



# Practitioner Competency Framework

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# Contents

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Foreword	5
Introduction	6
What is a Competency Framework?	6
How to use the RJC Practitioner Competency Framework	7
Benefits of the Competency Framework	7
About this Framework	8
Where does the Competency Framework fit with other restorative guidance?	9
How does it work?	9
The RJC Practitioner Competency Framework	10
<b>1.1 Knowledge of restorative practice</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1.2 Knowledge of RJC principles of restorative practice and of RJC standards and guidance</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.3 Understanding of different contexts, cases and practice environments</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>2.1 Respectful practice</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>2.2 Preparation</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>2.3 Effective communication</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2.4 Reflective practice</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2.5 Building and maintaining relationships</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>3.1 Risk and safety assessment</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>3.2 Overcoming barriers</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>3.3 Evaluating practice and service</b>	<b>24</b>
How to use the Framework in practice	25
General examples	26
Using the RJC Practitioner Competency Framework	28
Glossary	29
Acknowledgements	31
Appendix	32

**Knowledge and understanding of restorative practice**

**Restorative Justice Council Practitioner Competency Framework**

**Effective practitioner skills**

**Delivering restorative practice**

## Foreword

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I am pleased to introduce the Restorative Justice Council (RJC) Practitioner Competency Framework for the restorative practice field, developed specifically for restorative practitioners. The Framework provides practitioners with an overview of the behaviours and skills required of those working in the restorative field. It is intended to raise standards of practice and support practitioners in their professional development.

Restorative practitioners work in a diverse range of sectors across England and Wales. This Competency Framework has therefore been developed through consultation with a cross section of practitioners, professional bodies, statutory services and academics. Their feedback has informed the structure and content of the Framework, ensuring that it covers the core competencies and principles that are vital to good restorative practice. We are grateful to them all for their input.

In a developing field, we anticipate that the RJC's Competency Framework will be a step towards standardising practice across England and Wales. It will help to make it easier for practitioners to benchmark their practice against other services by using the competencies for comparison. We envisage that this Competency Framework will also help to target scarce training and development resources more effectively and encourage individuals to take more responsibility for their own development.

Improving the quality of restorative practice is important to all our members and supporting the provision of high quality practice is central to the RJC's work. The Framework is intended to support the development of competent, safe and quality restorative practice and I am confident that it will help practitioners to meet the challenges of the future and generate increased levels of trust in the field.

**Jon Collins**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Restorative Justice Council**

## Introduction

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It is the RJC's role to set and champion clear standards for restorative practice. As part of this work, the RJC has developed this Competency Framework. The Framework describes high quality restorative practice in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that practitioners need, and how restorative practice should be delivered. When developing the Framework, the RJC involved practitioners at every stage, and consulted widely on the draft Framework.

The Framework has been designed to apply to all areas of restorative practice, including formal and informal processes in the workplace, education, care homes, the community, criminal justice and within families. The Framework focuses on restorative practice in the criminal justice, health and education sectors, in situations where one participant has accepted responsibility for the harm. However, it is hoped that it is high level enough to be used across other disciplines, such as workplace restorative practice, family group conferencing and community mediation.

The Framework has also been designed to include all practitioners, including employed and volunteer practitioners, new and experienced practitioners, mediators, facilitators, co-ordinators, case supervisors and managers. It has three levels, reflecting the different knowledge, understanding and skills needed by entry level practitioners, intermediate practitioners and senior practitioners.

The RJC encourages all practitioners to use the Competency Framework to develop and improve their practice. Please contact the RJC with your feedback on how you have used the Framework in practice by emailing [standards@restorativejustice.org.uk](mailto:standards@restorativejustice.org.uk).

In developing the Framework, the RJC has been careful to ensure that it does not constrain practice or hamper practitioner creativity and the need for practitioners to develop and exercise their professional judgement. The Framework has been designed to be flexible so that it applies across different types of restorative practice without being overly prescriptive. It can be used by practitioners who carry out restorative practice full time and practitioners who carry out restorative processes as part of their role, as well as volunteers.

## What is a competency framework?

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A competency framework sets out the core skills, knowledge and behaviours that professionals need to work in a particular field, and which lead to successful performance. It enables professionals to demonstrate the level of skill they have, and can be used as a tool for professional development.

It is not:

- A guide to the personal qualities that are important in restorative practitioners. Therefore characteristics such as honesty, patience and professionalism are not covered in the Framework.
- A suitability test. The Framework simply sets out the skills and competencies that are required of practitioners to do their job to the relevant skill level.

The Framework does not define specialist skills associated with specific sectors where restorative practice is applied (such as education, criminal justice, residential care, custodial care, housing and local government). The Framework assumes that specialist skills are a necessary complement to the skills and knowledge it describes. They can be developed by undertaking specialist training and specific occupational qualifications and through experiential learning.

## How to use the RJC Practitioner Competency Framework

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**Practitioners** have identified that the Competency Framework could be used to:

- ensure consistency of practice and service by providing a single, consistent Framework for all practitioners
- enable practitioners to identify their development needs and plan to address them
- provide confidence to senior managers, commissioners and service users
- enable practitioners to develop their practice to ensure it is in line with RJC standards and guidance
- guide and inform the supervision process
- help people and organisations to choose the people most suitable as restorative practitioners
- support recruitment of restorative practitioners, and the design of training, education and continuing professional development (CPD) programmes and appraisals
- demonstrate and raise the level of professionalism in the restorative practice field

## Benefits of the Competency Framework

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**Practitioners** have identified that the Competency Framework will:

- enable and support reflective practice against an independent benchmark leading to increased self-awareness
- allow members of the public to know they are being offered a reputable service
- provide boundaries and guidelines for quality working
- shape and support the environment in which practitioners work as well as provide clear guidelines for practice
- promote a holistic approach
- provide a single framework that can be used by practitioners and potential practitioners, service managers, users of restorative services, commissioners, trainers and designers of education and training, and HR specialists

## About this Framework

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The Framework sets out how people in the restorative practice field should work. It puts the values of integrity, neutrality, respecting confidentiality and objectivity at the heart of practitioner casework.

The competencies are the skills, knowledge and behaviours that lead to successful performance. The Framework is broken into three clusters with each cluster relating to a specific aspect of restorative practice:

- knowledge and understanding of restorative practice
- effective practitioner skills
- delivering restorative practice

Each cluster in the Framework consists of a number of competencies which outline the requirements in terms of skills, knowledge and application. For each competency there is a description of what it means in practice and a list of indicators. There are also examples of effective behaviours which help practitioners to identify whether they are meeting the competencies.

Competence can be demonstrated through these effective behaviours. The behavioural indicators and effective behaviours are not exhaustive and others may be relevant but if practitioners are able to demonstrate them all, it is likely that they are meeting the requirements of the competency.

