

“It has made an enormous difference”

“It has made an enormous difference. Ideally everyone coming out of prison should have a Circle” Core Member

..there’s a fascinating case study of a Circle included on pages 5-6 of this newsletter.

...Lots to read! Make yourself a cup of tea and settle down...

Volunteers’ Conference and AGM— a valuable day for everyone involved

To mark the 5th Anniversary of Circles South West in September, we held our first ever Volunteers’ Conference, combining this with our AGM.

The event, held at Taunton Racecourse, was well attended by more than 60 Circles Volunteers, Trustees and staff. The day was packed with interesting speakers and facilitators, providing a range of workshop topics including research and evaluation; working with

intellectually disabled men who have sexually harmed; the use of Polygraph in supervising high risk sex offenders; and tools for working effectively with Core Members. It also provided an invaluable opportunity for Volunteers to meet others from across the region. We received overwhelmingly positive feedback from event delegates who are keen to see another similar event next year.

Grateful thanks are extended to external



Volunteers, trustees and staff exploring ‘what’s going well / what could be better’ as part of the volunteer conference

contributors including Clark Baim, Trainer, Author & Psychodramatist; Kieran McCartan, Associate Professor, University of the West of England; Liam Newton, Consultant Forensic Psychologist, Plymouth Community Learning Disabilities Team; James Fraser, Probation Officer & Polygraph Examiner, National Probation Service, Devon; Hilary Gunn, Probation Officer, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall Community Rehabilitation Company; and Liz Brown, CEO Circles UK.

Wiltshire Volunteer runs marathon for Circles

Grant Hesketh wasn’t a keen runner when he decided to run the Swindon half marathon for Circles South West but was driven by his passion for this cause. Grant says: “I wanted to



...continued over

make more people aware of what Circles is and to get the message out there more. I don't think a lot of people know about it".

Grant, a Wiltshire Volunteer says "A lot of people say they could never do this but I think if I can prevent it happening to at least one child then that's



a win for me. That's the end game, to stop them reoffending. No more victims is the main reason behind it and statistics show that it works."

Grant ran the Swindon half marathon, his first, in an impressive 2 hours and 4 minutes and he has already signed up for the Silverstone half marathon taking place in March 2016. Again, he intends to run to support Circles South West. You can support Grant at The Big Give page at <https://secure.thebiggive.org.uk/projects/view/15501>

Donating is easy

The easiest way to donate to Circles South West is via the charitable giving website 'The Big Give' : www.thebiggive.org.uk Simply go onto the website, and in the big search box where it says "By Keyword" type in *Circles South West* and hit Enter. This will take you straight to the entry for Circles South West, and you can then choose to "Donate Online". There is an option to GiftAid your donation if you wish.

2014/15 Headlines

2014/2015 continued to see Circles South West grow and develop, despite external factors which influenced a rather turbulent year. New policies and financial arrangements have significantly impacted on the voluntary sector working in criminal justice, for example, austerity measures and new commissioning approaches. As more organisations recognise the value of volunteering within criminal justice, so the pool of suitable, willing volunteers is more thinly spread. It's fair to say that these and related factors mean that, for us, sustainability is increasingly challenging. However, despite the difficult climate, we achieved an increase in funds secured, volunteers recruited, Core Members referred and most importantly, an increase in the number of Circles of Support and Accountability delivered in region: we coordinated 32 active circles over the

Help us to help prevent further sexual abuse

Are you an experienced Circles Volunteer? Perhaps you would be willing to share your experience with new volunteers? Do you have suggestions for development training?

Are you a public protection professional? Perhaps you have a suitable referral? Would you come along and give input to our volunteer training events?

Are you part of a community group that may be sympathetic to our aims? Can you promote our work? Can you help us recruit more volunteers in your area?

Do you have access to a community venue suitable for a Circle?

Can you display our advert for volunteers? Or circulate it via a mailing list or social media?

Get in touch!

email us at info.circlessw@gmail.com

phone us on 07717 442413

fill in the contact form at www.circles-uk.org.uk

follow us @CirclesSW

year, 24 of which were newly established. This is a 60% increase on the previous year.

Circles:

We coordinated 32 active Circles over the year, including 24 newly established. Circles were delivered in all five Police areas across the region.

Core Members:

We received 60 core member referrals of whom 28 were allocated to a Circle. Of the 32 active Circles coordinated, 1 core member was recalled for breach of licence conditions and 1 was sentenced to custody for offences committed prior to the Circle commencing (on bail throughout).

