CIRCLES OF SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY:

CABINET OFFICE - SOCIAL ACTION FUND

EVALUATION

2016

Dr Kieran McCartan

Associate Professor in Criminology

Kieran.mccartan@uwe.ac.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main objective of this research is to evaluate the outcomes of the Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) work funded by the Cabinet Office through the Social Action fund. This will be achieved through the adoption of mixed method approach (Robson & McCartan, 2016) that combines Core Member case studies, Core Member socio-demographic databases, post-circle data, a volunteer survey and a series of in-depth qualitative interviews (involving stakeholders, volunteers and Core Members).

It is important to note that given the small number of completed circles (n = 29), Dynamic Risk Reviews (DRR) (Complete DRR, n = 27), adapted DRR's (Complete adapted DRR, n = 9), volunteer on-line surveys (n = 62) and the nature of qualitative data we cannot make generalisations to all circles projects nationally based on this research. The current research, therefore, only gives us insights into "on the ground" CoSA practices within certain projects and the impact of individual circles on Core Members.

FINDINGS

- The findings reinforce past research showing that CoSA deals with, in the main, male, heterosexual sex offenders (who traverse a range of contact and on-line offences with adult females and children) who are medium (n = 21), high (n = 28) and very high (n = 12) on the Risk Matrix.

- CoSA provides social and emotional support to the Core Members across the life of the circle with the majority of the Core Members, who completed their circle (19 Core Members out of 29 Core Members), being in a stronger position to live offence free in the community than at the beginning of their circle. It is important to note that because of logistics, as well as the staggered start of the 75 circles not all Core Members completed in the research period; some are still ongoing.

- The findings reinforce past research that CoSA parallels and supports statutory working in sex offender community management (McCartan et al., 2014).

- Core Members and volunteers agreed that the Core Members risk had reduced by the end of the circle. However, Core Members and Volunteers had different perceptions of the level of risk that the Core Member posed at different points during the lifetime of the circle.

- While volunteers, through the on-line surveys and semi-structured interviews, were happy to work with Core Members they were cautious in telling other people that they volunteered with sex offenders or to introduce a Core Member to other people in their lives. This is important as it suggests that the volunteers separate out their work with CoSA and compartmentalise it as a protective mechanism. This does raise questions around the type of support that volunteers need to complete their role, who should be providing it and if the current training/support meets their needs.

- The findings stress the central role of volunteers in the circles process, suggesting that Volunteers act as a bridge between Core Members and communities.

- Clear roles, responsibilities and training are essential to the work done by CoSA. It is important to recognise that CoSA works in parallel with statutory agencies in a productive and collaborative way; therefore, it is essential that there are clear boundaries, cross-agency training and support.

- These findings suggest that the different groups of participants have different views on the role, function and viability of "Support and Accountability" within the circle. Having a clear balance between support and accountability is central as CoSA projects are integrated into the UK Criminal Justice System.

Recommendations

- A clearer more defined role for the "service user" (i.e. the Core Member) voice within the Circles process, especially in respect to defining and evaluating success factors.

- Work needs to be done streamlining and improving the roll out of new data collection tools and their implementation to new, as well as established projects.

- More reflection, planning and development focused on how CoSA conducts research with Circles UK, as well as each individual project; the need to consider how they collect, collate

and analysis information on Core Members (especially their social, emotional, psychological and physical well-being) before, as well as post the circle.

- There needs to be consideration of how volunteers receive additional support regarding their work with circles; especially in terms of more (or adapted) resilience building, self-support and informal/formal support from the projects.

- CoSA needs to consider how best to reconcile the roles and responsibilities of the circle and with those of statutory agencies so that everyone knows what their role and responsibilities are.

- CoSA needs to consider what "Support and Accountability" means to all participants (volunteers, Core Members and stakeholders) and how best to measure if this is happening; this is important in the UK version of CoSA as it is tied to the Criminal Justice System in a way that other international variants are not.

# CONTENTS

LITERATURE REVIEW & RESEARCH CONTEXT

Currently in England and Wales, as of the 1st January 2016, there are 49,322 Registered Sex Offenders in the community (College of Policing, 2016) which poses a sizeable community management challenge for police, probation and MAPPA. These community management issues are confounded by recent criminal justice system changes (i.e., the introduction of Transforming Rehabilitation, Ministry of Justice, 2013) as well as austerity measures in England and Wales. Transforming Rehabilitation has created an adapted criminal justice system for managing offenders based on collaboration between the private and voluntary sectors (Ministry of Justice, 2013). Sex Offender management, under Transforming Rehabilitation, in the community will be carried out through a downsized and streamlined National Probation Service, but there are opportunities for 3RD party/stakeholder organisations like Circles of Support and Accountability, (CoSA) to deliver services to support sex offender reintegration. The work of CoSA parallels and works in tandem alongside MAPPA and the new National Probation Service (McCartan et al., 2014).

CIRCLES OF SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) are a community-based offender service which aims to help integrate sexual offenders while reduce their risk and protect the public, originating in Canada in 1994 and evolving from restorative justice principles (Hanvey, Philpot & Wilson, 2011). The approach uses volunteers, drawn from the broader community, to support sexual offenders with high levels of need and at high risk of re-offending (Wilson & Hanvey, 2011; Hanvey et al., 2011). The primary goal of CoSA is to support the offender, known as the Core Member, to successfully reintegrate them, through the formation of a 'circle' (a group of 4 – 6 volunteers from a local community), into the community while monitoring them and making them accountable for their actions (Hanvey et al., 2011). CoSA has its roots in restorative justice philosophy where it is seen as 'a unique product of the application of restorative principles in the midst of a retributive society' (Hannem, 2011: 5) providing understanding but importantly accountability through 'a relationship of support' (Wilson and Hanvey 2011: 19) (figure 1). Core Members are referred by their Offender Manager, based on suitability, which is predominantly driven by their commitment to cease offending behaviour, the level of risk that they pose to communities, their level of isolation and their preparedness to accept the close liaison between volunteers and statutory agencies (Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014; Hanvey et al., 2011). Circles in the UK occur in two forms either

completely based within the community (Hanvey et al., 2011) or as part of a through-the-gate process starting in prison and ending in the community (Winder, 2015). Circles meet weekly at the beginning of the process and this may reduce as the Core Member progresses, with the circle usually last between 12-18 months (Hanvey et al., 2011).

Figure 1: Circles of Support and Accountability
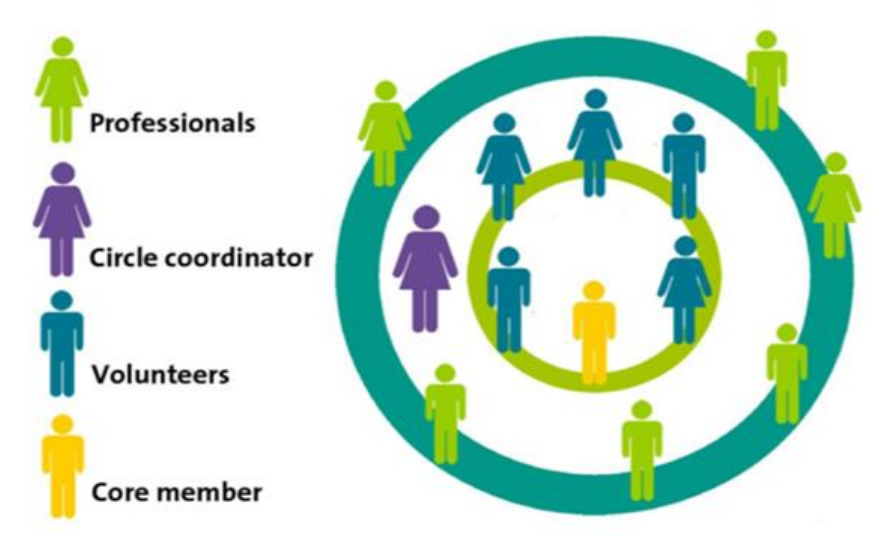
Circles volunteers are drawn from a wide range of age groups, employment backgrounds as well as social, cultural and ethnic groups (Hoing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, 2015; Hough, 2015; Circles South East, 2012). Circles UK currently have over 600 volunteers nationwide (Circles UK, 2016). All volunteers are screened and interviewed prior to acceptance; require references; are required to sign a declaration to adhere to appropriate boundaries and safeguarding Codes of Conduct; are DBS checked; attend an initial two-day training course prior to joining a circle; as well as receiving support and mentoring throughout (Circles UK, 2016). Volunteer training covers key areas of circles work including sex offender typology, role-play, monitoring and self-care, enabling the projects and individuals to assess suitability (Circles South East, 2012; Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014; Wilson, Cortoni & Prinzo, 2007a; Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo, 2007b). The volunteers are informed of the Core Member's past offending so can assist them in better-managing patterns of thought and behaviour that could otherwise result in their re-offending (Hanvey et al., 2011). Recent research with volunteers suggests that they volunteer for personal reasons, gain satisfaction from doing so and that they realise that they are working with a challenging group thereby recognising the importance of personal resilience and self-support (Hoing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, 2015; Hough, 2015).

The circle is managed by a circles coordinator, who is an experienced criminal justice professional. All Co-ordinators undertake a comprehensive training programme, designed by Circles UK, who set the national standards (Code of Practice) for all CoSA delivery, as required of them by the Ministry of Justice. Volunteers provide a weekly report to the coordinator, who reports regularly to the Offender Manager. If there is any concern of an apparent risk of re-offending that there is no hesitation in reporting this to the Offender Manager and this has resulted on some occasions in a recall. Hence, CoSA is a Social Action initiative, using volunteers who work together to create safer communities and reduce sexual offending.

CIRCLES OF SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY: THE EVIDENCE BASE

In the 10+ years that circles has existed in the England and Wales it has provided a circle for 500+ Core Members. In addition to the UK Circles of Support and Accountability currently exists internationally (Canada, USA, the Netherlands Latvia, Belgium and Spain), and is being considered in additional countries (Ireland, New Zealand, Australia, France, Hungary and Northern Ireland), but uses different operating models, different funding streams and different relationships to the criminal justice system.

