



delivering circles of support
and accountability

June 2017

... in Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset,
Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire



VOLUNTEERS' WEEK

We need more volunteers to help prevent sexual abuse

We are now actively recruiting new volunteers across the region, for our community circles for adults convicted of sexual offences, and for our newer pilot projects for young people, adults with intellectual disabilities, and prison circles. Please do spread the word within your networks. Core training is scheduled for July and September 2017.

"I don't know where I would have been without my Circle.... I would never have achieved the milestones I did. Although it was only once a week the Circle was on my mind every day.... Thank you for everything you have done for me"
Core Member

Dan reflects on volunteering with Circles South West

"I first started volunteering for Circles during my first year at University. Volunteering for Circles has been a thoroughly rewarding experience as well as being enjoyable. Compared to other volunteering opportunities,

Circles South West celebrates VOLUNTEERS' WEEK 2017

Here at Circles South West, we are delighted to recognise the incredible contribution, made by the millions of people, who volunteer in their communities across the UK.

Circles Volunteers are of course unique and extraordinary: they not only *support* the work of Circles, they *ARE* Circles. Now is the time for us to extend HUGE THANKS to all our volunteers, for your fantastic contribution to our work across the 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

Circles is certainly an 'out there' organisation in respect of the unique opportunities it provides. Working with Circles has enabled me to work alongside many other volunteers who have the same passion and drive for protecting the public and to help reintegrate vulnerable adults back into society. Volunteering for Circles has certainly 'opened my eyes' and altered any misconceptions that I may have held of those who have committed sexual crimes."

Dan, Circle Volunteer, Gloucestershire

Headlines 2016-17

- * **Volunteers** gave more than 5000 hours direct time with Core Members. This translates into an in-kind community contribution of around £74,000.
- * **More than 170** Volunteers were active in a Circle
- * **We coordinated** 44 active Circles across the region of which 27 were newly established.
- * **5 Circles** closed earlier than planned: 2 Core Members withdrew consent; 1 Core Member moved out of area; 2 Core Members were recalled (Breach of Licence; Breach of SOPO).
- * **The average duration** of a Circle was 14.5 months.

An Excellent Day: Our Volunteers' Conference, February 2017



The 'Wall of Silence' display

Over 60 people (majority volunteers) joined our Volunteer Conference at Taunton Racecourse for a celebratory day of presentations, workshops and networking.

With 'Circles in Action' as the conference theme, the day included input from our CEO, Chairman and Trustees including Dr Kieran McCartan, Associate Criminology Professor at the University of the West of England, who talked about his findings about the impact of volunteering in Circles.

Delegates attended a range of relevant workshops including our new evaluation initiative (being undertaken by Research in Practice), the pilot projects – prison, young people's service, and intellectual disability action, and our ground-breaking Prevention Project. There was also an opportunity to mould plasticine as part the workshop on creativity in Circles! We were delighted to welcome 'The Misfits Theatre Company', a wonderful theatre and social group led by people with learning difficulties. The theme of their performance highlighted key themes about not judging people by their outward appearance, inclusivity and diversity. It was incredibly well received, with volunteers who saw it calling it powerful, insightful and poignant.

On a more sobering note we were proud to host the 'Wall of Silence'; a raw and hard-hitting exhibition portraying the reality of child sexual abuse. The huge installation was set up for delegates to take some time to read real-life stories of people abused as children. It really bought home to everyone the reasons we do what we do. We were honoured that Dr Mike Pierce, CEO of the Southmead Project, joined us to introduce the exhibition and his presentation touched every delegate. Taunton Racecourse excelled on hospitality and delegates discussed and shared experiences over a wonderful buffet lunch. A big thank you to all the delegates and presenters that made the day so vibrant and successful. We look forward to seeing you at the next conference!

Lucy Graham,
Volunteer Coordinator

A Sneaky Peak (new publicity materials)

Since we established Circles South West in 2010, and with the enduring support and dedication of our volunteers across the region, we have grown our services and reputation as a strong, professional voluntary sector organisation.



In light of most recent broadening of our offer, i.e. Young People's Circles, 'Through the Gate' Prison Circles and 'Adapted' Circles for those with Intellectual Disabilities, we felt it timely to develop marketing and publicity materials to reflect our success and ambition.

Staff, Trustees and volunteers have been involved in selecting Bristol-and-Devon based 'The Group of Seven' to produce what we consider to be an excellent suite of marketing materials which give a strong sense of 'brand' and will be available for potential core members, referrers, volunteers and our funders. The Group of Seven is a highly respected company that represents a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations.