The Framework is for all practitioners within restorative practice and can be applied equally to those new to the field and those with extensive experience. To make the Framework inclusive it has been designed with three levels, reflecting the different knowledge, understanding and skills needed by entry level practitioners, intermediate practitioners and senior practitioners.

The competencies are intended to be discrete and cumulative, with each level building on the levels below – for example, a person demonstrating a competency at level A should be demonstrating levels B and C as a matter of course. The indicators of effective behaviour provide a greater understanding of what is expected from individuals working in the restorative practice field.

## Where does the Competency Framework fit with other restorative guidance?

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The Framework enables practitioners to meet many of the requirements of RJC standards and guidance. It underpins specific practice requirements and helps practitioners equip themselves with the appropriate skill set to prepare and hold restorative processes in accordance with RJC standards.

The Framework can be used in conjunction with the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for restorative practice and the NOS for other sectors, such as policing. There are clear links between the requirements of the Framework and the NOS. The two can be used together, for example in order to identify clear objectives in performance management and in identifying training needs. In sectors such as local government or criminal justice the Framework can also be used alongside any sector-based competency frameworks.

The Framework will help trainers create courses that are appropriate for the different experience levels of practitioners, from basic or new practitioner training, to training aimed at those working on sensitive or complex cases. For instance, the Framework is relevant to those delivering restorative facilitation training because the competencies, and their component parts, are likely to be core content for most facilitation courses.

Over the course of the next year, the RJC will be consolidating its existing standards and guidance to make them more accessible to those working in the restorative field and those using restorative services. We will be producing a professional handbook for each of our key membership groups – trainers, practitioners and organisations. The handbooks will be free to download from the RJC website in early 2016.

## How does it work?

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The RJC wants to provide a way of highlighting best practice as part of its aim to drive take-up and to enable safe, high quality restorative practice to develop and thrive. Use of this Framework is optional, but it is hoped that practitioners will use the competencies to develop their practice.

The Framework provides a mechanism for practitioner self-assessment. Practitioners and their managers or supervisors will be able to assess performance in terms of knowledge, skills and behaviours simply and easily by referring to the Framework. This document provides suggestions on how to do this but it may be used in other ways. See page 25 for examples of how practitioners, managers and supervisors can relate day to day practice to the Framework, demonstrating achievement of the competencies.

Practitioners may be able to demonstrate competence across more than one of the practice levels (entry, intermediate or senior). Using the assessment tool and template will enable practitioners, and managers, to see clearly the level at which they are working and what they may need to do to progress. The templates can be adapted to suit the needs of your organisation or you may choose to incorporate the assessment into your current appraisal and supervision documents.

The Framework and additional guidance on how to use this resource are available on the RJC website. The RJC will review the Framework periodically and welcomes any feedback on this version, including how organisations are using the content. If you have any feedback please contact the RJC at [standards@restorativejustice.org.uk](mailto:standards@restorativejustice.org.uk).

# The RJC Practitioner Competency Framework

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## Clusters

The Competency Framework is divided into three clusters, each of which has a set of associated competencies as set out below:

### 1. Knowledge and understanding of restorative practice

**This cluster is about the theoretical knowledge that everyone working in the restorative practice field should have. It provides the building blocks for restorative practice.**

- 1.1 Knowledge of restorative practice
- 1.2 Knowledge of RJC principles of restorative practice and of RJC standards and guidance
- 1.3 Understanding of different contexts, cases and practice environments

### 2. Effective practitioner skills

**This cluster represents the practical skills required to deliver restorative approaches.**

- 2.1 Respectful practice
- 2.2 Preparation
- 2.3 Effective communication
- 2.4 Reflective practice
- 2.5 Building and maintaining relationships

### 3. Delivering restorative practice

**This cluster covers the external processes that a practitioner needs to work within.**

- 3.1 Risk and safety assessment
- 3.2 Overcoming barriers
- 3.3 Evaluating practice and service

## The Competency Framework Levels

The Framework describes the skills, knowledge and understanding required at three levels:

- entry level practitioner (Level C)
- intermediate practitioner (Level B)
- senior practitioner (Level A)

These levels have been designed as a guide and are used throughout the Competency Framework – for further information see page 25. The opportunity to demonstrate the competencies in this Framework will differ according to the type of role the practitioner fulfils and the sector(s) in which they practise. The guidance starting on page 26 shows how examples from practice can be used by practitioners to demonstrate their achievement of the competencies.

# 1. Knowledge and understanding of restorative practice

## **1.1 Knowledge of restorative practice:**

Understands restorative processes and theories about how to apply this knowledge in practice. This includes formal and informal processes, questions, emotional needs and behaviours, power imbalances and actions to take in different circumstances.

## **1.2 Knowledge of RJC principles of restorative practice and of RJC standards and guidance:**

Understands the principles of restorative practice and the implications of these on practice including how to apply RJC standards and guidance.

## **1.3 Understanding of different contexts, cases and practice environments:**

A knowledge of the contexts and cases in which restorative practice is used, the different stakeholders and their needs.

## 1.1 Knowledge of restorative practice

The practitioner understands restorative processes and theories about how to apply this knowledge in practice. This includes: formal and informal processes, questions, emotional needs and behaviours, power imbalances, and actions to take in different circumstances.

### The indicators for this competency are:

- being aware of upcoming issues, policies and developments which might positively or negatively impact practice
- being active in expanding knowledge of areas related to their own role, including professional and ethical guidelines
- developing understanding of how their own and their team’s work supports delivery of restorative practice
- the ability to draw on the knowledge of the common ways in which incidents or crimes affect participants

### Examples of effective behaviours:

Entry level practitioner (Level C)	Intermediate practitioner (Level B)	Senior practitioner (Level A)
Uses information from training attended to select appropriate interventions.	Applies information from training and from supervision and peer mentoring to use a range of interventions according to circumstances presented.	Builds on information from training, experience and networks to develop further styles to deal with a range of practice circumstances.
Signs up to RJC and/or other networks to stay informed of developments in the field.	Meets regularly with other practitioners to discuss practice ideas and solutions.	Seeks observation/mentor experience outside of own speciality and/or organisation.
Observes other practitioners to develop knowledge of practice.	Engages in private study and attends training to develop knowledge.	Institutes service delivery change in response to new data or developments in the field.

## 1.2 Knowledge of RJC principles of restorative practice and of RJC standards and guidance

The practitioner understands the principles of restorative practice and the implications of these on practice, including how to apply RJC standards and guidance.