A number of studies have been carried on CoSA, including empirical studies (incl., Bates, Saunders, Wilson, 2007; Bates, Macrae, Williams & Webb, 2012; Cesaroni, 2001; Duwe, 201; Wilson, Cortoni & McWhinnie, 2009; Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo, 2007a; Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo, 2005; Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo, 2007b), literature reviews (including, Wilson, Bates & Vollm; 2010; Wilson, Huculak & McWhinnie, 2002; Nellis, 2009; Clarke, Brown & Völlm, 2015), evaluations (including, McCartan et al., 2014), cost-benefit analysis (incl., Duwe, 2012; Elliot and Beech, 2012) and feasibility studies (Elliott, Zajac & Meyer, 2013). Existing research indicates that, overall, CoSA has a positive impact on the reintegration of Core Members who have reported improved social, emotional and personal benefits (Hanvey et al., 2011; Cesaroni, 2001; Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo, 2005 and 2007a; Wilson, Bates & Völlm, 2010; Circles South East, 2012; Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014; McCartan et al., 2014; Clarke, Brown & Völlm, 2015). With stakeholders and 3rd parties, cautiously, arguing that the community was safer as a result as CoSA reduced risks of reoffending and a reduced fear of reoffending in the community by the Core Member (Wilson, Bates & Völlm, 2010; Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014; Clarke, Brown & Völlm, 2015; Wilson et al., 2010). However, some stakeholders had concerns about boundaries and organisation of the programmes but they

recognised that there was training and support available for the volunteers (Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014; Wilson et al., 2005) and the volunteers recognised that their own resilience played an important role in their capacity to work as part of a circle (Hoing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, 2015; Hough, 2015). When research was conducted with the general public on their views of CoSA these views were found to be generally positive (Wilson et al., 2010).

Research has identified that CoSA was associated with low sexual and violent recidivism rates when compared to offenders who do not experience CoSA with a series of Canadian studies finding reductions in recidivism of 50% or more in participants of CoSA compared with matched controls over up to 54 months of follow-up (Wilson, Cortoni & Vermani, 2008; Wilson, Cortoni & McWhinne, 2009; Wilson, Picheca & Prizo, 2005, 2007). In the UK reconviction and reoffending rates were lower for sex offenders involved in CoSA as opposed to those not receiving CoSA (Bates et al., 2007; Bates et al., 2012; Bates et al., 2013; Circles South East, 2012; Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014). It must be stated that these studies are matched samples or CoSA only studies as there has been no Randomised Control Trail (RCT) of CoSA in the UK (Hanvey, 2011). The only CoSA RCT took place in Minnesota showing a lower reconviction rate and better community management for the CoSA cohort as opposed to the non CoSA cohort (Duwe 2012: 1).

In addition to the impact of CoSA on the Core Member we also have to consider the cost implications of the programme, whether it provides a return on investment and if the cost can be justified. Two research studies have focused on a cost-benefit analysis of CoSA and its return on investment. One in the USA estimating a benefit of $1.82 for every dollar spent (Duwe, 2012) and one in the UK demonstrating a cost-benefit ratio of £1.04 for every pound spent (Beech et al., 2012). However, there were different sets of issues with these analyses and they cannot be directly compared.

The existing research evidence base indicates that CoSA does have an impact, but the degree and impact of which is still unclear, in supporting the reintegration of sex offenders back into the community (McCartan et al., 2014); but, it is clear that CoSA parallels statutory working and is more effective than doing nothing with this group of offenders (McCartan et al., 2014). This current research project looks to build on the existing research conducted in respect to CoSA in the UK, and internationally, to examine the model's real world impact as a means of social reintegration for offenders and a vehicle for community engagement in Criminal Justice System.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

This evaluation is tied to a Social Action programme undertaken by Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) funded by the Cabinet Office. The Social Action project looked to utilise the skills and commitment of approximately 300 volunteers to work with and support 75 offenders, who are medium or high risk sex offenders (according to 'Risk Matrix 2000') the majority of which have committed serious offences against children or young people, that have been released from significant prison sentences and are under the management of Probation and /or the Police through MAPPA. This research focused on the real world impact of CoSA as a means of social reintegration for offenders and a vehicle for community engagement in the Criminal Justice System. The research addressed issues including how we get communities to engage in offender reintegration; how communities and the Criminal Justice System can work in partnership with ex-offenders; and how in this age of social and institutional change, the Big Society can operate to respond to austerity.

RESEARCH PARADIGM

This research brought together a range of data from different sources using a mixed methods approach combining case analysis, CoSA data, qualitative and quantitative research (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The research used a pragmatic research design (Robson and McCartan, 2016) based on existing and original multi-faceted datasets which are triangulated to reach a rounded and more exact outcome. This methodology is important in the context of CoSA because of the complex and multi-faceted nature of the CoSA data sets to which the researcher had access. The research will use three types of triangulation:

1) Through the range of participants involved in CoSA process i.e. Core Members, Volunteers and professionals

2) Through the methodologies used i.e. case file reviews, qualitative methodologies, and quantitative methodologies

3) The geographical spread of the sites/CoSA projects being used i.e. Circles South West, Circles South East, Circles North East and Yorkshire & Humberside CoSA.

This ensured that the evaluation was rigorous and critical, enabling us to see the social impact that the programme has, both for the individuals involved and society as a whole. In turn, meaning that the research enables us to understand the utility and impact of the circle from various standpoints, as well as allow a multi-point analysis.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research used a mixed methods approach to bring together a range of data from a range of different sources and utilised a number of different methodologies, the reason for doing this is to develop a multi-faceted data set that is reliable and valid in light of the complexity of CoSA.

Study 1: Understanding and analysing the Core Members within the Circle

This study is based on the data collected from the 75 Core Members who are involved in the social action fund project, noting that not all the Core Members will have complete data on each dataset, from a number of different sources, including;

- o Core Member demographics: This is an excel spreadsheet completed at the start and end of a circle as per normal (appendix 3).

- o Original DRR with volunteers: The volunteers filled out a DRR (Dynamic Risk Review – this is a quantitative and Qualitative risk assessment tool, a copy can be supplied if the ethics board wish to see it) 3 times per year as per normal (Appendix 1)

- o Adapted DRR with Core Member: The Core Member completed an adapted DRR (Dynamic Risk Review – this is a quantitative and Qualitative risk assessment tool, a copy can be supplied if the ethics board wish to see it) with the co-ordinator themselves three times a year, at the same time as the one the volunteers complete with the coordinator. This was to involve the "service user" in the process getting them to think about/reflect upon their experiences as well as progress. The original and adapted DRRs compared to measure the Core Members perceived progress. The CM DRR shared with the volunteers. (Appendix 2)

- o End of Circle Report: This is a document that is completed at the end of a circle.

All of this data was collected by the four CoSA projects as a matter of course through the running of a normal circle with the exception of the adapted DRRs. The research team has been permitted access to all of this data by Circles UK and each of the four regional projects involved. The researcher also conducted a number of site visits to collect data and examine their data storage techniques.

The data was collated separately and then placed onto a case study review template and placed onto to a single SPSS database (the format of both have been developed by McCartan & Kemshall, McCartan et al., 2014).

Study 2: Understanding and analysing the Volunteers within the Circle

This study is based on the data collected from volunteers (n=62) through the use of an on-line questionnaire comprising a series of Likert scales, demographic questions, nominal questions and qualitative short answer questions (Appendix 4). These questionnaires were distributed via Qualtrics and then analysed via SPSS.

Study 3: Understanding and analysing the impact of the circle on Core Member integration

This study is based on the data collected from a series of in-depth follow-up qualitative interviews with a cross section of all three participant pools (44 interviews - 19 Core Members; 15 stakeholders; 10 volunteers) (Appendix 5); a lot of the volunteer and Core Member participants will have taken part in study 1 and study 2. The interviews were transcribed and interrupted through thematic analysis.

Drawing the 3 studies together

All of this data combined illuminated the experience of being in a circle and worked towards, collectively, identifying the circles pro-social impact upon the Core Member by demonstrating 'soft' data results such as achievements in securing stable accommodation, employment, pro-social activities, improved health and 'dependencies' history. This approach meets the NESTA guidelines as it shows the impact of CoSA on an individual, community, local, regional and national level and building on the organisation's previous internal and external evaluations. The research also will highlight Core Member change through the case studies which charts their progress throughout the circle.

In addition, this research was cost effective given that it will analysed data already being collated by each circles project (case file data), was conducted at distance (on-line questionnaire and telephone interviews) which reduced researcher travel (only for a site visit and in-depth qualitative interviews). It is important to note that by the end of the research period only 29 of the 75 Core Members involved in the social action funding have completed their circle because of logistic reasons and not as a result of the failure of a serious failure within the remaining 46 circles[1]. The research was therefore based on the Core Member data from 29 complete data sets.

SAMPLING

The participants were obtained through a series of discussions with the relevant Circles projects and National Offender Management Service (NOMS). All participants were interviewed by the same person, have the same consent form (Appendix 6) and treated the same. Circles of Support and Accountability did not, and will not, have access to any of the UWE developed tools (on-line questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews).

Sampling Core Members

Each CoSA project involved in the study will nominated a number of Core Members for interview from the specified 75 circles. The researcher then randomly selected 20 participants (5 from each project) to interview with the remaining recommendations being reserves in case of emergencies/problems.

Sampling Practitioners

The researcher talked with each CoSA project to identify the key stakeholders that they work with and with NOMS to identify their regional leads on sex offender treatment/management. From this combined list a series of names were short-listed and then contacted for an interview.

Sampling Volunteers

All the volunteers working on the 75 specified circles (350 volunteers in total - Appendix 3) were contacted and asked to complete the on-line questionnaire; a cross section of these were then contacted to take part in the interview.

---

[1] The remaining 46 circles projects are still ongoing at the time of writing.

SAFEGUARDING & ETHICS

The research project obtained NOMs (Appendix 7) and UWE (appendix 8) ethical permission as well as approval from the Circles UK Research and Evaluation committee. The research project adhered to the ESRC (2015), British Society of Criminology (2015) and British Psychological Society (2010) ethical guidelines.

The researcher team did not ask any of the Core Members, volunteers or practitioners about their experiences of sexual violence or their personal history, it was made clear that the research is purely about the role of Circles of Support and Accountability has in sex offender reintegration. The participants were all involved in Circles of Support and Accountability in some capacity at the time of the research (i.e., as a referrer, stakeholder, Core Member or Volunteer) and therefore understood the role and responsibilities of the organisation. The sensitive nature of the material covered, may have an impact on all participants and may trigger emotional reactions as well as embarrassment and stress. The researcher provided consent forms, briefing materials and then (where appropriate) briefed the participants in person. All the participants were assured that there were no judgements made about their responses and that all data will remain confidential with the researcher, not Circles UK, only having access. The researcher also ensured that contact details of relevant specialist services are available both in writing and verbally; all participants were given a copy.

