



circles
south west

delivering circles of support
and accountability

December 2014

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

With fond memories of a summer celebration...



As the nights draw in and the weather is upon us, a warm glow descends as we remember with fondness our celebration and AGM held in July at Somerset County Cricket Ground.

Around 70 volunteers, partners, funders and supporters joined us to mark our achievements the previous year. We were delighted to welcome prestigious speakers, including Juliet Lyon, Director of the Prison Reform Trust; Lydia Guthrie, Co-Director of Change Point Learning; Dr Kieran McCartan, Professor of Criminology at the University of the West of England; and Angela Cossins, Deputy Director of the National Probation Service (South West & South Central). Thank you: together we made it a great success.

until December 2015 Circles South West is



LOTTERY FUNDED

...,and the next step is...

Circles are “Pioneering work” says NSPCC

"We see Circles of Support and Accountability as an excellent child protection and prevention initiative"

Jon Brown, Head of Strategy and Development, NSPCC, 2014.

In early December the NSPCC nominated Circles of Support & Accountability for the UI_LocalGov 'Find The Innovators'.

Click the link to see a short film in which Jon explains why the NSPCC see Circles as a *"pioneering child sexual abuse prevention initiative"*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzXGkxyq7-8>

This link is a recent supportive article from the Bristol Post

<http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/Charity-seeks-help-support-sex-offenders/story-21292429-detail/story.html>

Help us protect more people from sexual abuse and sexual violence

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?** **Could** you perhaps promote our work and 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? **Do you have some time?** **Could** you provide remote administrative support on a voluntary basis?

Get in touch

email us at

info.circlesw@gmail.com

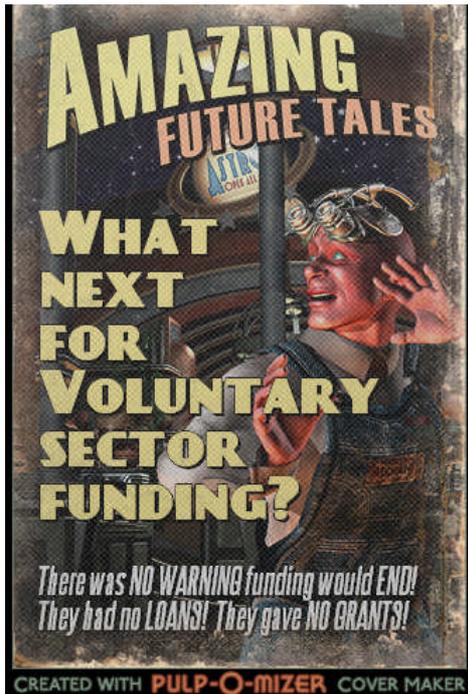
phone us on 07717 442413

fill in the contact form at

www.circles-uk.org.uk/local-projects/south-west-england

follow us @CirclesSW

Looking forwards: resilience is the new sustainability



“Non-profits must stop apologising for needing money... you should be asking for money as a vehicle to help your organisation create social change”
Nell Edgington, Social Velocity

Trustees and staff spent a day together in November kick-starting the strategic planning process for the next 3 years.

vision, mission and values

The starting point for our strategic review was to consider our vision, mission and values; reflecting on our stakeholder relationships; considering diversification options; assessing our strengths and weaknesses and exploring the opportunities and threats to our charity presented by external environment. We are now in the process of writing a succinct 3-year strategic plan which will be accompanied by an annual business plan.

financial insecurity: the current reality

We are working hard to achieve a secure financial position going forward into the new financial year. The recession, public sector cuts and the complexities of the Transforming Rehabilitation programme all continue to impact on our financial security. We are now entering our final year of secured funding from both the Big Lottery Fund and Wiltshire & Swindon Police & Crime Commissioner Innovation Fund. The end of the Cabinet Office

Rehabilitation Social Action Fund in March 2015 leaves us with a funding gap. We are in discussions with the National Probation Service and the Police regarding their respective statutory contributions and are busy applying to Charitable Trusts and Foundations who are sympathetic to our work.

Circles South West: the volunteer perspective

...help us recruit more volunteers... help us recruit more...

