are created by society. They include behaviours, activities and attributes that society considers appropriate for men and boys, versus for women and girls. However, this division of roles is arbitrary as nothing prevents women and girls from doing the things that gender roles assign to boys and men, and vice versa.

Gender roles are based on gender norms, which are social rules that tell us what it means to be a girl or a boy, a man or a woman. Rules are often enforced through control mechanisms, and gender norms are no exception. Gender norms may be enforced through social pressure, or through political or physical control." (p.7)

Amongst the materials within the Plan UK resource pack is Matt Brown's TedTalk <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UhP3OZ9ZCE&t=717s> entitled 'The Barber Shop Where Men Go To Heal'. (Please note this video contains references to self harm, violence and suicide). The video contains a range of potential conversation topics to incorporate into your session(s), particularly in situations where asking young people to share their own experiences may not be appropriate or possible.

The [Youth Endowment Fund](#) identifies the most effective interventions and strategies to reduce violence enacted by young people.

The highest impact comes from:

- Nutrition programmes.
- Trauma specific therapies.
- Sports programmes.
- Summer employment programmes.
- Social skills training.
- Cognitive behavioural therapy.
- A&E Navigators.

Moderate impact is achieved by:

- Restorative justice.
- Mentoring.
- Problem-oriented policing.
- Hot spots policing.
- Stop and search powers.

You will notice that many of the high impact strategies could be considered preventative or proactive, whilst the moderate impact interventions may come after an initial offence has been committed, i.e. reactive strategies. This has implications for policies by and for education, social work, policing, and local and national authorities.

PUNCH ran at the Young Vic from 1 March – 26 April 2025. During its run, Young Vic Taking Part collaborated with the London Violence Reduction Unit's (VRU) Young People's Action Group (YPAG) to create a series of activities designed to spark reflection and conversation between young people and the adults they trust. You can discover these activities and more [here](#).

SOURCES FOR THIS SECTION ON MASCULINITY AND VIOLENCE REDUCTION CAN BE FOUND HERE:

Violence Reduction:

[Youth Endowment Fund.](#)

[Resources | Violence Reduction Network.](#)

[The nature of violent crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2024.](#)

[How violent is Britain? New study examines conflicting trends in official violent crime stats - Lancaster University.](#)

[England and Wales violent crime figures 2024 | Statista.](#)

Masculinity:

[Changing gender norms: engaging with men and boys - GOV.UK.](#)

[Engaging men and boys in violence prevention.](#)

[Mistrust and masculine expectations among findings revealed by report that shaped new Greater Manchester youth violence prevention strategy.](#)

[Exploring Positive Masculinity, Gender Stereotypes and Anti-Violence with Young People.](#)

SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE & THEIR CAREGIVERS

- [Just For Kids Law](#) advocates for young people to ensure that their rights are respected and their voices are heard.
- [The Mix](#) is an organisation which supports young people with support and information including issues such as relationships, drugs and alcohol, education and mental health.
- For young people living with a parent who is dependent on drugs and/or alcohol, [The Children's Society](#) provides a list of sources of support.
- [Barnardos](#) provides support for young people who have a parent or relative in prison.
- [The Runaway Helpline](#) can help young people who are thinking of running away, who have already run away or who are away from home because of gang involvement. They have a comprehensive range of resources to help, as well as having a confidential helpline.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

- [Frank](#) is an organisation which provides information about drugs and can be contacted by phone, via online chat, text or email. Frank can also signpost to sources of support in your local area.
- [Alcoholics Anonymous](#) supports people in their recovery and sobriety.
- [Narcotics Anonymous](#) is a group in which its members help each other to become and stay drug free.
- For those affected by a loved one's use of substances, and those bereaved as a result of drug use, [Addiction Family Support](#) can provide help and guidance.

MENTAL HEALTH

- [Young Minds](#) fights for a world where no young person feels alone with their mental health. Use this link to find help and information for dealing with emotions and supporting positive mental health.
- [With You](#) is a mental health, drug and alcohol charity. Their website hosts a wide range of information as well as signposting local services.