Participants, in the quantitative and qualitative portions of the research, had to sign a consent form prior to the start of the research stating, among other things, that they may withdraw from the study at any time prior to the evaluation of the data and this reiterated verbally at the start of the session. In addition, the researcher also took time at the start of the interviews to ensure that the participants understood the implications of making a disclosure and the duty to pass that information on.

DATA PROTECTION

All computers used in the research were password protected. When, not in use, the recording device was stored in a locked filing cabinet in a locked staff office on the Frenchay campus. Only the researcher had access to the data either in the form of recordings or transcripts. No data was, or will be, taken off campus. Upon the completion of the research and the publication of the report, all data relating to the project will be destroyed securely in confidential waste. The memory stick will be wiped or destroyed at the end of the project. The audio recordings of the interviews will be erased once the project has been finalised.

DATA ANALYSIS

The research is used a mixed methods approach so that it could look at the process and impact of CoSA on sex offender reintegration from multi-perspectives to obtain the best understanding of it; this means that there are multiple methodologies and data analysis techniques being used. The research will analysis each piece of data in the way that is most appropriate for it, using thematic analysis with qualitative data sources and numeric analysis for quantitative data sources, which means that we can see what the different data sources are telling us in their own right and how they are building on each other (Robson and McCartan, 2016). As there is different data sources being used in the evaluation it is important to recognise that not all of these will be of the same size and scope, therefore meaning that the results, as well as analysis, have to be considered within their own contexts.

CHALLENGES AND REFLECTIONS

Circles UK and the four Circles projects (Circles South West; Circles North East; Circles South East; Yorkshire & Humber Circles) were all very forthcoming coming in supporting the research, in giving the researcher access to their datasets, Core Members, Volunteers and Stakeholders; which made parts of the research very straightforward and enabled us to sample effectively. The research team received all the databases in a timely and complete manner. Across the life of the research project there were ongoing issues in getting projects to complete and return all of the adapted DRR's which resulted in a smaller sample than anticipated; this had been discussed with Circles UK at various points during the research process.

In respect to sampling and interviewing participants, we agreed early in the project that some of these interviews could be done over the phone or via skype given the geographic spread of the research area and the limited funding attached to the project. We did not have issues obtaining Core Members to interview, we achieved a robust sample from them; however, obtaining volunteers and stakeholders was more of a challenge given their busy schedules and other commitments. The researcher contacted the Volunteers on several occasions regarding the research, both in terms of the on-line questionnaire (we reached out on five occasions to over 350 volunteers and this only resulted in 62 volunteers completing the questionnaires) and semi-structured interviews (10 volunteers out of the 30 we approached), with limited responses. The researcher then returned to the four CoSA projects asking for new names at different points in the cycle where and when appropriate. This means we have a snapshot of volunteer information from across all four circles projects.

In terms of stakeholders we asked for a list of stakeholders (40 in total) from all four circles projects on 5 occasions across the life of the research project. A lot of these stakeholders agreed to be interviewed initially but then could either not be tied down to a date or dropped out of the research. We have stakeholders from three out of the four projects as we could not obtain participants from one area; which means that the stakeholder sample does not reflect the full research area.

Overall, the project came together well and the researcher had a good interaction with the participants and circles projects, but in retrospect, we could have approached the adapted DRR's and volunteer on-line questionnaire in a different fashion (for instance, we could have had a shared research repository on-line where material could have been placed and checked by each circles project, Circles UK and the research team).

Key findings of the research

This section will discuss the main findings of the research project, it will discuss each part of the project separately and the draw the three parts together to discuss the overarching results and how they link to the previous literature as well as research objectives.

STUDY 1: UNDERSTANDING AND ANALYSING THE CORE MEMBERS WITHIN THE CIRCLE

The research study focused on 75 Core Members spread across 4 circles projects, this section will discuss the quantitative and qualitative data collected directly about the 75 Core Members from a range of sources including the referring organisation, the Core Member and the volunteers;

- The Core Member databases collected and maintained by the 4 Circles projects.
- Adapted DRR with Core Member
- Original DRR with Volunteers

CORE MEMBER DATABASES

When a new circle starts the co-ordinator collates the socio-demographic material of each Core Member, it is important to state that there is missing data within the database which can come about as a result of the Core Member referring organisation not giving information, inconsistent recording practices and/or only recording given information (i.e., that no data is not missing data, but rather not completed data). Hence, the data presented in this section is based upon the data that the researcher received and as such is not 100% complete for each section. In terms of Core Member data at circle commencement;

- All 75 Core Members are male, none are female and although some projects (i.e., Circles South East) do have female Core Members we thought it was better, for comparison and validity, to exclude them from this research.

- The Core Members range from 21 – 72 years of age.

- All 75 Core Members were White British.

- The majority of Core Members self-identified as heterosexual (55 Core Members), with less identifying as gay (11 Core Members), bisexual (3 Core Members) and some declining to say (5 Core Members).

- Just under a third of Core Members identified as having a disability (18 Core Members) which included cognitive impairments, dyslexia, physical impairments and Asperger's Syndrome; however, none were registered disabled.

- In terms of offences it is important to note that Core Members may have committed a number of offences and this data is representative of the types of offences committed and the number of Core Members that have committed them, including, rape of an adult female (4 Core Members), rape of a child female (7 Core Members), rape of a child male (2 Core Members), sexual assault of a adult female (7 Core Members), sexual assault of a adult male (3 Core Members), sexual assault of an child female (28 Core Members), sexual assault of an child male (11 Core Members), incest (1 Core Member), Abduction of a child (1 Core Members), indecent exposure (4 Core Members), voyeurism (1 Core Members), internet offences (27 Core Members), possession of child sexual abuse imagery (28 Core Members) and other offences (including, attempting to meet a child; sexual grooming; breach of SOPO; failure to comply with registration; making and distributing child exploitation material; sexual activity with a child) (19 Core Members).

- Over half the Core Members (39) on license when referred to the circle and 49 Core Members had a Sex Offender Prevention Order, community order (12 Core Members), prison sentence less than 1 year (2 Core Members), prison sentence 1-3 years (20 Core Members), prison sentence 6-9 years (7 Core Members), prison sentence 4-5 years (8 Core Members), prison sentence 10+ years (1 Core Member), suspended sentence order (11 Core Members) and indeterminate sentence (including IPP and life) (11 Core Members).

- The total number of offences committed by a Core Member range from 1 – 52 and the total number of convictions per Core Member range from 1 – 30.

- Prison sex offender programme (29 Core Members completed programmes while in prison, whereas 1 Core Member had started a programme in prison but had not completed by time

of release), community sex offender programme (21 Core Members complete and 21 Core Members were still completing) and therapeutic community (2 Core Members),

- In terms of the community management of the 75 Core Members, 57 are MAPPA level 1, 12 are MAPPA level 2 and 4 are MAPPA Level 3.

- In terms of the 75 Core Members Risk Matrix 2000 scores identified are 12 very high, 28 high, 21 medium and 10 low.

- In respect to the 75 Core Members OAsys score Risk of Harm General Public are 2 very high, 12 high, 14 medium and 42 low; Risk of Harm Children are 4 very high, 40 high, 21 medium and 6 low; Risk of Harm Professional Staff are none at very high or high, with 2 medium and 69 low; Risk of Harm Known Adult are 1 very high, 4 high, 9 medium and 56 low.

- The majority of Core Members were referred from probation (64 Core Members) with less being referred by the police (10 Core Members).

- A minority of Core Members, 3, were in a relationship.

- The majority of Core Members were unemployed (53 Core Members) or retired (5 Core Members), some had part-time jobs (7 Core Members) or volunteered (2 Core Members) and only 3 Core Members were in full-time employment.

- Core Members lived in a broad range of accommodation including on their own (38 Core Members), in approved premises (14 Core Members), in a hostel (1 Core Member), with others (3 Core Members) or with another family member (11 Core Members).

- Core Members also had additional stressors including issues with Mental Health (19 Core Members), benefits (64 Core Members), debt (12 Core Members), drugs (5 Core Members), alcohol (17 Core Members) and lack of family contact (23 Core Members).

As of the 30th of November 2015, 29 of the 75 circles had been completed,

- 19 circles had reached their planned ending with 10 circles having an unplanned ending

- 1 Core Member was still in a community sex offender treatment programme, 3 Core Members were in a substance abuse treatment, 1 Core Member was receiving medication and oversight for mental health issues

- 6 Core Members were in a relationship.

- 2 full-time employment, 1 a student, 2 retired, 1 voluntary and 11 unemployed

- Core Members discussed their living arrangement, including living on their own (19 Core Members), prison (1 Core Member), in a hostel (2 Core Member), with others (1 Core Members), other institution (2 Core Members) or with another family member (3 Core Members).

- Core Members also had additional stressors including issues with Mental Health (5 Core Members), benefits (22 Core Members), debt (3 Core Members), drugs (1 Core Members), alcohol (6 Core Members) and lack of family contact (7 Core Members).

- Criminological outcomes: 5 Core Members were arrested for indecent images, breaching SOPO, breach of license, sexual assault and possession of a weapon. Of these 4 were convicted and one had a court appearance. An addition 6th Core Member was convicted of a previous offence.

- Of the 10 unplanned circle ending 4 Core Members were recalled (one committed a new sexual assault offence, one was caught sending inappropriate photos, one absconded, and one failed to notify about a new relationship) and reasons for the end of the other 6 circles are not recorded.

In terms of the differences across the life of the circle;

- 6 Core Members experienced a transition in employment, this was positive for 5 Core Members (with 1 moving from part-time to full-time, another moving from part-time to full-time education, 2 moving from unemployment to full-time employment, one moving from unemployment to voluntary work) and negative for one (moving from volunteering to unemployment)

- 12 Core Members experienced a change in accommodation during the life of the circle, with 5 moving from approved premises or a similar institution to their own premises, 2 moving from approved premises or a similar institution to living with family, 1 moving from living with family to living by themselves and 1 from approved premises to a hostel; whereas 1 moved from approved premises back to prison, another from living with family to an approved premises and another from their own premises back to approved premises.