Volunteers:

At the year-end we had 128 trained volunteers across the region, of whom 124 had been in a Circle during the year. 3 Circles South West Volunteers were awarded the Open College Network Circles Accreditation Award, the first of its kind in the UK. We trained 67 new volunteers and delivered refresher/advanced training events for experienced volunteers. A conservative estimate of the value in-kind that our volunteers have brought this year through their direct contact with Core Members is more than

£40,000 [based on formulas recommended by Volunteering England].

Money:

Our total income over the year was £205k against expenditure of £221k. We secured significant income from new sources.

Jobs:

Gary Gunby, our Senior Coordinator for Devon & Cornwall, gave notice to retire in May 2015. Unfortunately due to financial pressures, this position was deleted.

Trustees:

Tim Price, a Circle Volunteer, joined the Board of Trustees. He was quickly appointed as Deputy Chair.

Independent evaluation:

Funded by the Cabinet Office, the University of the West of England has conducted an independent evaluation of 54 circles in 4 English Regions, 22 of which are in the South West region.

National Offender Management Service recognition:

NOMS 'Commissioning Intentions From 2014' specifically refers to "Circles of Support and Accountability affiliated to Circles UK" as "valuable for offenders who are above low risk on either RM2000 or OSP".

For further information read our annual report for 2014/15.

In the news

We've had some good recent publicity including our Trustee Diane Wills

appearing on BBC2 Victoria Live plus newspaper articles in the Swindon Advertiser, Plymouth Herald and North Devon Journal.

MAPPA recognition

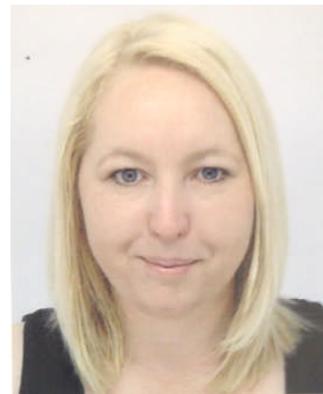
We are delighted that Circles South West's contribution to supporting public protection has been highlighted in the Annual Reports for 2014/15 of Dorset MAPPA and Wiltshire & Swindon MAPPA:

For Dorset: *"Dorset MAPPA works closely with Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) South West. CoSAs work with the highest risk sex offenders identified via MAPPA. There has been an active number of CoSAs running across Dorset for several years now with very positive results for communities, the volunteers and the offenders."*

The full report can be read here <http://bit.ly/1MBRFHE>

For Wiltshire and Swindon: *"This innovative community response to preventing sexual harm reduces the risk of re-offending by known perpetrators by 70% by engaging sex offenders in a strengths-based approach which makes a lasting difference"*. The full report can be read here <http://bit.ly/1NS1apE>

Introducing Lucy Graham (Volunteer Coordinator)



I'm Lucy, the new volunteer coordinator for Circles South West. Aware that I am stepping into the big shoes worn by the lovely Elle, I join Circles South West with a passionate enthusiasm for what the organisation does and the hope that I can continue to provide the high standards you are used to.

It seems my jobs in the past have been moulding me for this role; from coordinating large numbers of passengers for cruises, solving problems for people in need of social housing repairs and helping patients and relatives alike working with St Luke's Hospice in Plymouth. All of these roles have really been people-centred and given me an appreciation of what people can achieve. They've also made me possibly the most organised person in the world with a geeky love of spreadsheets. In the last few years I have travelled extensively and watched how people struggle but pull together and wondered why we don't work more as a community back at home. It gave me the impetus when I returned home to want to work for a really worthwhile cause. At the centre of Circles is the idea of No More Victims, it felt like I could be part of something that really makes a difference. I have always been in favour of rehabilitation and being able to be proactive in what sometimes feel like a helpless situation feels like a step in the right direction. I am honoured to be able to work with such a dedicated and knowledgeable team and giving, passionate and lovely volunteers.

Since I started a few months ago my enthusiasm hasn't diminished at all. Meeting volunteers that are giving up their time and even being able to attend a circle has only bolstered my dedication. I'm excited about the future and being a part of recruiting new volunteers to help us change a little bit of the world.

[Elle Fletcher resigned as Volunteer Coordinator in June 2015 to pursue her social business in the recruitment and retention of volunteers.]

Help us recruit more volunteers!

"This is a practical way of the community taking responsibility for the reintegration of offenders"
Circles Volunteer

We are continually staggered by the skill set, commitment and dedication of our wonderful Circles Volunteers. We have more than 100 Circles Volunteers across the South West region but we need more.