**The indicators for this competency are:**

- seeking to understand practices and principles in restorative practice and how they work together to create value for participants
- ensuring own practice or group activities are aligned to the relevant RJC standards and guidance
- applying relevant legislation to ensure that legal and confidentiality requirements are met

**Examples of effective behaviours:**

Entry level practitioner (Level C)	Intermediate practitioner (Level B)	Senior practitioner (Level A)
<p>Researches information sources to build knowledge of services, practices, principles and restorative approaches.</p>	<p>Uses and interprets performance information about services, practices, principles and restorative approaches.</p>	<p>Challenges services, practices and principles to develop consistent value for participants.</p>
<p>Analyses own practice against RJC principles and reviews own thoughts for change with experienced practitioner.</p>	<p>Reviews analysis of own/group activities with mentor(s).</p>	<p>Empowers and supports colleagues to be innovative in their practice.</p>
<p>Investigates legislation that applies to own practice and working environment.</p>	<p>Reviews legal requirements in own practice with senior practitioner and/or supervisor.</p>	<p>Participates in activities to change or develop aspects of the law, standards and guidance.</p>

## 1.3 Understanding of different contexts, cases and practice environments

The practitioner has a knowledge of the varied contexts in which restorative practice is used, the different stakeholders and their needs.

### The indicators for this competency are:

- applying appropriate knowledge to own practice environment and recognising where additional support may be needed
- sharing experiences to develop understanding and knowledge of own practice and that of other restorative areas of expertise
- focusing on the overall aims of restorative practice, and what is trying to be achieved, not just on individual tasks
- applying understanding of own service’s policies regarding any restrictions on restorative practice

### Examples of effective behaviours:

Entry level practitioner (Level C)	Intermediate practitioner (Level B)	Senior practitioner (Level A)
Understands own practice environment and how it differs from others.	Applies contextual knowledge and explores differences in other environments.	Builds on contextual knowledge across different practice environments.
Identifies sensitive or complex cases and refers to another practitioner or seeks support.	Requests support on sensitive or complex cases that they have not previously been involved with.	Accepts support as needed on sensitive or complex cases and offers support to others.
Discusses service policies with line manager to understand how they fit with restorative practice.	Meets service policies in everyday practice and questions to understand how policies and practice can co-exist.	Supports line managers/service leads to align service policies to restorative practice.
Joins a practitioner group to discuss experiences and identifies a mentor who can provide additional support.	Meets regularly with other practitioners, including at least one senior practitioner, to review experiences and methods for staying focused.	Leads practitioner meetings to discuss experiences and develop support networks.

# 2. Effective practitioner skills

## **2.1 Respectful practice:**

The ability to treat all stakeholders fairly and without discrimination. This includes applying the skills of neutrality and confidentiality, approaching situations without bias, showing compassion, active listening, establishing empathy and demonstrating cultural and diversity awareness.

## **2.2 Preparation:**

The ability to assess and arrange restorative approaches relevant to participants. This includes practicalities, explaining the restorative process concisely and coherently, selecting the restorative approach, deciding if restorative processes are appropriate or not to the circumstances, managing the expectations and emotional needs of those involved, and considering future participant needs.

## **2.3 Effective communication:**

The ability to express themselves clearly and encourage confidence in others. This includes communicating with and listening to all participants and stakeholders, providing and accepting feedback, co-working and writing reports where applicable.

## **2.4 Reflective practice:**

The ability to engage in a cycle of self-observation and evaluation in order to understand own actions and the reactions these prompt, on an ongoing basis. This includes seeking support, reviewing performance, professional development, networking with peers and mentoring.

## **2.5 Building and maintaining relationships:**

The ability to establish acceptance between themselves and other parties, establishing a mutual understanding and rapport. This includes information sharing, providing peer support, teamwork, and establishing trust with restorative practice participants.

## 2.1 Respectful practice

The practitioner treats all stakeholders fairly and without discrimination. This includes applying the skills of neutrality and confidentiality, approaching situations without bias, showing compassion, active listening, establishing empathy, and demonstrating cultural and diversity awareness.

### The indicators for this competency are:

- establishing respectful relationships with a range of stakeholders to support restorative practice
- investing time to create a common focus with individuals, groups or agencies
- giving space to others to lead discussions and make decisions
- upholding personal and professional values, including those of own organisation, and respecting participants' views and values (even if participants decline a restorative approach)
- consistently showing an empathic attitude, responding to participants' verbal and non-verbal communications

### Examples of effective behaviours:

Entry level practitioner (Level C)	Intermediate practitioner (Level B)	Senior practitioner (Level A)
<p>Researches ethics discussions in other sectors eg NHS and sets up similar meeting with peers.</p> <p>Takes action when sees inappropriate behaviours from participants, peers or stakeholders.</p> <p>Talks through respectful practice issues with supervisor/mentor.</p>	<p>Joins practice debates and forums to support own practice and provide support to others.</p> <p>Challenges inappropriate behaviours from participants, peers or stakeholders as they occur and agrees appropriate response.</p> <p>Arranges case review after activity on the case has stopped, if respectful balance was difficult.</p>	<p>Supports own service's management to take account of respectful practice when planning the restorative service.</p> <p>Uses colleagues' feedback and examples of positive and negative respectful practice to improve own practice and service.</p>

## 2.2 Preparation

The practitioner can assess and arrange restorative approaches relevant to participants. This includes practicalities, explaining the restorative process concisely and coherently, selecting the restorative approach, deciding if restorative processes are appropriate or not to the circumstances, managing the expectations and emotional needs of those involved and considering future participant needs.

### The indicators for this competency are:

- checking participants’ understanding of the restorative process, encouraging questions and assisting their decision-making
- seeking information from participants to understand their needs, expectations and consent for different interventions or processes
- using creative solutions during preparation to give participants choices in the process and providing ideas to address concerns
- making plans but reviewing priorities if situations change, participants have conflicting demands or risks arise

### Examples of effective behaviours:

Entry level practitioner (Level C)	Intermediate practitioner (Level B)	Senior practitioner (Level A)
Questions to understand preparation guidance and processes in place.	Helps to address issues within preparation processes in own service.	Contributes to development of preparation processes for own service.
Shares feedback from participants to improve preparations.	Shares successful creative solutions with colleagues.	Sets up collaborative relationships with other services to support preparation processes.
Supports participants to articulate their needs for the restorative process.	Explores participants’ needs for the restorative process and any concerns.	
	Researches choices available to participants and makes recommendations for implementation in own service.	Recommends a range of solutions to colleagues on how to deal with concerns raised by participants.

## 2.3 Effective communication

The practitioner has the ability to express themselves clearly and encourage confidence in others. This includes communicating with and listening to all participants and stakeholders, providing and accepting feedback, co-working and writing reports where applicable.