- 3 Core Members started a relationship during the life of the circle; 3 Core Members came off benefits; 2 Core Members resolved their debts and 1 gained new debts; 3 Core Members restarted communications with their family; 6 Core Members resolved and managed their mental health issues, whereas 2 developed mental health issues; 2 Core Members resolved their problems with alcohol, whereas one developed alcohol related issues; & 1 Core Member resolved their problems with drugs,

- Of the 19 circles had reached their planned ending, 3 Core Members were arrested (indecent images; offensive weapon; breach of SOPO)

- 10 circles having an unplanned ending 2 Core Members were arrested (sexual assault; breach of licence) with another being recalled after absconding

Conclusions

The data indicates that, reflecting previous circles research nationally (McCartan et al. 2014; Circles South East, 2012; Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014; Hanvey, 2011), that in the main CoSA deal with male sexual offenders who are medium to high risk. These Core Members have committed offences against children, adult women and download child sexual abuse imagery (Circles South East, 2012; Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014; Hanvey, 2011). Interestingly, it seems that CoSA provide a service for individuals, possibly because of their risk status, who may not have access to treatment or support through other means which reinforces the role that Circles plays in paralleling, but not replicating, statutory supervision (McCartan et al., 2014).

DRR (DYNAMIC RISK REVIEWS)

The DRR is a conversation between the circles coordinator and the volunteers carried out three times during phase one of the circles, normally at three-month intervals. The form itself allows for the capture of qualitative and quantitative data relating to the Core Member, their current standing and their change over the course of the circle. Some preliminary research on the DRR has already been done showing some promising outcomes (Bates & Wager, 2012). In addition to the traditional DRR with the coordinator and the volunteers we decided to adapt the DRR process into a semi-structured interview with the co-ordinator and the Core Member. The aim of this was to capture the Core Members voice in a more systematic and comparable way. The two DRR processes happened in relative parallel with the coordinator being involved in the two related DRR sessions at approximately the same time.

DRR's completed between the volunteers & the Co-ordinators

The collection of the DRR's was not complete and comprehensive across all 75 Core Members, with some having not completed their circle and therefore not having a complete set and others only having two and not three. At the end of data collection, we had complete sets of DRR data, a minimum of three DRR's across the life of the circle, for 27 Core Members which what we have based the following analysis on[2].

Figure 2: Completed DRR's across the life of the Evaluation

---
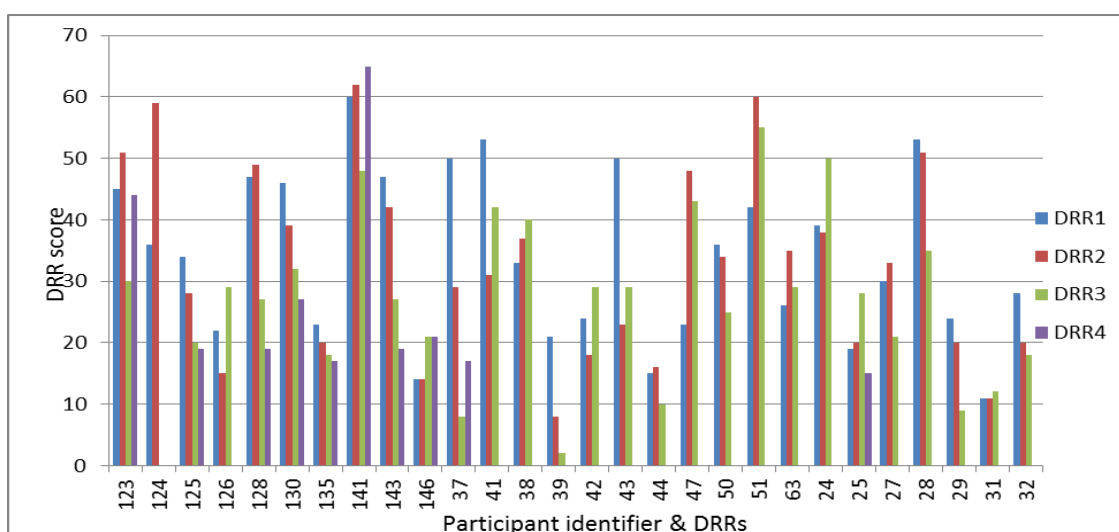
[2] Please note that for the purpose of this report and analysis the researcher, in conversation with Circles UK, has defined the outcomes of the DRR as being – High risk = 50+ ; medium risk = 30-50 ; low risk below 30.

In line with the data collated by circles in the Core Member database, as well as previous research (Circles South East 2012; Wager and Bates, 2012), the DRR data indicates that the majority of Core Members start at a low to medium risk level (i.e., the higher the score on the DRR the high the risk that the Core Member poses). Upon examination of the DRR data, we can see that for the vast majority of these Core Members risk fluctuates across the life of the circle with the majority having a lower risk at the end of the circle as opposed to the start and only 4 having a higher risk level at the end. This indicates that the circle is assisting in helping the Core Members to reduce their level of risk and assisting with their desistence from offending. Interestingly, at some point during the circle a large minority (N = 12) of Core Members had their risk levels increase before falling again, this finding replicates other research completed on the DRR (Bates & Wager, 2012).

Figure 3: Participant 128's total DRR scores
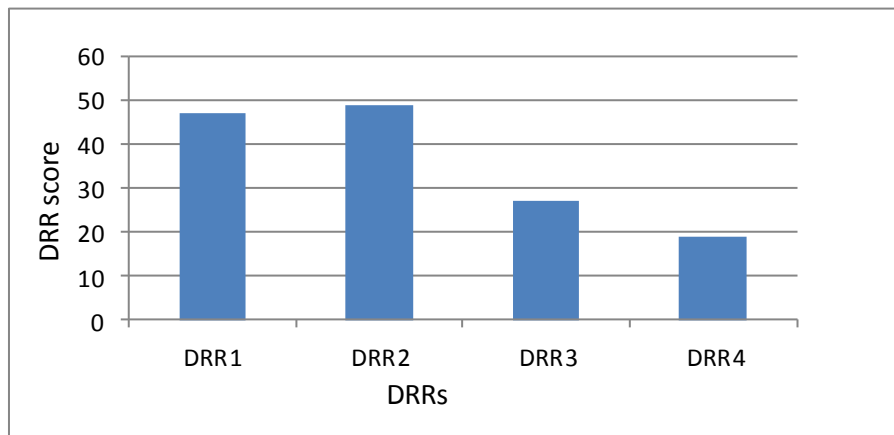
Case Study 1: Participant 128, as we can see from figure 3, started their Circle with a medium risk score which increased slightly in the 2nd quarter of the circle before falling across the remainder of the circle to a point well below their initial risk score and being considered low risk. Examining the individual scores for the Core Member we can see, based on the DRR data, that over the course of the circle they struggle less with their sexual thoughts (Question 1), they struggle less with emotional loneliness (Question 6) and increase their self-esteem (Question 14). However, the Core Member struggles with some things across the life of the circle, including, they struggle to develop new relationships (Question 8), fail to develop new prevention strategies (Question 13), and continue to have poor problem-solving skills (Question 12).

Figure 4: Participant 128's individual DRR scores per question, per DRR
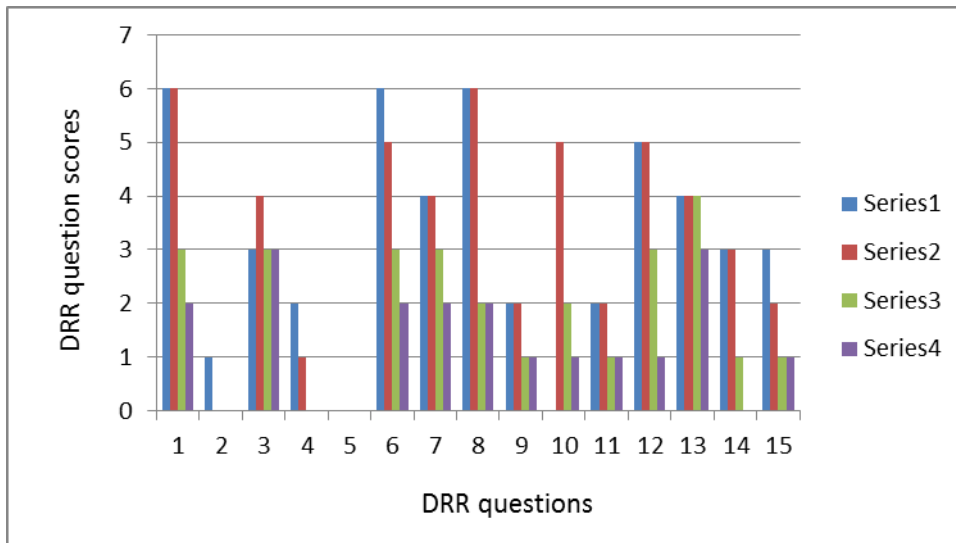

```
SEXUAL THOUGHTS


DRR 1 – "CM fully acknowledges this – says his SOPO helps him to not reoffend"

DRR 3 – "The volunteers have noticed a significant reduction in the CM's report of problematic sexual

thoughts. He has secured employment in a more senior role and reports he is socialising more which

has resulted in him being less preoccupied with sex."


PREVENTION STRAGIES


DRR 1 – "CM appears to be completely reliant on avoidant strategies to manage his risk"

DRR 3 – "No change – still seems reliant on avoidant strategies.
```

Case Study 2: Participant 141, as we can see from figure 5, started their circle with a high-risk score which was maintained in the second quarter, dropped in the third quarter (to a medium risk score) before rising again during the fourth quarter to be at a higher point than their initial risk score. Examining the individual scores for the Core Member we can see that over the course of the circle, based on the DRR data, they struggle with their sexual thoughts (Question 1), inappropriateness about sexual matters (Question 2) and negative attitudes towards women (Question 4) until the final DRR where they all increase. In other areas, including, volume of emotional relationships outside of the circle (8), problem solving (Question 12), developing release prevention strategies (Question 13)

and developing appropriate hobbies (Question 15) this Core Member seems to makes no real progress.

