

## **Dorset Circles Coordinator**

### **Briefing Note for Applicants October 2019**

#### **What is Circles South West?**

Circles South West is an independent regional charity established in 2010 to reduce the risk of sexual re-offending and therefore prevent further sexual abuse. Working in close partnership with public protection agencies, we provide Circles of Support and Accountability for people convicted of sexual offences, facilitating their safe integration as law-abiding members of local communities and preventing further sexual harm. There are over 50,000 people living in UK communities who have been convicted of sexual offences, of whom around more than 5000 live in the south west region. We deliver services across the region in Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Avon, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Dorset.

Our vision is 'No More Victims'. The difference we want to make is simple: to stop further sexual offending by known perpetrators and therefore prevent further sexual abuse.

Our work is delivered in accordance with the Ministry of Justice approved Code of Practice for Circles of Support and Accountability and is audited regularly against national standards.

Circles South West is one of the 3 winners of the 2019 Robin Corbett Award for the Prisoner Re-Integration in recognition of the excellence of our Prison/Through The Gate (TTG) Circles of Support & Accountability.

#### **What are Circles of Support and Accountability?**

The 'Circle of Support and Accountability' represents a community engaging with, not rejecting, someone trying to live without harming; putting local volunteers at the heart of a solution to further sexual abuse being committed by known perpetrators. Our focus is on building stronger and safer communities by overcoming the isolation experienced by adults who have sexually harmed, encouraging their safe inclusion, connection and integration within those communities.

Each Circle of Support and Accountability (Circle) consists of between four and six specially recruited and trained volunteers who support a convicted sex offender (core member) for between 12-18 months. Core members are generally referred by probation or police. If the core member is assessed as motivated to create no more victims, poses a risk to the community, is isolated and is prepared to accept close liaison between volunteers and the statutory agencies, then they will be considered suitable for a Circle. Volunteers are informed of the core member's past so they can assist the core member to better manage their thought patterns and behaviour, which could otherwise result in them re-offending. The volunteers are managed by an experienced criminal justice coordinator.

The Circle holds the core member to account for his or her behaviour and is alert for indications that the risk of reoffending might be increasing. In this way public safety is enhanced, the Circle acting as a safety mechanism for both the core member and the community. Circles work towards there being 'No More Victims' by reducing emotional loneliness; modelling appropriate adult relationships; monitoring core member behaviour and holding the core member to account.

## **What do we do in Dorset?**

Until now, we have delivered Circles in the community working closely with probation and police. In addition to this work we have now secured funding to pilot a new Prison/Through The Gate Circles project based at HMP The Verne.

Prison/TTG Circles start 3-6 months pre-release, supporting the core member 'through-the-gate' and on into the community for another 12 months post-release.

## **What is the remit of the Circles Coordinator?**

This role has a dual function:

- Prison/Through the Gate Circles of Support and Accountability: to lead the development and delivery of a new pilot project for men serving sentences for sexual offending at HMP The Verne, who have release plans to Dorset.
- Community Circles of Support & Accountability: to establish and coordinate Circles for men convicted of sexual offences who are living in Dorset communities.

Both functions will be delivered in accordance with:

- national standards, the Ministry of Justice approved Code of Practice for Circles of Support & Accountability, and
- Circles South West's Practice Standards.

The Coordinator's main roles and responsibilities are set out in the attached Job Description.