### The indicators for this competency are:

- communicating in a concise way, explaining restorative practice in a clear manner and challenging decisions when necessary – for example, if a participant suggests a non-restorative approach
- communicating using different styles, methods, active listening and timing to maximise understanding and impact
- managing strong emotions such as anxiety, anger, sadness and intimidation
- sharing of information and resources
- acknowledging and appreciating contributions and compromises made by all
- drawing on basic people skills and understanding as circumstances require

### Examples of effective behaviours:

Entry level practitioner (Level C)	Intermediate practitioner (Level B)	Senior practitioner (Level A)
Discusses with line manager/mentor how to manage strong emotions with different people.	Builds on experience of dealing with strong emotions with support from mentor/peer.	Provides guidance to others on dealing with strong emotions based on own experiences.
Participates in group learning, taking on different roles to appreciate their views – eg, participant, facilitator, and other agency staff.	Reviews effectiveness of communication styles and methods personally used.	Promotes restorative practices with stakeholders and decision-makers where appropriate.
Observes multidisciplinary meetings or case reviews, where applicable.	Takes part in multidisciplinary meetings, workshops, case reviews or conferences to improve communication, and shares learning with colleagues.	Leads multidisciplinary meetings where applicable to bring together all views and give a forum for listening to and possibly actioning these.
	Shares information, knowledge and resources with partner agencies.	Represents the restorative practice viewpoint at planning sessions/meetings.

## 2.4 Reflective practice

The practitioner has the ability to engage in a cycle of self-observation and evaluation in order to understand their own actions – and the reactions these prompt – on an ongoing basis. This includes seeking support, reviewing performance, professional development, networking with peers and mentoring.

### The indicators for this competency are:

- being open to, and encouraging, feedback on own practice from a range of other people
- being realistic about own capabilities and sharing this self-appraisal with others
- requesting opportunities and challenges for personal development
- treating situations that did not go to plan as learning opportunities and applying these in practice
- participating in professional development activities

### Examples of effective behaviours:

Entry level practitioner (Level C)	Intermediate practitioner (Level B)	Senior practitioner (Level A)
Takes part in peer reviews to apply theory to practice.	Requests feedback from colleagues and participants to actively improve own practice.	Develops own practice through peer reviews.
Seeks appraisals from experienced mentor or supervisor to develop practice.	Takes part in training activities. Plans to try a new intervention with supervision/mentoring.	Stays up to date with professional and service developments, and shares this knowledge with others.
Records feedback received and actions taken to develop own practice based on this.	Reviews own practice against standards and best practice as well as peer feedback.	Conducts research relevant to restorative practice and/or service – for example benchmarking practices across different restorative practice services or helping to write funding bids/business plans for service development.
Asks for cases or training activities that will develop own practice and experience.	Arranges to learn from peers and other agencies through shadowing opportunities.	

## 2.5 Building and maintaining relationships

The practitioner has the ability to establish acceptance between themselves and others, creating a mutual understanding and rapport. This includes information sharing, providing peer support, teamwork and establishing trust with restorative practice participants.

**The indicators for this competency are:**

- communicating effectively with all stakeholders, acting as a positive role model
- providing feedback to help others to make appropriate decisions
- dealing with conflict in a prompt, calm and constructive manner
- recognising different perspectives, remaining non-judgemental and actively listening to others
- taking into account the needs and feelings of others
- checking everyone understands their roles, the structure and the ground rules in an intervention

**Examples of effective behaviours:**

Entry level practitioner (Level C)	Intermediate practitioner (Level B)	Senior practitioner (Level A)
Shows ability to develop professional relationships with participants.	Manages group dynamics successfully.	Acts as an advocate of restorative practice to decision-makers.
Asks for views from participants.	Supports others to share their opinions respectfully.	Takes an active role in cross service and agency working.
Encourages others to contribute to casework procedures.	Seeks to network/make links with other local services and agencies.	Collaborates with others on interventions when invited.

# 3. Delivering restorative practice

## **3.1 Risk and safety assessment:**

The ability to review information in order to make a decision about the risks involved and any actions required. This includes following health and safety processes, applying safeguarding measures, an awareness of potential stress to self which may affect the situation and emotional, psychological and physical risks.

## **3.2 Overcoming barriers:**

The ability to react flexibly, creatively and responsively to barriers which may occur during restorative processes. This includes being adaptable to changing circumstances, dealing with inconsistencies on casework, inclusive practice and deciding what process is best to address problems.

## **3.3 Evaluating practice and service:**

The ability to provide opportunities to discuss and review opinions about the restorative process they have delivered and its outcomes. This can include reviewing the quality of the service – for example ease of access to resources, time taken with individuals and groups and outcomes for participants. It is also about evaluating ways to raise awareness of restorative practice, self-awareness and evaluating supervision, for example accepting feedback from others and asking for support to develop self.

### 3.1 Risk and safety assessment

The practitioner has the ability to review information in order to make a decision about the risks involved and any actions required. This includes following health and safety processes, applying safeguarding measures, an awareness of potential stress to self which may affect the situation and emotional, psychological and physical risks.

**The indicators for this competency are:**

- preparing to take managed risks, ensuring these are planned and the impacts reviewed
- remaining positive and focused on restorative practice goals
- implementing and regularly reviewing risk assessment or safety procedures to provide the best environment for all participants
- reviewing risk assessment and safety processes to confirm all are completed by a trained practitioner
- assessing indicators of risks or safety concerns to participants or self and taking appropriate action
- recognising when the risks of continuing a process, or aspect of a process, become unacceptable and ending the process safely
- assessing the likelihood of further harmful behaviour during restorative interventions, with a suitable plan in place to manage this

**Examples of effective behaviours:**

Entry level practitioner (Level C)	Intermediate practitioner (Level B)	Senior practitioner (Level A)
Ensures personal safe practice using service policies.	Supports the training of others in safe working practice, promoting a culture of safety.	Promotes a safety culture within the service and/or with peers.
Takes part in participant safety activities.	Highlights areas of potential risk with regard to colleagues and participants.	Seeks to diagnose and quantify risks.
Seeks opportunities to learn about safe practice from supervisor/mentor.	Proposes risk and safety reduction ideas to team and service management.	Researches external projects, strategies and practice for addressing risk and shares lessons learned.
Analyses different events/incidents to identify the effect on participants and on outcomes.	Contributes to safety-related governance processes within own service.	Supports the development of safe, reliable systems to reduce the risk of harm.

## 3.2 Overcoming barriers

The practitioner reacts flexibly, creatively and responsively to barriers which may occur during restorative processes. This includes being adaptable to changing circumstances, dealing with inconsistencies in casework, inclusive practice and deciding what process is best to address problems.

### The indicators for this competency are:

- being willing to meet the challenges of difficult barriers while supporting others to do the same
- inviting ideas from a range of stakeholders to inform own thinking and develop creative solutions
- being open to the possibilities of change, considering ways to adapt own practice

### Examples of effective behaviours:

Entry level practitioner (Level C)	Intermediate practitioner (Level B)	Senior practitioner (Level A)
Uses team meetings/mentor to debate the issue and discuss solutions.	Reviews and questions current processes that are regularly creating barriers.	Supports colleagues and participants to feel safe and to challenge existing processes if these are creating barriers.
Takes part in service meetings to review effectiveness of processes.	Uses meetings and/or contacts from other disciplines to discuss solutions to barriers.	Facilitates and encourages new ideas and creative solutions to existing problems.
Reviews the effectiveness of different solutions and approaches.	Develops solutions with others for identified areas for improvement.	Tests different solutions, adapting as required and passes this learning on to others.
Seeks opportunities to learn about successful solutions used in the past.	Shares experiences in overcoming barriers with colleagues.	