Figure 5: Participant 141's total DRR scores
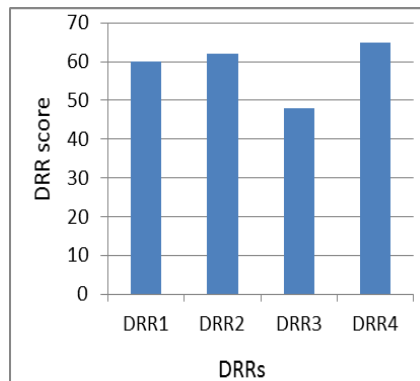
Figure 6: Participant 141's individual DRR scores per question, per DRR
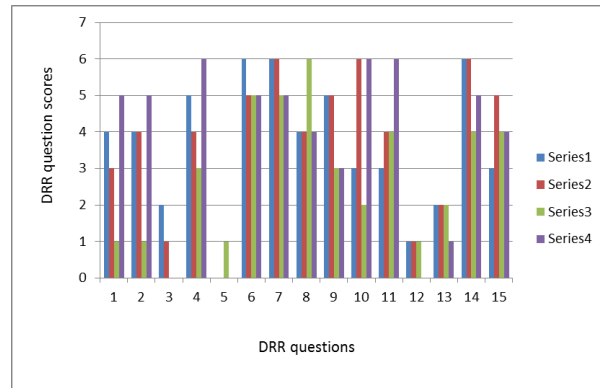
RELAPSE PREVENTION

DRR 1 – "Has not done Better Lives RP yet, (starts end of September) just uses avoidance strategies, as in the example of the school girls he was staring at in town."

DRR 2 – "Just uses avoidance, thinks he can manage and will not re-offend."

DRR 3 – "No, last week we discussed having internal controls in place to manage the temptation of downloading pornography, 3 days later he had. Police have put software on his phone to monitor, so it is almost like he has to have external controls in place."

Case Study 3: Participant 126, as we can see from figure 7, started their circle with a low-risk score which was dropped in the second quarter, but rose in the third quarter to be at a slightly higher point than their initial risk score; which resulted in them completing their circle in the medium risk category instead of the low risk one. Examining the individual scores for the Core Member, based on the DRR data, we can see that over the course of the circle they do not seem to struggle with problematic sexual thoughts (Question 1), inappropriate sexualised talk (Question 2), and sexualised attitudes to children (Question 3). However, they develop increasing negative attitudes towards women (Question 4), low self-esteem (Question 14), emotional loneliness (Question 6), reckless behaviour (Question 10), hostile outbursts (Question 11) and they have issues with relapse prevention (Question 13), developing appropriate hobbies (Question 15) and problem solving (Question 12).

Figure 7: Participant 126's total DRR scores
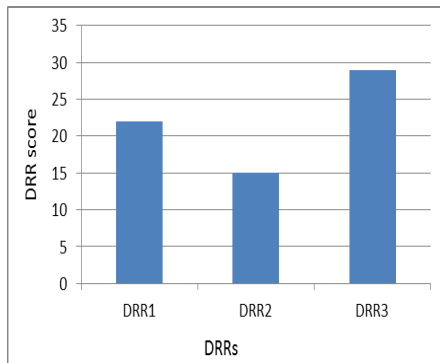
Figure 8: Participant 126's individual DRR scores per question, per DRR
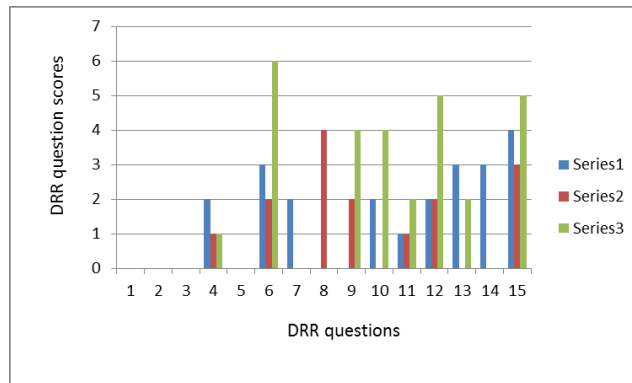
Conclusions

The research findings reflect previous work done on the DRR (Bates and Wager, 2012) indicating that across the life of the circle there is fluctuation in the Core Members risk but that, in the main, the Core Member exits the circle at lower risk level than they entered it. These findings also reflect previous research stating that the Core Member becomes more social, emotional and personal adaptive as a result of the circle (Wilson 2007; Cesaroni, 2001; Wilson et al.,2007a; Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014; McCartan et al., 2014), but that not all Core Members have increased social engagement as a consequence (McCartan et al., 2014).

DRR's completed between the Core Members & the Co-ordinators

The adapted DRR between the Core Member and the coordinator was a new approach piloted during this piece of research to try and better understand the "service user" voice. Within Circles, but also across the UK Criminal Justice System, the sex offender "service user" voice has not always been as present or as clearly defined as it could; especially in relation to other offender "service user" voices. The research wanted to capture what the Core Members had to say about their experience within the circle and then see how this related to the volunteer and coordinator voice; so did Core Members place themselves in the same psychological, emotional and offence position that the volunteers did?

To do this we developed a semi-structured interview schedule (see appendix 2) which is based upon and parallel to the DRR (appendix 2). Throughout the course of the research it was recommended that the coordinator did this adapted DRR with the Core Member at the same time that the

26

coordinator and volunteers were doing the actual DRR's about the Core Member. DRR interviews completed with 33 Core Members and their coordinators with 3 Core Members having complete sets of 3 adapted DRR's (i.e., that is all having all three adapted DRR's completed) and 11 Core Members having semi-completed sets of adapted DRR's (i.e., having at least 2 adapted DRR's done); the results of which are below (figure 15).

The higher the score on the adapted DRR (as with the original DRR and scored in the same fashion) more at risk the Core Members think they are. The vast majority of these 14 Core Members place themselves in the low risk category throughout the circle, with only two Core Members considering themselves medium risk at a single point during the circle, and all Core Members perceiving themselves to be a lower risk at the end of the circle as opposed to the start; which reinforces the DRR data and previous circles research (Bates and Wager, 2012; Circles South East, 2012).

Figure 9: Completed adapted DRR's across the life of the Evaluation
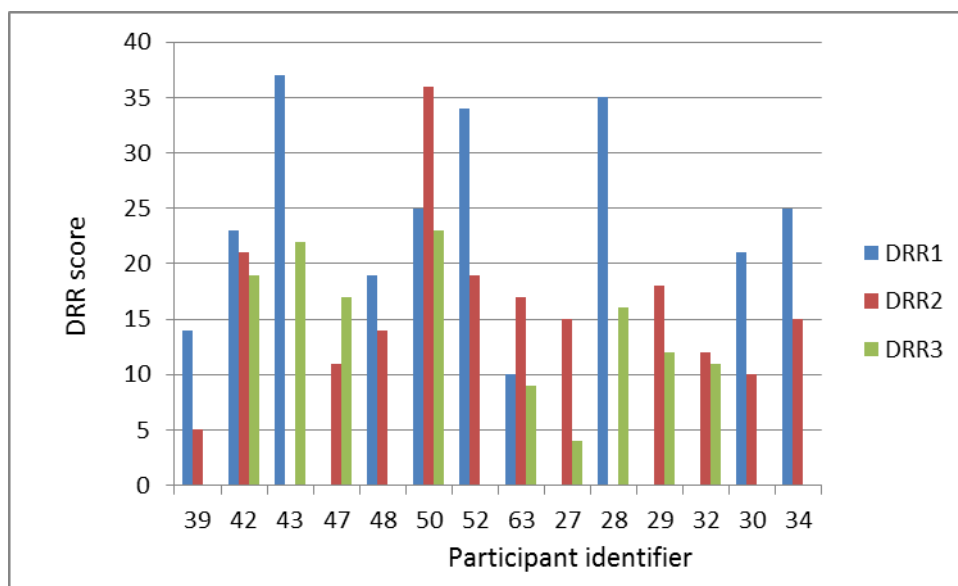
Figure 10: Participant 50's total adapted DRR scores
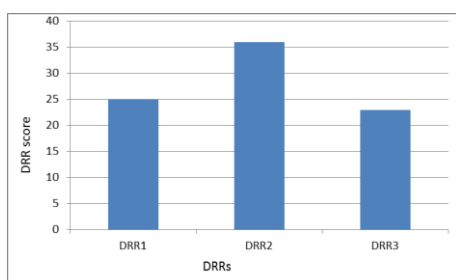
Case Study 1: Participant 50, as we can see from figure 10, perceived themselves to be at a low risk at the start of their circle which increased to medium risk during the life of the circle and returned to being low risk, below their original risk score, by the end of the circle. Examining the individual scores for the Core Member we can see, based on the adapted DRR data, that over the course of the circle their ability to manage their sexual behaviour (Question 1),

capacity to share feeling with others (Question 2) decreased; but interestingly the Core Members problematic sexual behaviours change radically in the last DRR. In respect to the other questions, the Core Member fluctuates throughout the circle except for their self-esteem, which vastly improved at the end (Question 4).