LAW, RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND VICTIM SUPPORT

- **[Victim Support](#)** is an organisation which supports people who have been the victims of crime. Their website provides information and guidance about their services. The **[website](#)** also has a 'leave this website' feature which redirects to the Google homepage should users be concerned that someone else may see them looking at the website.
- **[PACT](#)** is an organisation which works with prisoners, people with convictions, and their families, throughout the justice process. This includes court proceedings, imprisonment, and the subsequent release and reintegration into the community.
- **[The Longford Trust](#)** provides scholarships to serving and former prisoners to study at university and provides mentoring and employability support.
- **[Oasis Restore](#)** is a youth justice organisation which focuses on restoration and therapeutic approaches to improve the life chances of young people in custody.
- **[The Common Ground Justice Project](#)** is creating space for a new kind of conversation on crime and justice. By listening to voters, victims and communities, the project bridges divides and invites people from all walks of life to help shape a safer, fairer Britain.
- **[Calm Mediation](#)** is a London - based organisation which provides mediation services in a variety of settings including the education system, residential neighbourhoods and for families.
- **[The Forgiveness Project](#)** collects and shares stories from victims or survivors of crime, and those of perpetrators, focusing on how they have rebuilt their lives after experiencing hurt and trauma.
- **[Why Me?](#)** is a national charity which delivers Restorative Justice.
- Remedi, the organisation involved in the Restorative Justice for Joan, David and Jacob can be found at their **[website](#)**. You can also email queries to them at **rj@remediuk.org**.
- The **[Restorative Justice Council](#)** is the independent membership organisation for Restorative Justice.
- **[Appeal](#)** is a charity and a law practice that fights miscarriages of justice.
- **[Catch 22](#)** works with both young people and adults providing intervention, rehabilitation and victim services in prison and in the community.

POSITIVE INITIATIVES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- **[Support Through Sport](#)** use sport to engage young people, empowering them to develop positive lifestyles and avoid influences which will be detrimental to their wellbeing.
- **[Growing Against Violence](#)** work to safeguard young people and prevent youth violence.
- **[Football Beyond Borders](#)** is an education and inclusion charity which uses the power of football to change the lives of young people.

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SOCIAL CARE

- [Refuge](#) provide help and support for women and children experiencing domestic abuse.
- [Change Grow Live](#) supports a range of different issues including justice, physical and mental health, and substance use.
- [St Giles Trust](#) is a charity which helps people who have been held back by abuse, the criminal justice system, homelessness and poverty.

ORGAN DONATION

- Full information about NHS Organ Donation can be found on [this website](#). You can find out about the law surrounding donation, how to opt out of the scheme, as well as information and guidance regarding faith, funeral arrangements and it also provides information about blood donation and how to be a living donor for donations such as tissue, bone marrow and platelets.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Jacob's TedTalk which is referenced in the play can be found [here](#): Transformative Justice | Jacob Dunne | TEDxYouth@Bath.
- A Guardian article about Joan and Jacob's relationship can be found here: [My son's killer and me: grief, pain and the power of forgiveness after a one-punch death | Theatre | The Guardian.](#)
- A Guardian article about Jacob's book, Right From Wrong can be found here: [The man who killed a stranger with a single punch, and then turned his life around | Youth justice | The Guardian.](#)



Photography by Marc Brenner

FURTHER READING:

- John Braithwaite. *Crime, Shame and Reintegration* (1989)
- Dr Belinda Hopkins and Transforming Conflict, *Restorative Classroom Practice* [booklet](#)
- Dr Belinda Hopkins, *The Restorative Classroom: Approaches to Foster Effective Learning* (2011)
- Dr Belinda Hopkins, *Just Schools: A Whole School Approach to Restorative Justice* (2003)
- Dr Belinda Hopkins, *Just Care: Restorative Justice Approaches to Working with Children in Public Care* (2009)