### 3.3 Evaluating practice and service

The practitioner provides self and other parties with opportunities to discuss and review opinions about the restorative process and its outcomes. This can include reviewing the quality of the service – for example, ease of access to resources, time taken with individuals and groups and outcomes for participants. It is also about evaluating ways to raise awareness of restorative practice, self-awareness and evaluating supervision, for example, accepting feedback from others and asking for support to develop self.

**The indicators for this competency are:**

- reviewing what and who is required to make different restorative solutions successful and suggesting improvements
- explaining succinctly, both in writing and verbally, how decisions have been reached and reviewing their impacts
- reviewing the balance of communication and power dynamics between participants, helping to maintain a neutral process focused on the restorative outcome
- actively promoting the work of own restorative practice service and supporting the restorative practice culture and values
- asking for support and supervision from an experienced practitioner (or practitioners) as well as line manager, where applicable

**Examples of effective behaviours:**

Entry level practitioner (Level C)	Intermediate practitioner (Level B)	Senior practitioner (Level A)
Identifies areas for self-improvement based on peer and participant feedback.	Proposes ideas for service improvement.	Informs change to practice and/or processes for a group or service.
Participates honestly and openly in case reviews.	Takes part in discussions with colleagues and participants to develop understanding of their experiences.	Communicates progress made in practitioner and participant satisfaction.
Examines the impact of own performance and discusses with supervisor/mentor.	Records own decision-making processes and discusses with supervisor/mentor.	Supports colleagues to evaluate their practice and suggests improvements.
Researches how the service deals with poor feedback.	Helps to shape the future practice and service provided by self and others.	Works with multidisciplinary colleagues to collect as much feedback as possible regarding different interventions.

## How to use the Framework in practice

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### Effective practitioner skills

#### 2.1 Respectful practice

Please see below an example of how different practitioners might use the Framework in relation to one specific competency 2.1, respectful practice. There is an example for each of the three levels.

##### Entry level practitioner

Q works for the police and has completed a conference. On reflection he is unhappy with some aspects. In particular he feels that some of the conference participants were disrespectful to others. Q challenged the behaviour but did not feel he managed this well. This created an imbalance in the conference. Q discusses the issue with his case supervisor and they talk about different ways to manage disrespectful behaviour. As a result, Q feels more confident about addressing this issue in the future.

##### Intermediate practitioner

E wants to develop her respectful practice skills and works in a care home. She asks her supervisor if there are any forums she can join to discuss how to apply respectful practice. E's supervisor has previous experience in the NHS and knows a bit about the ethics discussion groups regularly held here. E decides to find out what typically happens in such groups and to set up one in her service. She sets an agenda for a particular theme with time for open debate, invites practitioners at all levels so they can learn from each other and asks someone from the local NHS ethics group to join the first meeting to help steer the agenda if needed. The meeting is well attended with many ideas on respectful practice. E plans to hold more meetings, each with a different theme or topic.

##### Senior practitioner

L is concerned that respectful practice is being lost as a key theme within her group of peers due to the pressures to meet procedures, deadlines and deal with the increasing volume of cases. L works in a school and asks the head teacher if she can attend a service planning meeting and wants to champion respectful practice and show how it can be embedded in the planning process without adding a further burden. L is invited to the next meeting and prepares a short presentation on the importance of respectful practice, some case examples of how it improves participant satisfaction and an argument for how it helps the service to meet its aims more effectively. The head agrees to trial a few suggestions initially with the hope to take on all of L's ideas in the future and ask her to develop a range of respectful practice behaviours that relate to all their work.

## General examples

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Below are some general examples of how you can apply the Framework.

### Entry level practitioners

As part of her training, entry level practitioner Z attends a session on the Youth Offending Service as an organisation, how it is structured, and how national policies translate to local implementation within their settings. This gives Z the opportunity to understand another part of the sector that delivers restorative practice and some of the issues or pressures they face. Z makes an excellent contact at the Youth Offending Service and they agree to get in touch with each other if they need to co-work on a case.

R works in a school. He asks an experienced practitioner working in the same service as him to provide an example of an informal process. R reads through the example, researches different methods for circle processes and evaluates the outcomes of the example. R and the experienced practitioner discuss his findings and how to apply them in real situations.

G practises in a mediation service and looks at how conferences are arranged. G assessed this using her previous experience of arranging meetings and using standards and guidance, as well as some participant feedback. She is able to suggest changes to further improve the practicalities of delivering conferences, and discuss these suggestions with her peer group and her supervisor.

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## Intermediate level

E volunteers in a mediation service. She notices inconsistencies in the delivery of an intervention within the service and raises this with her supervisor. The supervisor suggests they discuss her ideas at the next group supervision meeting. E prepares her points for the meeting and the group discusses how these issues could be improved. E is careful not to impose her own ideas on the group or be critical of others. E makes observations and focuses on improvements in the future. As a result a number of excellent solutions are generated at the meeting.

P works in the NHS and has been asked to work with participants and colleagues in all disciplines to suggest updates to the service's policy on inclusion. He is able to contribute by talking about practice situations in which he has observed problems for both participants and practitioners. When the policy is rewritten he supports the participants and practitioners to identify ways in which it will be explained easily to everyone. Throughout this small project, he demonstrates his commitment by setting up and attending meetings, responding to requests for feedback and comment, and by talking one to one with participants and practitioners from different services to discuss their concerns and best practice.

K works in a prison. She wants to improve her evaluation skills as an intermediate practitioner in restorative practice. She looks at the in-house training provided by her service. Her hope is to be able to help shape a clearer CPD structure for practitioners to help make them feel more confident. K collects information from her supervisor and colleagues and researches best practice in learning, teaching and CPD. From this K makes recommendations and an action plan for how to improve delivery of training so that it can be more focused and personalised to the needs of each level of practitioner. Her supervisor agrees to trial some of the recommendations and finds that staff feel more supported and that the learning is more relevant.

## Senior practitioners

B works in the police. She realises that there are 22 different ways to receive referrals at her restorative practice service. As a senior practitioner she had seen that this leads to confusion in allocating cases and delays for the participants in accessing the service. She sets up a project to introduce a simpler way to deal with participant requests, especially at first point of contact, and reduce waiting times. She achieves this by working with her team and colleagues from other agencies to centralise the services for different interventions so that they can be dealt with through the same, shared, system so everyone involved can access them and not be dependent on one person to do so.