Figure 11: Participant 50's individual adapted DRR scores per question, per adapted DRR
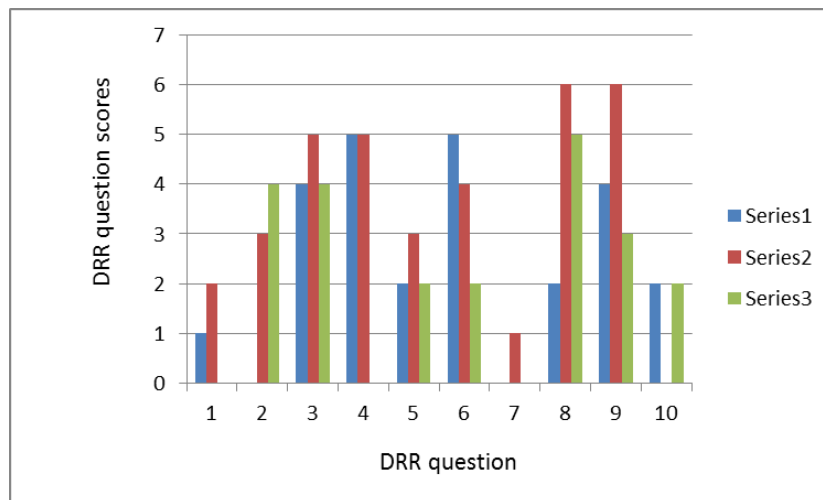
SEXUAL THOUGHTS

DRR 1 – *"CM reports feeling that he's coping well with fewer sexual thoughts as he is aging. He reports using adult gay pornography and self-talk, reminding himself that 'this is wrong' and walking away if he finds himself looking at young boys."*
DRR 3 – *"CM feels that his sexual urges have reduced to almost nil."*

SELF-ESTEEM

DRR 1 – *"CM spoke of very slight improvement but generally sense of self-worth is quite low."*
DRR 2 – *"CM remains focussed on low self-esteem as he feels that he has failed and screwed his life up because of his past (childhood and offending). He says he cannot see a positive future."*
DRR 3 – *"CM reports feeling better about himself – better able to motivate himself and says that his self-care has improved and acknowledges that this is a big, positive change for him."*

Figure 12: Participant 63's total adapted DRR scores
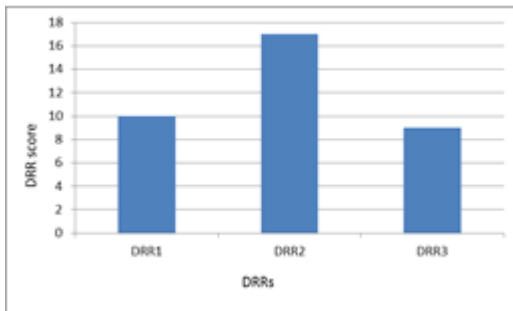
Case Study 2: Participant 63, as we can see from figure 12, perceived themselves to be at a low-risk at the start of their circle which fluctuates across the life of the circle, first increasing and then decreasing, to rest at a point below their original risk score. Examining the individual scores for the Core Member we can see, based on the adapted DRR data, that all the Core Members scores increase during the circle returning to a low-risk level by the 3 DRR.

Figure 13: Participant 63's individual adapted DRR scores per question, per adapted DRR
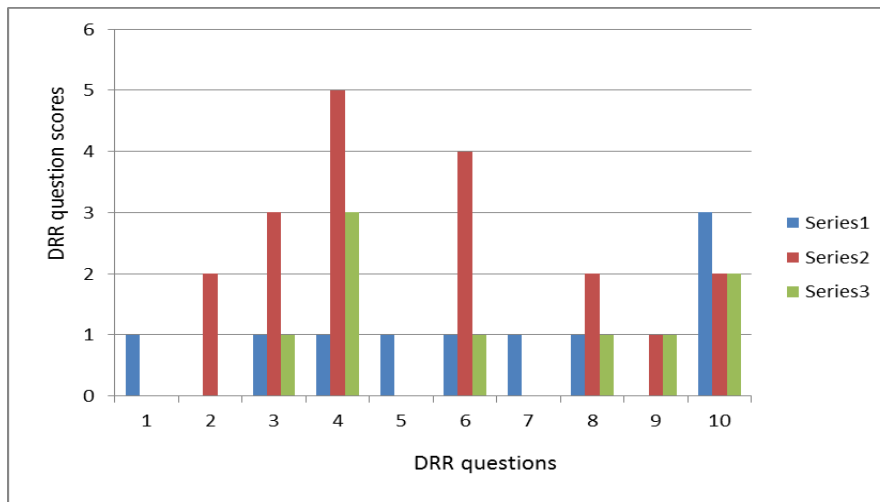
SELF WORTH/SELF ESTEEM

DRR 1 – *"I feel much better. I am off anti-depressants and feel more alive and alert. Gardening has also really helped"*

DRR 2 – *"I am feeling low again. I have a new Police PPO and had to go through all my offending again. I feel like I will never be able to put my past behind me. I am back on anti-depressants"*

DRR 3 – *"I am feeling OK but know that I go up and down. I go to a new church now and have got a new AA group so at the moment, I feel OK"*

29

Figure 14: Participant 42's total adapted DRR scores
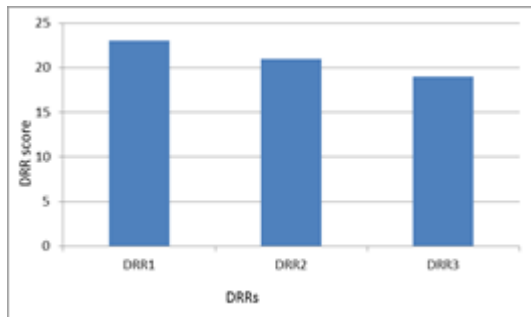
Case Study 3: Participant 42, as we can see from figure 14, started their Circle with a low-risk score which steadily decreased over the life of their circle to end at a point below their initial risk score. Examining the individual scores for the Core Member we can see, based on the adapted DRR data, that over the course of the circle they remain relevantly stable with a few fluctuations, but not many, with a couple of exceptions (relationships (question 3), ability to make decisions (Question 5) and engaging in hobbies (Question 8) whenever there is an increase in perceived risk this always reduces.

Figure 15: Participant 42's individual adapted DRR scores per question, per adapted DRR
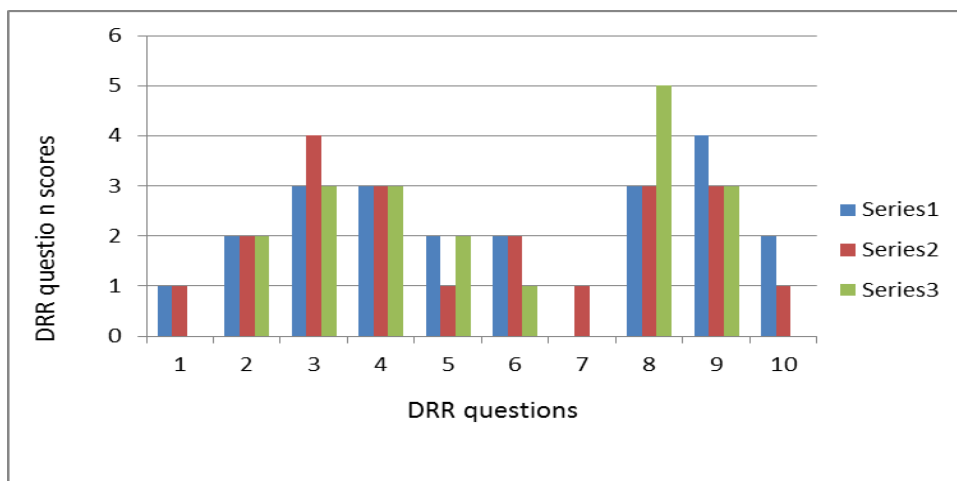
EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

DRR 1 – *"Maintaining good relationship with family and developing relationship with respect to the rambling club whose meeting he recently attended, e.g. met and chatted with strangers (he thought maybe 10-12 people). CM reports developing good relationships with Circle."*

DRR 2 – *"No significant relationships developing outside the Circle though CM is now able to have superficial conversations with people he meets occasionally (in the pub)."*

> **DRR 3** – *"Still a bit stuck in terms of developing new relationships'. CM has developed strong relationships with Circle volunteers and said that the relationship with his father and sister has improved."*
>
> **DECISION MAKING**
>
> **DRR 1** – *"CM making careful decision in relation to spending time outside his flat, e.g. xxxx club and looking for appropriate employment. Though he says that his decision making has not necessarily changed as he has always been quite cautious."*
> **DRR 2** – *"CM says he has always been quite careful in making decisions, e.g. not being around a school at 'going home' times and says he doesn't go out at weekends as the town is busy with people drinking and he doesn't feel safe in that environment."*
> **DRR 3** –*"No change from previously when CM was making decisions to avoid being around children/younger women."*

Conclusions

The research findings reflect previous circles research indicating that the Core Members struggle with social situations, loneliness, self-esteem issues and relationships (Wilson 2007; Cesaroni 2001; Wilson et al., 2007a; Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014; McCartan et al., 2014); this research suggests that the circle may help with this as Core Members community engagement, based on a case by case basis, can improve throughout the life of the circle. Interestingly the current research gives the impression that Core Members self-perceptions of their progress across the life of the circle is different to that of the volunteers perceptions of their progress; this could be as a result of a number of issues including, self-esteem, confidence, dealing with their sexual behaviour, society's perceptions of them and their capability to feel truly reintegrated.

Comparing the adapted DRR and original DRR

We were able to compare the 3 sets of DRR data, adapted and original, for three Core Members (participant 42, 50 and 63) out of the 29 complete data sets. It must be noted that this sample is not big enough to prove significance or make attributions, which shows some general relationships between the volunteers and Core Members in respect to where the Core Members were at.

Figure 16: Comparing completed DRR'S and adapted DRR's across the life of the Evaluation for the same participants
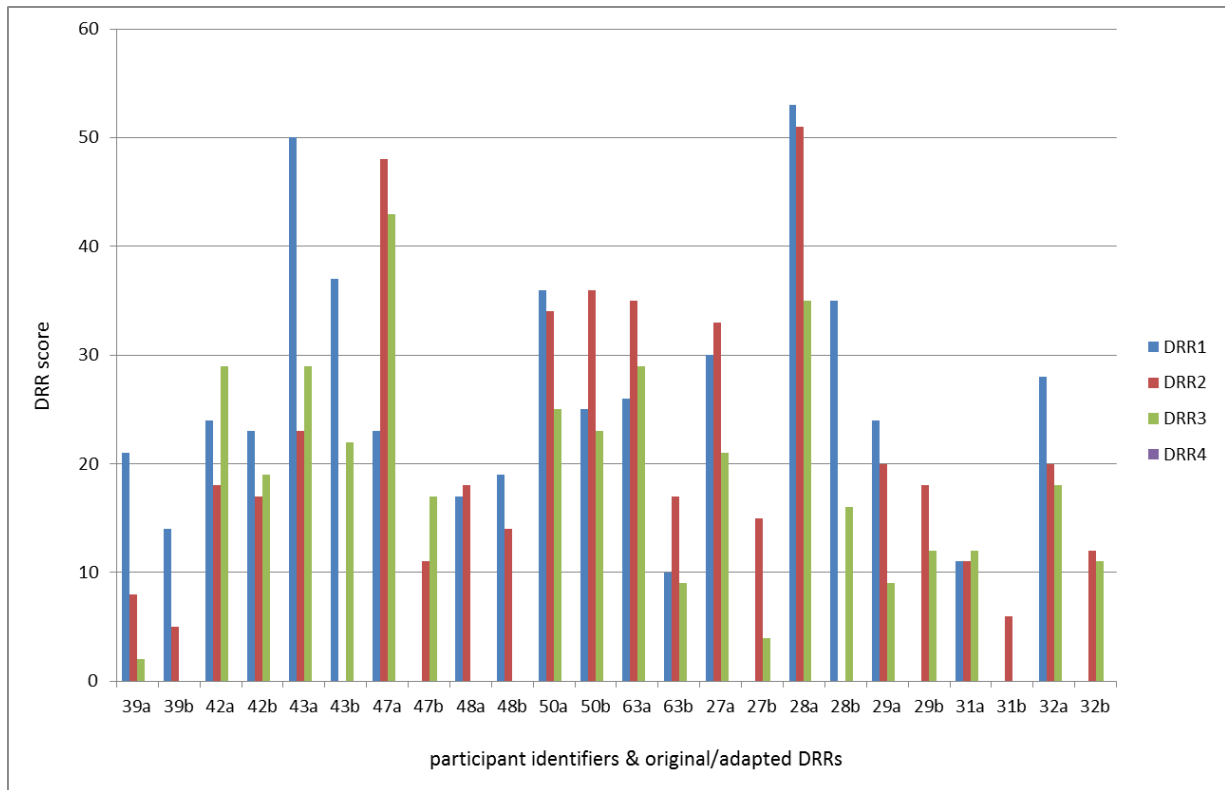
In the main, the majority of Core Members and volunteers agreed that the Core Members risk had reduced by the end of the circle; however, there was not always a direct agreement between the two participant groups about the Core Member's risk level at any given time during the lifetime of the circle.