We attach our volunteering advert and introductory leaflet in the hope that you can help raise our profile and attract more volunteers by displaying and /or disseminating this via your networks and by talking to your contacts about our work. Let us know if hard copies of this information would help. The next 2-day Core Training & Assessment Event for new volunteers is in January.

100% of our Circles Volunteers recommend volunteering with Circles South West

"I think I began learning long ago that those who are happiest are those who do the most for others"

Booker T. Washington

Our most recent Volunteers' Survey tells us that as a result of volunteering

with Circles South West:

83% said that they have more confidence to work with disadvantaged groups

85% said that they have more knowledge and understanding of working with sexual offenders

69% said they felt more confident in liaising with statutory agencies

100% would recommend volunteering with Circles South West!

"It is challenging, inspiring and I've met some lovely people"

"A deeply satisfying way to work in the community"

"I am impressed by the organisation and commitment and support provided by those who run Circles"

"Without question, I have found everyone involved to be helpful, supportive and knowledgeable"

Number crunching

Since April we have had 28 active Circles across the region and have more scheduled to start between now and March 2016.

New developments

Tackling Cyber-sexual offending in Gloucestershire

This is the first year that we have secured funding from all 5 Police and Crime Commissioners in the region. The Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire has funded us to establish 2 new Circles which are specifically designed to reduce the risk of cyber-sexual crimes being committed by known perpetrators. The innovation of this project is in the adaptation of this proven Circles model to focus on cyber sexual offending. A clear need for this focus has been established in Gloucestershire: the Public Protection Unit estimates that around 60% of the 450 Registered Sex Offenders living in Gloucestershire do commit, or have committed, cyber sexual crime. Furthermore, of those who have been convicted of cyber sexual offences, the Public Protection Unit estimates that around 60% have committed contact sexual offences for which they have not been convicted.

Adapted Circles

As well as consolidating and maintaining our core service, we want to diversify so that we can offer services to a broader client group. This is a direct response to significant gaps in provision identified during the last couple of years. So, funding dependent, we hope to pilot

services:

- For young people who have sexually harmed
- For adults with intellectual disabilities/autism who have sexually harmed

And we also want to pilot a 'through the gate service' for people in prison who have been convicted of sexual offences where the Circle would start months in advance of their release and then continue in the community.

Developing a prevention model for adult men with a sexual attraction to children

Congratulations to Sara Radford (Circles Coordinator) for winning a Streetcraft Scholarship funded through the Young Foundation. Sara's proposal is for Circles South West to develop a harm prevention model for un-convicted men who have self-identified an enduring sexual attraction to children. We hope that this will attract enough investment for us to establish a pilot project at some point in the future and have recently applied to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for a development grant to extend this work.

Ministry of Justice Compliance Audit

"The last couple of days have been a joy and work done [in the region] is really impressive", Auditor 2015

Circles UK, on behalf of the Ministry of Justice, periodically undertakes a compliance audit of member projects against the national 'Code of Practice' for the delivery of Circles of Support and Accountability, to ensure consistency of standards and service delivery for all organisations delivering Circles in the UK. Circles South West was audited in November: alongside the submission of a written evidence file for assessment against the 42 Standards, Circles UK did a 2-day 'site visit' when the Auditors met with volunteers, core members, coordinators, trustees and statutory partners. Informal feedback from the Auditors has been positive and we await the final report which we are confident will demonstrate a high level of compliance with national standards and will report favourably on the quality of our work in the region.

Independent Evaluation

Funded by the Cabinet Office, the University of the West of England has been evaluating the impact of 54 Circles across 4 English Regions, 22 of which are coordinated by the South West. Dr Kieran McCartan led a seminar at our recent Volunteers' Conference on the evaluation findings to date. A synopsis of preliminary findings (relating specifically to Circles South West) concludes that

“CoSA is seen as a positive, complementary approach to statutory provision.... The initial results provided complement existing national and international research relating to volunteer as well as stakeholder attitudes” (McCartan, 2015). The full independent evaluation report is expected to be published by January 2016. Sincere thanks to all volunteers and other stakeholders contributing to this valuable research.

Case Study: Circle K

Background and context

K is a 52 year old White British male. He was sentenced to 7.5 years custody for Sexual Assault of a 7 year old girl who had Downs Syndrome, and Sexual Assault of a 17 year old female who was registered disabled and had a mental age of an 8 to 10-year-old child.

K knew the girl's father through work. He has previous offences for similar offences against 2 other girls for which he received an 18 month custodial sentence.