“... 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 pool of wonderful Circles Volunteers

We held Core Training & Assessment events for new volunteers in July, September, October and December. We now 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 Core Training & Assessment Event for new volunteers is at the end of January. Development Training for experienced volunteers is also scheduled for 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

Thanks to all volunteers who took the time to respond to our recent volunteer survey undertaken in the Summer . You told us that as a result of volunteering with Circles South West:

77% of you now have more confidence in working with disadvantaged groups

89% of you now have more knowledge and understanding of working with sex offenders

49% of you have improved employment opportunities

69% of you now feel more confident in liaising with statutory agencies

100% of you would recommend volunteering with Circles South West!

Number crunching

Since April we have had more than 20 active Circles in the South West and we are on target to achieve what we set out to do this financial year before the end of March 2015.

New developments

We're proud that some of the first ever nationally accredited Circles Volunteers will be part of our Circles South West family! As part of the Circles National Accreditation Pilot Project funded by the Cabinet Office, 10 of our South West Circles Volunteers are working on portfolios for submission to the National Open College Network in January. We wish you every success!

Young People's Service

In response to demand in several areas we have developed a model of working with younger people (14-17 years and 18-20 years) who have either displayed harmful sexual behaviour and/or have been convicted of a sexual offence. We are actively fundraising to be able to pilot this service in a couple of areas.

Tweet Tweet

You can now follow us on Twitter @CirclesSW. We're finding that it's a great way to stay in touch and keep abreast of relevant developments.

Recent funding success

Many thanks extended to Exeter Community Grant for £2k funding to train more Circles volunteers in Exeter. Thanks also to Avon & Somerset Police for recent confirmation of a £10k contribution to our work across that area.

Circles' Got Talent

Our promotional film about Circles in the south west was launched at our AGM in July. It stars some of our experienced volunteers, a core member, a funder and supporters. The film has been well received by stakeholders and has been useful in our fund-raising efforts. Obvious sensitivities mean that this film is not in the public domain but if you would like a copy to support us raise profile and therefore recruit more volunteers and core members, then do let us know.



Former Core Member BBC interview

A former Core Member was recently interviewed for a BBC programme about the need for more helpline resources for people like him who are living in the community without harming. An excerpt from the interview is below:

"As regards helplines, yes I would now make a phone call. I think more about what I have to do - keep safe, and away from children. A big boost after finishing Circles was to do voluntary work - keeping myself busy, working 2 days a week, and I am going on a course now about how to apply for jobs, which I'm not very good at. Voluntary work has helped me a lot - with adults, so I can assess the situation - I would make a phone call, though I am nervous.

I am thankful to Circles, as it has been over 18 months now, and I am building a new life, being careful about who I mix with, and I can keep that number in my diary..." Core Member 2014

Press coverage

We have had some positive coverage in the local press of late including articles in papers circulated to Salisbury, Swindon, Bristol, North Somerset, Bournemouth and Plymouth. Many thanks to the volunteers who have been interviewed for this purpose.

Don't take our word for it....

The independent evaluation is now well underway. Funded by the Cabinet Office, Dr Kieran McCartan's team at the University of the West of England is evaluating the impact of 74 Circles across 4 English Regions, and 22 of these are Circles we have established in the South West. Sincere thanks to all volunteers and other stakeholders contributing to this valuable research.

10 months in the life of a Circles South West Coordinator

Having been in post since February 2014, I thought I could give you a snapshot of progress as Circles South West Coordinator in Avon and Wiltshire.

February: Stabilisers and 'L' plates...

firmly fixed on my Circles tricycle I am inducted into the world of Circles South West, meeting fantastic CSW volunteers and colleagues - taking over the coordination of existing Circles in Bristol and Swindon.

March: Herding cats on a tricycle...

Established my first 'new' Bristol Circle with a fantastic bunch of volunteers, managing to find a suitable venue and time that works for everyone in the Circle. This

month I also spent time introducing myself to statutory sector partners across the area.

April: Cycling with flippers...

Still feeling a bit clumsy and inexperienced I attend a Circles UK Coordinators' Forum in Birmingham where I meet with colleagues delivering CoSA across the UK where we share ideas and good practice and it is a relief to know that establishing Circles can be equally tricky the country over. I am also beginning to realise quite how large and rural Wiltshire is!