Figure 17: Participant 42's total DRR and adapted DRR scores
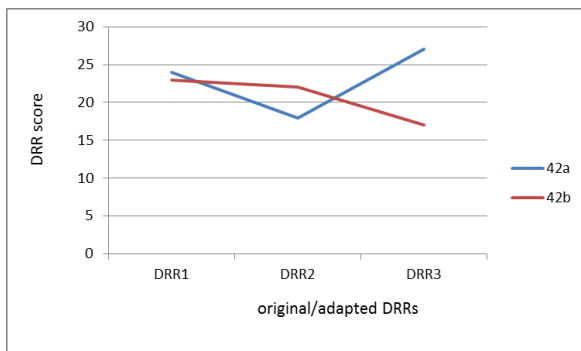
Case Study 1: Participant 42 and their volunteers agree that this Core Member starts the Circle of at the same level of risk; however, as the circle progresses the Core Member believes that their risk is steadily reducing but the volunteers believe that the Core Members risk initially reduces is reduces but that towards the end of the circle it increases again. The circle ends with the Core Member and volunteers having very different perceptions of the Core Member's risk.

It must be noted that the volunteers and Core Member at all points in this circle perceive the Core Member to be of low risk.

SELF-WORTH/SELF-ESTEEM

Core Member (DRR 3): "*CM feels that his self-esteem fluctuates. E.g. he is comfortable at home with his parents and family but when alone in XXXXXX he can feel less able to cope.*"

Volunteer (DRR 3): "*In terms of Circle relationships he remains highly self-deprecating. He struggles to understand why anyone would like him or want to spend time with him. He is too terrified to try and make new contacts.*"

Figure 18: Participant 50's total DRR and adapted DRR scores
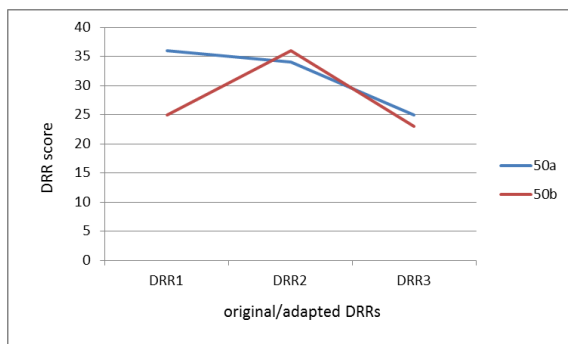
Case Study 2: Participant 50 and their volunteers believe that this Core Member starts the circle at different levels of risk, with the volunteers perceiving them to be medium risk and the Core Member believing that they are low risk. As the circle continues the volunteers believes that the Core Members risk level decreases to low risk, whereas the Core Member thinks that their risk increases to medium risk and then decreases back to low risk again. Interestingly by the end of the circle, the Core Member and the volunteers are in agreement about the Core Members risk level.

RELATIONSHIPS

Core Member (DRR 3): "*CM cites only his OM (Police officer) with whom he is able to share feelings. Says that he doesn't share feelings with other family members and has no intimate relationship.*"

Volunteer (DRR 3): "*CM has no emotional support from his family and finds his contacts 'draining' rather than giving him support. He has only the Circle to talk to.*"

Figure 19: Participant 63's total DRR and adapted DRR scores
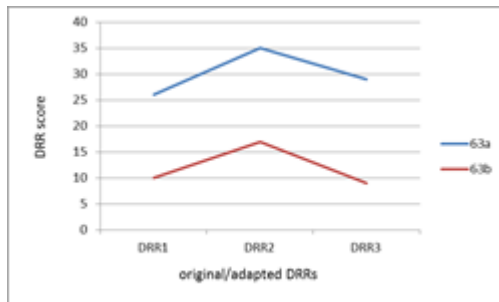
Case Study 3: Participant 63 and their volunteers are quite far apart on their estimation of this Core Members risk, but they do mirror each other with both agreeing when the Core Member peaks and troughs. The volunteers always think that the Core Member is at greater risk of reoffending than the Core Member does themselves, at one point suggesting that they are medium risk.

SEXUALISED THOUGHTS

Core Member (DRR 3): "*I remain of the view that I do not have a problem with controlling my behaviour as I am no longer attracted to children. I am looking for an adult relationship now.*"

Volunteer (DRR 3): "*Although he never discusses his offending and his sexual attraction to children, we are not convinced that he is entirely honest about his feelings as there are discrepancies in his accounts.*"

Conclusions

In comparing the two versions of the DRR we can see that the majority of Core Members and volunteers agreed that Core Members risk had reduced by the end of the circle; but interestingly, they have different perceptions of what that level of risk is at different points during the circle. This reflects previous research indicating that sex offenders can have different perceptions of their offending behaviour, sexual attitudes and risk management (Hudson, 2005).

STUDY 2: UNDERSTANDING AND ANALYSING THE VOLUNTEERS WITHIN THE CIRCLE

Out of the complete sample of 350 volunteers contracted, 62 circles volunteers responded and completed the on-line survey conducted through qualtrics. The data set shows that:

- The majority of circles volunteers were female (46 participants) as opposed to male (16 participants).

- The majority of circles volunteers were aged 22-30 (29 participants), 61 -70 (10 participants), 51-60 (8 participants), 31-40 (6 participants) 41-50 (5 participants), 70+ (3 participants) and 18-21 (1 participant).

- The majority of circles volunteers either held no faith (agnostic – 7 participants; Atheist, 22 participants) or identified as Christian (catholic – 5 participants; protestant –11 participants).

- The majority of circles volunteers were employed (full-time employment, 20 participants; part-time employment, 11 participants; self-employed, 1 participant), with less being retired (14 participants) or in full-time education (13 participants)

- The majority of circles volunteers were not parents (37 participants)

- The majority of circles volunteers were white British (58 participants) with the remaining 4 participants being white Irish, black African, Indian and mixed race.

- All four circles projects had some representation in the participant sample (Yorkshire & Humberside CoSA – 6 Participants; Circles South West – 14 participants; Circles North East – 18 participants; Circles South East - 23 participants).

- The majority of circles volunteers found out about circles on-line (25 participants), through friends or peers (7 participants), through the media (6 participants) or through word of mouth (4 participants). In addition, 19 participants found out about CoSA via alternative means including university lectures, volunteering advice/guidance points, studying/research and/or other volunteers.

- The majority of circles volunteers had been involved in CoSA for less than a year (35 participants), with slightly less having been involved for between 1 – 5 years (20 participants) and fewer still being involved for over 5 years (6 participants).

- In terms of the training that they received the majority of circles volunteers were pleased with it (54 participants said that it was appropriate or very appropriate).

- The majority of Circles Volunteers (51 participants) believed that they had a better understanding of sexual violence since being involved in CoSA.

- Circles volunteers gave a range of reasons for wanting to get involved in CoSA, these were mainly pro-social and included curiosity in respect to the offending population, preventing victimization, giving something back to their local communities and a belief that people could change.

- In terms of the impact of the circle upon the Core Member the circles volunteers felt this was positive
    o 59 participants said that circles assist Core Members reintegrate back into society.
    o 54 participants said yes and 7 participants said maybe in respect to whether circles assist Core Members to confront their offending behaviour.
    o 48 Circles volunteers said yes, 11 Circles volunteers said maybe and 1 Circles volunteer said no as to whether circles assist Core Members in reducing their reoffending.
    o 53 participants said yes, 7 participants said maybe and 1 participant said no to whether the circle assisted the Core Member to broaden their social network.
    o 55 participants said yes and 6 participants said maybe to whether the Circle assisted the Core Member to develop positive social relationships.

- The Circles Volunteers saw the main function of CoSA to support the Core Members social reintegration (38 participants), to hold the Core Member accountability in terms of (potential) future (25 participants) and past offending (14 participants), assisting in the community management of the Core Member (13 participants) and befriending them (10 participants).

- The majority of Circles Volunteers believed that being in CoSA had been a positive experience (58 participants), stating that they felt that they had helped reduce reoffending, helped turn people's lives around, gained more knowledge and broadened their own social network. Consequentially, the majority of Circles Volunteers (48 participants) would recommend CoSA to another member of the public to volunteer with based on their experience.

- The Circles volunteers were split on whether they would tell another person that they volunteered with CoSA with some saying yes (21 participants), some saying no (4 participants) and some saying sometimes (34 participants). In the main the circles volunteers said that if they were going to tell anyone they would tell partners/significant others, children, friends, and peers; but they would be hesitant because of the population in question. They stated that would not tell people because of the nature of the population and public attitudes towards them.

- The majority of the circles volunteers (41 participants) thought it would be inappropriate for them to introduce the Core Member to their friends and family.

- The majority of Circles Volunteers had previously volunteered with disadvantaged groups (32 participants) and they stated that their experience with CoSA would encourage them to volunteer with another organisation (43 participants).