## **What is the intervention model?**

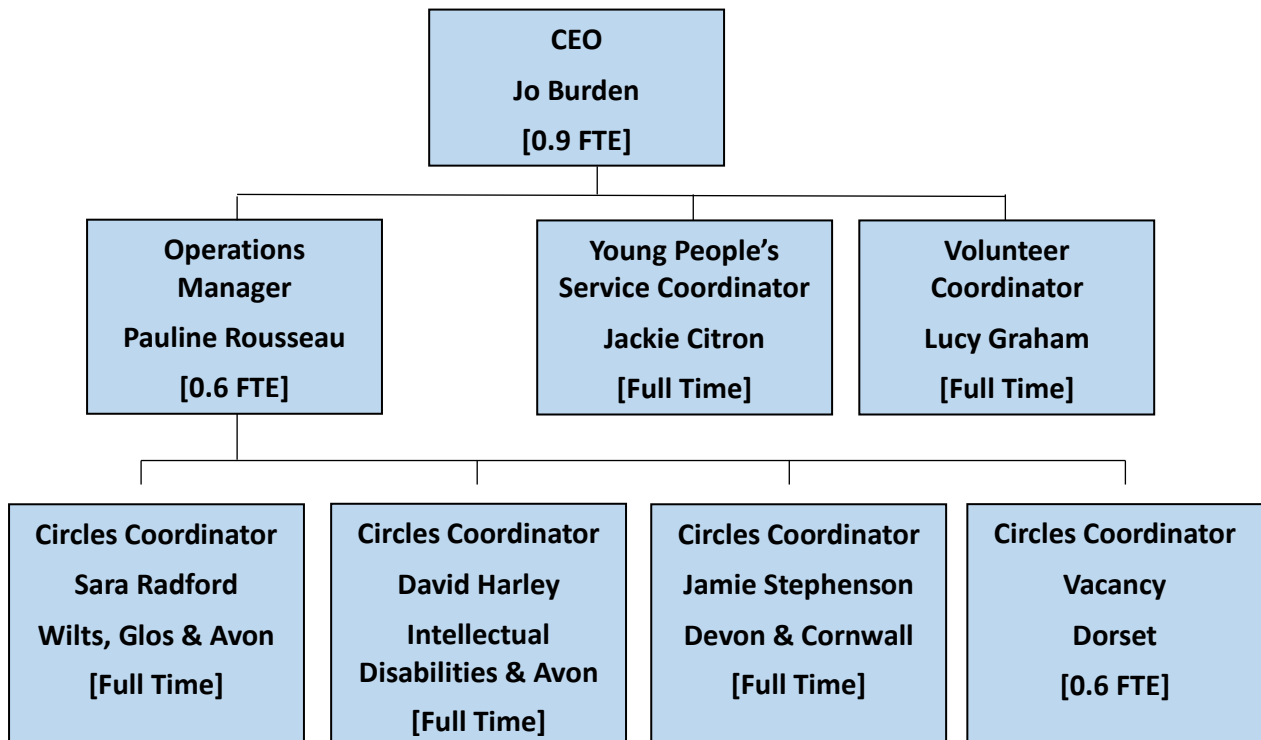
Small groups of trained and carefully selected volunteers from the local community meet regularly with the core member, providing a unique and supportive social network to counteract those circumstances and traits which are known to increase the risk of reoffending and sexually harmful behaviours.

There will be weekly meetings between the core member and volunteers, taking place at pre-agreed and convenient times in safe local environments. In general, community Circles continue for 12 months, and Prison/TTG Circles run for up to 18 months.

## **How does the Dorset Circles Coordinator fit within the existing Team?**

With the appointment to this new post, our staff team will comprise 8 employed staff (2 part-time). We have a very experienced team, all bar one of whom are social work and/or probation qualified. Team members have an impressive track record of working with people who have sexually offended and with harmful sexual behaviour. All staff have extensive experience of working with and supporting volunteers. The staff team is ably supported by around 170 community volunteers across the region, 9 of whom make up our Board of Trustees. Operational staff are county-based meaning that with a very small team we are able to coordinate Circles across a vast regional area.

## Circles South West Organisation Chart October 2019



Our volunteers are a diverse group of community members who offer an impressive skill set. Whilst we welcome relevant professional experience, we primarily seek well-balanced people with a mature outlook and clear personal boundaries who can represent their communities. We have a robust recruitment, training and assessment process which includes an application form, pre and post training interviews, mandatory two-day core training plus ongoing development training, two references and an Enhanced DBS check.

Further information about our work is on our website [www.circles-southwest.org.uk](http://www.circles-southwest.org.uk)

**ENDS**