K was released to an Approved Hostel around half-way through his sentence but was recalled back to prison 18 months later as it was assessed that his risk had become unmanageable in the community: he had been

'hanging around' a children's play park and possibly filming/photographing children. Due to his presenting risk his Licence conditions were fairly stringent. He was also required to register with the police on Sex Offenders Register indefinitely and was subject to Sex Offences Prevention Order for indefinite period.

K had undertaken a Sex Offender Treatment Programme prior to his recall, but there were significant outstanding issues including: sexual preoccupation; sexual preference for children; inadequacy; emotional congruence with children; poor problem solving; adult attachment problems; lack of adult intimate relationship; believing women cannot be trusted. He was assessed as presenting a high risk of serious harm and medium risk of re-conviction.

K was referred for a Circle by his Probation Officer who was particularly concerned about his outstanding risk/treatment needs and licence ending, and him having no support and being very isolated from community.

The Circle

The following goals were identified for the Circle:

- Supporting Better Lives plan
- Coping with loneliness

- Healthy living e.g. diet, exercise, personal hygiene
- Coping with sexual preoccupation/ sexual thoughts about children
- Constructive use of time e.g. employment voluntary or paid
- Coping with or without relationships
- Rebuilding relationships with family
- Learning to trust people – adult attachment problems

This Circle started in December 2014. There are three female Volunteers (64, 40 and 29 years) and one 34 year old male. The Circle met weekly for the first 8 months and the core member attended every meeting. There has been a high level of liaison and information sharing between the Circle and Probation.

This Circle has been incredibly creative in its approach to working with K. The volunteers have used a number of techniques combining formal circle meetings (including role-plays, art therapy, skills practice, worksheets) with informal meetings in the community (e.g. shopping, eating out, and meeting for coffee).

Outcomes

The Circle has been very involved in helping the core member with job applications (unsuccessful to date) and how to manage his frustration and disappointment in not gaining employment yet. They have done interview practices and role-plays, helped him produce an up-to-date CV; they have worked with him to produce a disclosure letter that he can take to interviews. They have also done various exercises/interventions to facilitate his victim empathy. They continue to work with the core member focusing on issues including: diet (weekly diet sheets); healthy eating (food diary and nutritional education); exercise (encouraging him to ride his bike and walk to appointments); personal hygiene and presentation – they have been clothes shopping with him; constructive use of time (finding alternative and safe adult free activities for him to get involved in); managing his money – helping him when he has got into debt and had money stolen from his bank account; social skills training including role plays about practicing speaking to women/potential partners; helping him perspective take

and consider other options in his day-to-day life. They have helped him write a letter to his estranged brother.

The Circle has been particularly important from a point of view of support and monitoring during the period since K's supervision on Licence came to an end: this was a time of vulnerability for K and the volunteers acted accordingly, offering high levels of emotional support together with helping him with practical issues whilst encouraging him to stick to his relapse prevention plan.

In addition to the high level of emotional and practical support that they offer, the Circle is very focused on accountability and regularly challenges K about his attitudes to women (particularly his ex-wife), his 'poor me' attitude, his lack of victim empathy and his minimisation in relation to the index offences. Information has also been gained and passed on with regard to concerns about who K was associating with and about the television programmes he admitted to watching (children's TV). The volunteers have had access to K's 'good life plan' and regularly refer back to this when he is considering any decisions

he is taking or behaviours that could be concerning.

In addition to the formal Circle meetings, the volunteers and K have met for a number of 'social evenings' in local cafes and restaurants and all have benefitted from this change of focus and venue. In preparation for the end of the Circle, and with the aim of creating independence rather than dependence, for the last few months the Circle alternated between formal, informal and no meetings on a three-weekly cycle.

The Volunteers are keen to continue contact after the formal Circle closes (likely December 2015) and this move into 'phase 2' will be managed by the Coordinator and will be invaluable for K in offer-

ing a continued level of support and monitoring.

"Volunteering for Circles has challenged my views on sexual offending as I have learnt so much about what is effective for rehabilitation. I have witnessed a deeply mistrustful core member evolve over time into someone who openly discusses his fears and hopes for the future. I take a lot of pride from my work with Circles as I have seen the transforming effect it has on both the volunteers and the core member" Circles Volunteer, 2015

And finally

We extend festive wishes to all our supporters. We are hugely grateful to all volunteers, funders, statutory partners and other supporters. It is because of you that our charity continues to grow and develop.

from all the team and trustees:
have a great Christmas, and

Thank you!