N is a restorative practice consultant. He does not receive case feedback as he usually facilitates on his own. N has a complex and sensitive case that is particularly challenging. He discusses the issues with a peer practitioner who N invites to observe the case and provide feedback and support.

## Using the RJC Practitioner Competency Framework

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The Framework can be used for a wide range of professional development processes. It offers the opportunity to assess performance and enables such assessment to be more objective leading to a focused development plan. It can aid performance management tasks such as objective setting, supervision, appraisal, performance review and feedback, in line with business objectives.

There are three skill levels against which to measure the attainment of the competencies. These levels are defined below:

Level		Explanation
A	Senior practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• can facilitate all levels of case complexity without the need for significant guidance and support</li> <li>• takes substantial responsibility for own casework</li> <li>• performs a variety of casework or restorative processes and can apply a range of techniques in a variety of challenging contexts</li> <li>• can mentor and support other practitioners</li> </ul>
B	Intermediate practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• can facilitate simple cases without the need for significant guidance or support</li> <li>• requires some guidance and support to facilitate complex and sensitive cases</li> <li>• performs a variety of casework or restorative processes</li> </ul>
C	Entry level practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• can facilitate simple cases with significant guidance and support</li> <li>• has limited or no case experience</li> <li>• performs basic casework or restorative processes</li> </ul>

The practitioner levels above have been designed as a guide and are used throughout the Competency Framework. However the opportunity to demonstrate the competencies in this Framework will differ according to the type of role the practitioner fulfils and which sector they practise in. Examples of how to measure these competencies are given in the previous pages. The RJC has also created an assessment tool and decision table tool to help practitioners to review their current practice against the competencies and create a record of their development. A further explanation of these tools and blank templates can be found in Appendices 1-4. For definitions of some of the terms used in the level table please refer to the glossary.

## Glossary

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**Case:** in this circumstance case refers to any type of referral made to a restorative practice service and includes all interventions as well as situations where a referral does not proceed due to risks or if restorative practice is inappropriate.

**Case review:** looking over any type of case to learn lessons, highlight good practice or issues and seek feedback from others.

**Case supervisor:** fully competent restorative practitioner who can provide advice and oversight in individual cases, bring new ideas and check that nothing is going seriously wrong.

**Cluster:** a grouping of related competencies – for example, effective practitioner skills.

**Competency:** having the necessary ability, knowledge and skill to do something successfully, fully or efficiently.

**Complex and sensitive cases:** may involve an incident of a serious violent or sexual nature, leading to risk of ongoing harm. They have a complexity or a range of issues involved, for example cases involving a number of people or participants, a vulnerable participant or a participant who is motivated to cause further harm, for example where a participant is manipulative, controlling or threatening.

**Continuing professional development (CPD):** informal and formal learning that will develop a practitioner's restorative practice. Examples of CPD include:

- attending seminars, conferences, workshops or training relevant to practice
- reading and/or writing articles, papers and books related to areas of restorative practice
- receiving supervision or mentoring which enhances learning and development or peer review
- co-working
- appraisals
- work-based learning, which may include work shadowing, reflecting on experience or feedback from service users
- attending practitioner network meetings

**Effective behaviour:** a measureable demonstration of achieving a competency within own practice.

**Formal processes:** a restorative conference, face to face mediation or family group conference. This can also include indirect processes such as shuttle mediation, video or telephone conferencing and written communication.

**Indicator:** further guidance or explanation of a competency.

**Informal processes:** use of the skills and knowledge that underpin formal restorative processes informally, using restorative practice as part of day to day work. Examples include circles, and management of relationships in the classroom, in staff disputes and workplace grievances. This can also involve work with just one individual.

**Mentor:** experienced practitioner helping other practitioners with less experience than themselves.

**Multidisciplinary meetings:** practitioners, service managers and other agencies coming together to discuss restorative practice.

**Participant:** in this context this term covers both the victim and the offender, or harmed and harmer.

**Peer:** practitioners at the same level of experience and knowledge.

**Practitioner:** someone who has completed introductory or facilitation courses or workshops in order to deliver restorative practice. This includes volunteers, those who complete restorative practice as part of another role and those who are full time practitioners. It covers those working in all sectors.

**Restorative interventions:** in this context this includes all types of interventions including instant restorative practice, indirect processes such as letters or videos, conferences, victim offender mediations and informing participants about restorative practice and circles.

**Restorative processes:** bringing those harmed by crime or conflict and those responsible for the harm into communication, enabling everyone affected by a particular incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward.

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**Risk assessment:** in this context risk assessment is used as a 'catch-all' term for any safety-related processes such as health and safety checks, safeguarding procedures and emotional, physical and psychological risk assessments.

**Service:** an organisation, department or charity offering restorative processes.

**Service policies:** any policies which a practitioner must comply with as an employee or volunteer of a service. These can include standard operating procedures, regulatory policies, and codes of conduct.

**Service reviews:** evaluation of the overall service, not just a case. This can include reviewing processes for referrals, sharing information, case allocation and ongoing support facilities for practitioners and participants.

**Simple case:** any case which does not constitute a serious and complex case.

**Speciality:** an area of knowledge and practice in one defined area.

**Supervisor:** someone with a formal role to line manage or oversee the practice and wellbeing of a practitioner – in this context they may not necessarily be an experienced practitioner themselves. They are not necessarily the practitioner's line manager.

**Stakeholder:** a person or organisation with a formal interest in the service provided. Stakeholders may include service users, the local community, partner agencies, commissioners, staff and volunteers.

## Acknowledgements

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The RJC would like to acknowledge the feedback and input from the following organisations into the Competency Framework.

Bath Council  
Birmingham Council  
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BLAST Foundation  
Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset & Wiltshire  
Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC)  
CALM (Mediation Service)  
Cardiff Youth Offending Service (YOS)  
CRB Problems Ltd  
Creative and Restorative UK  
Cumbria YOT  
Darlington YOS  
Daybreak Family Group Conferences  
Devon YOS  
Eaves for Women  
Edengates  
Evalogica Ltd  
Fair Process Ltd  
Forensic and Offender Health Pathway, South London  
and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust  
G4S Care and Justice Services Ltd  
Garden Court Mediation  
Janet Clark  
Just Peace Initiatives  
Kent Police  
Kiernan Consultancy  
Kirklees Council  
Leeds YOS  
London Community Rehabilitation Company  
Luton YOS  
Maidstone Mediation  
Marian Liebmann & Associates  
Mark Finnis Training and Consultancy Ltd  
Mediation Buckinghamshire  
Medway Mediation  
MTC Ltd  
National Probation Service  
National Probation Trust (London)