We will be using their expertise to develop a comprehensive web/digital presence through which, once live, users will be able to access latest and archived information about our work, news, documents and relevant published articles.

We will soon have the newly published posters and leaflets available and particularly welcome your ideas of places to display our volunteer recruitment posters.

Update on new pilot projects

The Big Lottery Fund is the main funder of our pilot projects which are being tested out and evaluated over the 3 years 2016-2019. Here's a quick up on how things are going:

1. Young People's Service: providing Circles of Support & Accountability for young people (14-20) who have sexually harmed and/or with convictions for sexual offences, in partnership with Be Safe (Bristol) Glebe House Therapeutic Community. There are now 6 young people's Circles running and other referrals under assessment.
2. Circles for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities (Avon and surrounding areas), in partnership with Avon Forensic Community Learning Disabilities Team. There are now 2 Circles running and others being assessed.
3. Prison Circles for adults convicted of sexual offences, commencing a few months pre-release and then for 12 months in the community, in partnership with HMP Dartmoor, HMP Channings Wood and HMP Leyhill. There are now 3 Circles running and others in the pipeline.

In Memory of Martyn Jessep

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of one of our volunteers, Martyn Jessep in March. I am sure many of you will know and remember Martyn (and his guide dog, Kristian) from volunteering or training.

Martyn had been involved with Circles for several years and had volunteered in two circles. He was very committed as demonstrated by his work with one particular core member. This man was extremely hard to work with, unpredictable, highly emotional, angry and with significant learning difficulties. None of this prevented Martyn from building a fantastic rapport and relationship. He went above and beyond what is normally expected of a volunteer with us; Martyn accompanied the individual to church on a fortnightly basis in addition to always attending weekly circle meetings. The core member held Martyn in such high esteem that he attended the funeral and behaved himself impeccably, which I know would have made Martyn proud.

Martyn was a man with his own history of difficulties and life-long problems. He dealt with these in a pragmatic and successful manner making him an excellent role model and an inspiration to others. Before volunteering with CSW, he had a career in youth justice and social services and brought the skills and experiences gained there to our project. He had endless compassion for his fellow humans, kindness and empathy towards core members and fellow volunteers and a dry and droll sense of humour, which I particularly appreciated.

I am sure that I speak for everyone who knew him when I say that I will miss him greatly and am very saddened by his death. Our sympathies go to his family and his husband, Lee.

Jamie Stephenson, Circles Coordinator (Devon & Cornwall)

Save the date...

Thursday 14th September is our Annual General Meeting.
More info to follow soon.....

A massive thank-you to Rodney Mahon, Trustee 2010-2017

Rodney has been a Trustee of CSW for over 7 years now and in that time has been our Treasurer, Finance Officer, Bookkeeper, Secretary, Adviser and a loyal friend to so many. He has now decided the time is right to bow out and take some richly deserved time off! CSW, as we know it now, began in 2010 with Rodney as a founder member and mover of the organisation. He worked tirelessly to set up our constitution, record our accounts and get CSW up and running as a charity. He has been the bedrock of CSW over the years, ensuring we have the funds to continue, making sure bills are paid and expenses are claimed along with all the mundane but so important issues like having full insurance. Rodney has always been available to give sound advice and when we are faced with what seemed like an insurmountable problem he would often just say sit back and say "well, what we could do is..." then producing a solution we had all missed! Not only did he work as a Trustee but he went far beyond that, managing our finances and banking on a day to day basis but always declining any payment for what has been many hundreds of hours of work.

Rodney, you will be such a loss as a Trustee of CSW in so many respects, your dedication to the charity has been unerring. Your practical advice, conscientiousness, unshakeably honesty, integrity, dedication and plain hard work will be sorely missed. Your work has contributed to many Core Members having the opportunity to be part of a Circle of Support and Accountability and there will be people around the Country who have not become victims of sexual abuse because of your work; you should be very proud. On behalf of Board of Trustees, the staff and volunteers of CSW can I say a big thank you and we wish you every success and happiness for the future.

Tim Price
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Reflections on a Bournemouth Circle

Circles can be tricky: some Core Members can be resistant, some are understandably slow to engage and the process in itself can be a challenge. So it's great to be able to report another success story. This Bournemouth Circle ran for a year. The volunteers described the Core Member (CM) as very intro-

verted and shy when he came to the Circle, he was very nervous about meeting them and very nervous about what their reaction to him would be.

Rebecca says, "He had a lot going on in his life that he needed help with, he didn't want to talk about it but he knew he had to".

