

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This report describes progress made over the last twelve months in the Reintegrative Shaming Experiments (RISE). The aim of this study is to compare the effects of standard court processing with the effects of a diversionary conference for four kinds of offence categories:

- drink driving (over .08 Blood Alcohol Content) at any age
- juvenile property offending with personal victims (under 18 years)
- juvenile shoplifting offences detected by shop security staff (under 18 years)
- youth violent offences (under 30 years)

There are three central hypotheses of the experiments:

- both offenders and victims find conferences to be fairer than court
- there will be less repeat offending after a conference than after court
- the public costs of providing a conference are no greater than the cost of processing offenders in court

We are able to report that the additional data analysed for this report continues to confirm the first of these hypotheses.

Although this report does not contain data on the second hypothesis, we are pleased to foreshadow that reports on the first and largest of the offence categories, drink driving, will be available in the near future. Cases into this experiment were completed in December 1997, all possible first wave interviews have now been completed and the great majority of the 900 cases have had the specified two year period post-random assignment in which to reoffend. We believe that giving RISE offenders this length of time for reoffending will enhance the reliability of our findings and the likelihood of detecting a difference in the effect of the two treatments. In addition, cases in the remaining experiments are very close to being completed and a good proportion of participants have already undertaken their second wave interviews, which take place two years post-random assignment.

Likewise, this report does not contain information on the question of cost. However, this analysis is well underway and will be the subject of a separate report in the coming months.

This report follows the plan of the 1998 report and can best be understood in conjunction with it. The tables replicate with new data those appearing in that document. Each table is numbered according to the corresponding table in the 1998 report. Chapters are numbered according to the Chapter in which the tables appeared last year. Comment is made wherever there is a substantial difference between these results and last year's. The additional Chapter, entitled 'Long-Term Consequences of Court and Conference', reports on analysis of new data collected so far from offenders and victims at their second wave interviews: this material was not available last year.

We are pleased to be able to report on the substantial progress made in RISE over the past twelve months and the quality of the data collected. This will ensure that the experiments will yield information concerning the effectiveness of conferencing compared with court which will be

welcomed internationally as an important contribution to the debate on the value and potential of the restorative justice alternative.