Neighbourhood Resolutions  
NJW Training  
Northamptonshire YOS  
North Wales Police  
Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for  
Northumbria  
PCC for Essex  
Peacemakers  
Prison Fellowship  
Project Salus  
ProQual Awarding Body  
Rane Training  
Restorative Justice Initiative Midlands  
Restorative Solutions  
Restorative Thinking Ltd  
Rochdale Borough Council  
Royal Borough of Greenwich  
Ryse  
Salford City Council  
Sandwell Council  
SFJ Awards  
South Wales Fire & Rescue HQ  
South Yorkshire Police  
Straker RP Solutions  
Tameside Neighbourhood Resolution Panel  
Thames Valley Restorative Justice Service  
The Reconciliation Group/Försoningsgruppen  
The Restorative Justice Training Company  
Tower Hamlets  
Transforming Conflict Centre for Restorative  
Approaches in Youth Settings  
Victim Support  
Wakefield YOT  
Wales CRC  
Wales Probation Trust  
Wales Restorative Approaches Partnership  
West Dorset Neighbourhood Justice Panel  
West Mercia YOS  
Why Me?  
Wigan Restorative Solutions Team  
Wolverhampton YOT  
Youth Justice Board for England and Wales

## Practitioner Competency Framework – appendices

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### Appendix 1 – Assessment tool

The assessment tool below can be used to record the discussion practitioners may have with their supervisor or mentor about how they believe they are performing in terms of achieving the different competencies and to different levels. This tool is supported by the assessment decision table found in Appendices 3 and 4. Completing this exercise will give a focus to a practitioner's development needs and provide a professional review record.

The example given below is for an entry level practitioner, and a blank template which can be printed out and used by practitioners is available in Appendix 2.

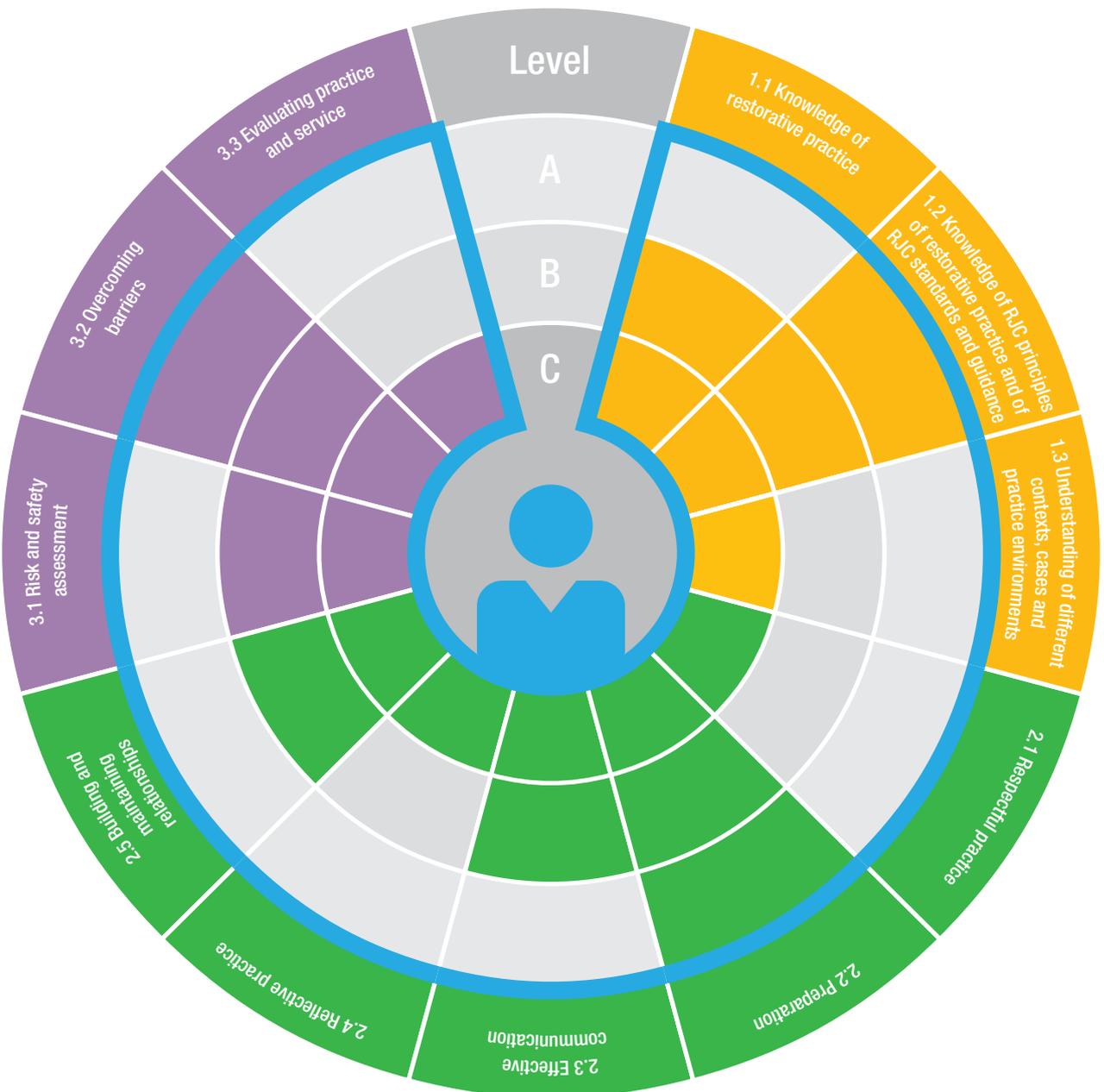
The centre ring represents the practitioner. The first ring represents Level C, the next ring Level B and the outer ring Level A. Practitioners fill in the competency being reviewed up to the level they are practising at currently. They should complete a different chart with each review, this will build up a record of progress and areas that may need prioritising for development. The three colours shown represent the three cluster titles of the competencies:

- Knowledge and understanding of restorative practice (orange)
- Effective practitioner skills (green)
- Delivering restorative practice (purple)