Steve says they found common ground early on, "we found it easy to connect with him, we had similar interests and we started by talking

about things like politics and music". Focussing not solely on his offending helped build his trust and helped him relax. "CM is a highly intelligent man and sharing ideas and speaking with him helped him feel comfortable with us." CM had issues within his family and as time went on the volunteers were able to help him through some of those difficulties.

The Circle also talked about CM's offending, what he was doing to keep himself safe, what he was achieving in AA. He demonstrated his strategies and demonstrated keeping sober.

The volunteers put the strength of the Circle down to their different perspectives. The volunteers ranged in age, life experience and outlook with each bringing a unique viewpoint to the Circle. They said it strengthened the bond within the Circle because each of them were able to discuss and share ideas. CM told the Circle Coordinator that they treated him like a human being, the prison experience had made him feel like he might not be. And at the end the CM thanked the volunteers for all they had helped him with.

According to Steve, "CM potentially may be diagnosed with Aspergers and when we finished the Circle he still didn't feel like he could go out to a public place – so we got a take-away and finished the Circle together in a way he felt comfortable with.

He says, "I feel like we gave him some self-esteem back and that he can move forward with his life with his strategies in place to avoid offending and avoid falling back into alcoholism."

CM has now moved out of the area after spending a year with his Circle. Rebecca says: "We were with him for almost a year exactly. He's moving on now, thinking about work – optimistically but logically. He's talking about the Open University and potentially becoming an editor. We don't see him anymore but I hope he's doing well".

Poetic Reflections of a Core Member

I AM

I am an offender of the law
Broke the worst one of them all
Abusive images I saw no shame
Now all I see is pain
Pain . . .
Pain . . .

Here I sit almost 12 months gone
I often wonder where it all went wrong
Not in prison, but not at home
No longer king of my own throne

My family, my friends, my home, my career
Thrown away because I dared to look and leer
My thoughts were clouded at the time
Not sure how I made it fine.

My family I have hurt so very bad
Their actions now make me mad
Life is sad, life is grim
I fight the thoughts to pack it in

My children are a dad without
I love them dearly I want to shout
I miss their voices and their smiles
They seem so distant but not in miles

My thoughts rage like a burning fire
Sometime happy but often dire
I fight to suppress any kind of joy
Playing with life as if it's a toy.

Spent dark days, many more still lay ahead
Some days I hide, or stay in bed
Isolation I often seek
All because I'm scared and weak.

A long journey I must travel
All my thoughts I must unravel
A new path I need to set
Parts of my past remain with regret

I work part time for a charity
My life now a disparity
Gone is the life I once knew
Friends now there are just two

I am an offender of the law
A family man I am no more
Moved away from what I know
Moved to *****, strange but true

Now the fight, I must get tough
Another court battle will be rough
I hope and long to see my sons
Priorities few but they are my ones.

Highs and lows they do occur
Days pass me by as if a blur
Cooking, cleaning I often forget
Easier to buy a filled baguette.

Life was fun, filled with frolic
That's when I was an alcoholic
All my problems, I didn't care
Now all have become a living nightmare

Help and comfort I have sought
Hypnotherapy I even bought.
Negative thoughts they start to churn
Not sure which way to turn

Support options so very thin
Not sure which category I fit within
I am a man with feelings and need
Emotional wreck I am indeed

No longer happy to be a burkel
Overjoyed to have joined a circle
A group of people that do not judge
My negativity they help me budge

I am an offender of the law
My circle I am in awe
They welcome me with open arms
doing their best, using their charms

No more offending is the aim
Reintegrate with society it's not a game
Not friends, not colleagues, just people
Treating me as a human not a creeple

I am an offender of the law
That's what I will be remembered for
that's all

I am an offender of the law
I am human like you all.

Anon Core Member, Circles South West

Volunteer Development Training Dates for 2017

10th June

Morning: Rolling With Resistance
Afternoon: Exploring The Changes To Sex Offender Treatment Programmes
30th September: Internet Offending (repeat of last year's training for those who weren't able to secure a place and new volunteers who have joined in the last 6 months)

Coming soon:

Creative Approaches To Circles

To book your place contact Lucy at volunteering@circlesw.org.uk or on 07738 947988

We need your help

* Can you help us recruit more volunteers in your area? Perhaps you're part of a community group sympathetic to our aims? Can you display our advert for volunteers? Or circulate it via a mailing list or social media?

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

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

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

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. On the website, scroll down to the big search box where it says "Enter Keywords...", type in Circles South West and select Enter. This will take you straight to the entry for Circles South West, and you can then choose to "Donate Now". There is an option to GiftAid your donation.

Get in touch

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