May: Tricycle to a two wheeler...

With my first Circle under my belt I am feeling confident that it is possible to ride without stabilisers and stay upright. I meet with police and probation colleagues across Wiltshire and co-deliver our weekend volunteer training and assessment event in Exeter where I have the privilege of working alongside a group of enthused and hard-learning volunteers and colleagues.

June: Tour de France (well, Leeds)...

I attend a fascinating two-day conference 'Assessing the impact of Circles of Support and Accountability' hosted at University of Leeds with a raft of highly knowledgeable academics and statutory professionals. The event launched the findings of a 3 year research study carried out by the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies looking at CoSA (Circles of Support and Accountability) as an exceptional community-based initiative where volunteers play a major role in working with sex offenders. Funding for this study three year study was provided by the Wates Foundation in conjunction with The School of Law at the University of Leeds.

July: Cycling one handed... (holding a microphone in the other). This month and last, time outside the usual Circle prep and management was spent interviewing for our short CSW 'promo' film. I was part of the team effort to use the skills, knowledge and experience of a range of folk, including volunteers, a Core Member, funders, academics and other stakeholders to present our work in a short film which I hope you will have seen. Also in July we hosted our AGM and Celebratory Event in Taunton which attracted an excellent turn out with speakers, tea and cakes being enjoyed overlooking the County Cricket crease.

August: Cross country cycling...

Much of August was spent travelling around beautiful Wiltshire admiring the view from behind tractors and Combine Harvesters on my way to and from Circles established in Salisbury and Chippenham. With more wonderful volunteers recruited and trained this month was busy with one to one supervision and Circle Reviews. I received my Tour de France 'Yellow Jersey' with pride having successfully completed my six month probationary period with CSW. Still waiting for the magnum of Champagne ...

September: Building a peloton...

Pleased with the success of an earlier feature in the Bristol Evening Post where two local volunteers had (bravely and kindly) offered their time and experience to shape a very positive newspaper piece, I was very pleased to make headway with crime journalists working for the Swindon Advertiser and Salisbury Journal. With the constant stream of news stories relating the damage of sex offending on victims and communities, it is important to be able to highlight a realistic and effective community response offered through CoSA. The articles attracted local interest and I was thrilled to recruit further volunteers as a result.

October: Cycling into a cross wind...

In October I attended a 'Well-being' event at HMP Ashfield which served as a reminder of the need to develop the important service offered to the community by CoSA. I met a broad range of serving prisoners who had been convicted of sexual offences and for many of whom a Circle would provide an invaluable source of support and accountability upon release. The men I spoke to were keen to participate and it is important to 'grow' the Circle initiative to be able to offer the service more widely. CSW are pioneering a 'through the gate' Circle in HMP Leyhill and this way of delivering Circles is now being piloted at HMP Whatton.

November: A spin in the velodrome...

With a pipeline of waiting Core Members November saw my feet locked into the toe straps, head down sprinting to get Circles established in Swindon, Bristol and Salisbury. CSW held its Strategic Planning day in Taunton which was a rare opportunity for our geographically spread staff members and Trustees to come together,

review and plan for the challenges of the year ahead.

December: Arc de Triomphe in my sights...

With some annual leave being taken in Paris this month, I shall be shaving off my Bradley Wiggins sideburns, leaving my CSW racer at home and seeing the city on foot. Reflecting on the past ten months I am very proud to be a part of delivering such a valuable service - working for a small charity with big aspirations. There is no finish line in the work of Circle South West but I wish you all a peaceful and merry Christmas-time. A big 'thank you' to our statutory partners, and most especially, to our volunteers for their support, patience, good humour and commitment.

Sara

Two gaps to fill on the board of trustees

The hunt is on for a treasurer, and a senior Police representative, to join us in this important work. If you might be interested, or can suggest someone who might be, please contact the chair, Stephen Ashton

stephen@thepublishingcentre.com

we look forward to welcoming you to our team

And finally

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

And all good wishes to all our supporters for 2015. We are hugely grateful to all volunteers, funders, statutory partners and other supporters. It is because of you that our charity continues to develop.

THANK YOU!