## Assessment tool example

### Restorative Justice Council Practitioner Competency Framework

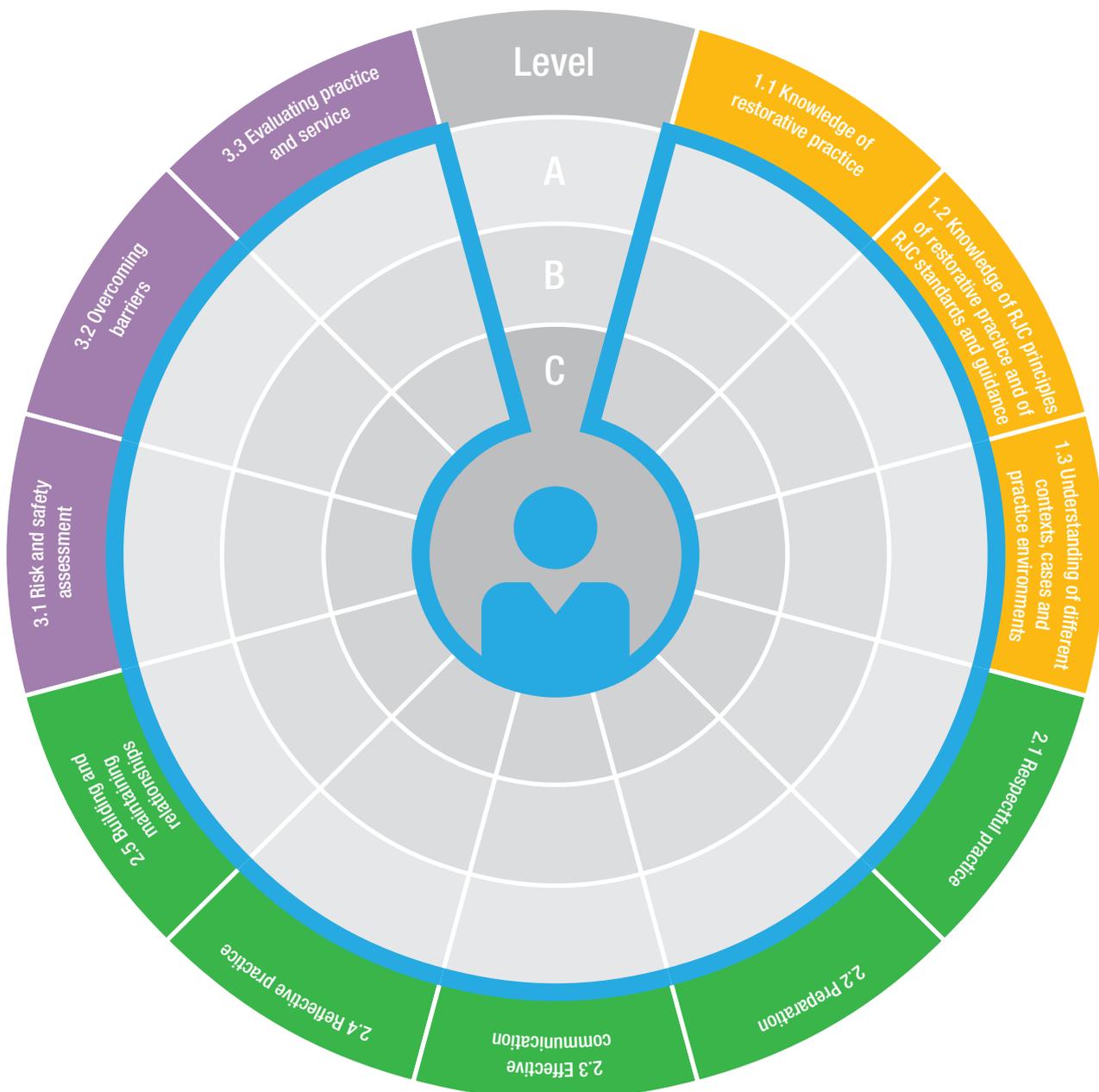
- 1 Knowledge and understanding of restorative practice (orange)
- 2 Effective practitioner skills (green)
- 3 Delivering restorative practice (purple)



## Appendix 2 – Blank assessment tool

### Restorative Justice Council Practitioner Competency Framework

- 1 Knowledge and understanding of restorative practice (orange)
- 2 Effective practitioner skills (green)
- 3 Delivering restorative practice (purple)



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### Appendix 3 – Assessment decision table

The decision table shown on the next page can be used to record the discussion practitioners may have with their supervisor or mentor or to record the decisions they have made on their own when assessing their current attainment of the Competency Framework, and especially the effective behaviours within this framework. This table supports the assessment circles tool, again with a blank template available for printing in the appendices. Completing this exercise will give a focus to a practitioner’s development needs and provide a professional review record. The example below is for cluster one only, Knowledge and understanding of restorative practice.

It is recommended that no more than three development needs are prioritised at each review to make development achievable by the next review date.

Please note the levels are cumulative, so a Level B practitioner will have achieved all the effective behaviours in Level C.

## Example assessment decision table for an entry level practitioner

This practitioner has achieved all Level C behaviours and one from Level B...

...and needs to develop two more to complete Level B.

Name:

Review number:

Date:

Date of next review:

Competency	Level	Effective behaviour achieved	Effective behaviour to develop	Actions to be taken (examples only)
1.1 Knowledge of restorative practice	B	Meets regularly with other practitioners to discuss practice ideas and solutions.	Applies information from training and from supervision and peer mentoring to use a range of interventions according to circumstances presented.  Engages in private study and attends training to develop knowledge.	Request cases outside of current experience to build on breadth of interventions.
1.2 Knowledge of RJC principles, standards and guidance	A	Challenges services, practices and principles to develop consistent value for participants.	Empowers and supports colleagues to be innovative in their practice.  Participates in activities to change or develop aspects of the law, standards and guidance.	Offer mentoring to other practitioners.  Ask contacts in other agencies if it is possible to observe their practice.

For this competency the practitioner has achieved all of Level C and Level B plus one effective behaviour in Level A...

...and needs to develop two more to complete Level A.

Competency	Level	Effective behaviour achieved	Effective behaviour to develop	Actions to be taken (examples only)
1.3 Understanding of different contexts, cases and practice environments	C	<p>(Has achieved three of the four behaviours in Level C.)</p> <p>Requests support on sensitive or complex cases that they have not previously been involved with. (Level B)</p> <p>Meets service policies in everyday practice and questions to understand how policies and practice can co-exist. (Level B)</p> <p>Meets regularly with other practitioners, including at least one senior practitioner, to review experiences and methods for staying focused. (Level B)</p>	<p>Identifies sensitive or complex cases and refers to another practitioner and seeks support. (Level C)</p> <p>Applies contextual knowledge and explores differences in other environments. (Level B)</p>	<p>Discuss with others in person or via email any support needs.</p> <p>Ask supervisor (where applicable) to provide experienced practitioner for support.</p> <p>Discuss different restorative practice environments with colleagues and with any contacts made through training/previous cases.</p>

The practitioner has one effective behaviour from Level B to develop in order to start the next Level.

The practitioner has achieved most of the Level C effective behaviours and needs to complete one more in Level C.

## Appendix 4 – Assessment decision table template

Name:

Review number:

Date:

Date of next review:

Competency	Level	Effective behaviour achieved	Effective behaviour to develop	Actions to be taken
1.1 Knowledge of restorative practice				
1.2 Knowledge of RJC principles of restorative practice and of RJC standards and guidance				
1.3 Understanding of different contexts, cases and practice environments				
2.1 Respectful practice				
2.2 Preparation				
2.3 Effective communication				
2.4 Reflective practice				
2.5 Building and maintaining relationships				
3.1 Risk and safety assessment				
3.2 Overcoming barriers				
3.3 Evaluating practice and service				