Conclusions

The findings from the on-line questionnaire with the volunteers are reflective of past findings of research with circles volunteers in the UK (Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014; Bates, Williams, Wilson & Wilson, 2012; Hough, 2015). The findings demonstrate the social impact of volunteering and the pro-social attitudes of volunteers in general, but especially those that go on to work with challenging populations. Additionally, the findings indicate that while volunteers are happy to work with Core Members, they are cautious in telling other people that they work support sex offenders or introduce the Core Member to people in their lives. Which is important as it suggests that the volunteers separate out their work with circles and compartmentalise it as a protective mechanism, highlighting their own resilience processes (Hoing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, 2015; Hough, 2015);

therefore do volunteers need a different or adapted form of formal support to the type currently in place?

STUDY 3: UNDERSTANDING AND ANALYSING THE IMPACT OF THE CIRCLE ON CORE MEMBER INTEGRATION

A range of individuals involved in CoSA were interviewed as part of the research project, the aim being to triangulate the social impact of CoSA. The research interviewed 44 participants including Core Members (n=19), volunteers (n=10) and (3) stakeholders (i.e., police, probation, therapists, prison staff, etc.) (n=15) from across the four project areas. In designing the semi-structured interview schedules it was agreed that all the participants, regardless of which of the 3 groups that they come from, would be asked the exact same questions in the same way as it would allow for greater reliability, validity, and better data analysis.

There were four main themes that emerged from the interviews, consisting of (1) The perceived positive impact of CoSA; (2) the perceived role of the volunteer within the circle; (3) Responsibility, safeguarding and the role of the circle; & (4) Support vs Accountability or Support & Accountability.

1. *The perceived positive impact of CoSA*

All participants, especially the Core Members and stakeholders, discussed the positive impact of CoSA on Core Member integration and management reflecting past research (Bates et al., 2007; Bates et al., 2012; Bates et al., 2013; Circles South East, 2012; Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014; Wilson 2007; Cesaroni 2001; Wilson et al.,2007a; McCartan et al., 2014).

> *"It's (Circles) a life altering thing that has happened to me, circles without a doubt changed my life" (Core Member, participant 16)*

> *"Yes, yes I would (recommend volunteering with Circles to another person) as it opened my eyes to the reality of being an ex-offender in the community" "(Volunteer, participant 9)*

> *"As I train new probation officers coming up I do use them (circles) and I do recommend them (Circles) on a daily basis to staff..." (Stakeholder, participant 7)*

All the Core Members that were interviewed stated that they learnt about Circles through the statutory agencies that they were involved with. A few of the Core Member indicated that police and

probation had recommended circles to them because they had previous positive experiences of working with the organisation (Circles South East, 2012; Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014).

> *"It was through my first probation officer, she thought it would be good to meet some people to go out with and… just… to get used to the community you were going into" (Core Member, participant 2)*

All the participants interviewed believed that participating with CoSA was beneficial for the Core Members on a number of levels include, personal, social, emotional and in terms of public protection as well as risk management (Wilson 2007; Cesaroni 2001; Wilson et al., 2007a; Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014; McCartan et al., 2014).

> *"I have just relaxed since I come here, I am more relaxed around people it's better now….. I feel more free, it's hard to explain but I feel that I can talk about the things that interest me and make me feel like myself….not just (the topics) what other people want me to talk about all the time….' (Core Member, participant 6)*

> *"I hope that it gives the Core Member a place to talk about things that they cannot really talk about with other people, outside of probation.." (Volunteer, participant 4)*

Core Members recognised that the volunteers were there to support them, but more importantly that they did not have to attend the circle if they did not want to as it was not compulsory. This was enough for some Core Members to be able to demonstrate that circles had a positive impact, in that they attended when they did not have to.

> *"It's only voluntary anyway, if I wanted to walk out I could but I don't want to" (Core Member, participant 5)*

> *"You can ask them anything and they will help you with it. If there is anything that you are not sure of, paper work and the like they can help" (Core Member, participant 2)*

The participants, especially Volunteers and Core Members, felt that the circle was unique and different to the other services that they had experienced through their experience of the Criminal Justice System (Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014; McCartan et al., 2014). The Core Members

valued the input of the volunteers and their insights, often seeing them as a half-way house between the public (and normal friends) and the Criminal Justice System (Thomas, Thompson and Kardstad, 2014). The circle brought added value rather than just replicating what other people or services were already doing (McCartan et al., 2014).

> *"Generally, it's been police and probation, and my mother that I would talk to…but to get out there and talk to new people it's been brilliant, a breath of fresh air" (Core Member, participant 6)*

> *"People that we would refer to circles have poor socialisation and issues in integration, they are not necessarily the most high risk but they are the people that we think would struggle to make friends, settle back into the community well." (Stakeholder, participant 7)*

> *"It helps people that the majority of others (the general public) don't think need help, it's really good" (Volunteer, participant 3)*

The Core Members discussed how they felt that they were part of the circle and that they were valued as a member, being able to contribute ideas, have a voice and did not feel separate. Which came across strongly in two instances, the first being during "normal" conversations (i.e., non-offence related conversations) that were a central component to each circle meeting and secondly through the planning of circle activities. The circle was inclusive, not exclusive, which they felt was different to other parts of their lives (Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014)

> *"As part of the circles project they put me on to new activities.. And it gets me out. I have to be careful in what I do pursue because there cannot be young people there, they help with that. At Christmas we went for a meal, which was fun. We try to do something fun every now and then, on special occasions mainly." (Core Member, participant 8)*

> *"We have been out for a walk… sometimes we go to the comedy club… but it's usually for a meal, or coffee or a drink" (Core Member, participant 2)*

> *"I'm into paranormal stuff and we did this ghost walk (in Edinburgh)… it may not have happened because of probation but they said because you are with your circle it's alright. And the whole day went perfect" (Core Member, participant 3)*

However, this blurring of boundaries could be a bit confusing for some of the Core Members as they felt that the volunteers are their friends rather than people there to support them in their reintegration.

> "We can never be friends; it's a bit strange really…I spend more time with them than anyone else, apart from police and probation, it'll be sad to see some of them go. I want to call them my friend but they are not really; I have to be careful when I call them and when I see them….." (Core Member, participant 8)

> "I think that there is a fine line with some Core Members where they treat you like support group or like a therapy group, where they befriend you and we have to remind them that we are not there to be their friends…" (Volunteer, participant 6)

The relationship between the Core Member and volunteer is really important considering that the circles only last for 12 months (Hanvey et al., 2012). When discussing the impact of the circle ending on the Core Member there was a mixed response within and between the participants.

> "I'm conscious of that and I am happy with that as well" (Core Member, participant 14)

> "Oh really, I was not aware of that…that worries me" (Core Member, participant 7)

> "It's a bit, shall we say, sad to know that it will come to an end but it is good to know that they have helped me develop a solid foundation (in their reintegration back into)…" (Core Member, participant 16)

> "Yes it's always a concern but it's a concern with probation supervision as well." (Stakeholder, participant 7)

> "We have to give the Core Members the tools to look after themselves and hope that they can do so, that they don't get themselves into trouble…" (Volunteer, participant 6)

Despite the positive work being done within the circle there are also potential issues that arise, including a lack of Core Member engagement, a lack of understanding of the role of the Circle (and

the volunteers) and the capacity of the circle to achieve sustainable change (Thomas, Thompson and Karstedt, 2014; McCartan et al., 2014; Circles South East, 2012).

> *"I have only mixed with the circle people up to now; I have old friends from before. I have no activities ….. I'm getting on I'm 69, activities are not my thing" (Core Member, participant 5)*

> *"I hope that he could (use the skills learned in the circles) but he is not showing any promise, despite a lot of prompting..." (Volunteer, participant 4)*

> *"Oh, they would back us up all the way and if they could not they would point us in the right direction about who to see" (Core Member, participant 2)*

However, there is a recognition that the circle has some impact and that its better than doing nothing with this population (Thomas, Thompson and Kardstat, 2014; McCartan et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2010).

> *"I don't really know of anything that does what a circle does, people don't really want to go there with sex offenders it still a bit taboo really…" (Volunteer, participant 3)*

The findings reflect previous research done on the functionality and impact of Circles on Core Members internationally (including, Bates, Saunders, Wilson, 2007; Bates, Macrae, Williams & Webb, 2012; Cesaroni, 2001; Duwe, 201; Wilson, Cortoni & McWhinnie, 2009; Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo, 2007; Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo, 2005; Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo, 2007) as well as recent UK based studies (Thomas, Thompson and Kardstat, 2014; McCartan et al., 2014)

2. <u>The perceived role of the Volunteers</u>

The volunteers were seen by different participants to have different roles and allegiances, with Core Members thinking that they were there to support and help them to reintegrate, Stakeholders thinking that they were there to support them manage the sex offender and prevent re-offending, and the Volunteers believing that they straddled the two perspectives.

In the main Stakeholders and Core Members had positive opinions of the Volunteers and the work that they did seeing them as dedicated, hardworking, positive and good natured individuals.

Stakeholders and Core Members viewed volunteers as being distinct from others who work in statutory services with sex offenders (Thomas, Thompson and Kardstat, 2014; Circles South East, 2012; Wilson et al., 2007a; Hanvey et al., 2011).

"It feels like a group of friends rather than somebody in a professional capacity…" (Core Member, participant 1)

The stakeholders had a positive, but critical, and paradoxical view of the volunteers were on one had they criticised them for not being as well trained or as rigours as professionals, but on the other they viewed them as being a substitute for themselves. The Stakeholders believed that the volunteers could talk more freely with Core Members and that Core Members may say things to them that they would not to their probation officer or a police officer; which they thought was a good thing and made them additional "eyes and ears" for the Criminal Justice System.

"I think that it's a nice thing that people can use; I think that they are duplicating work that probation and other agencies are doing… I think that there is a place for them but it is complementing work that is already being done." (Stakeholder, participant 5)

"These are people who have seriously abused and hurt others, usually more vulnerable than themselves, and we have to make sure that they do not do this again. Of course people can change, but we need to make sure that we are not drawn into believing that they have changed when they haven't…offenders can be manipulative, sex-offenders especially, and we need to make sure we seen change when it happens and we are noted fooled. If we as professionals need to be wary, with all our training, then volunteers need to be more so because they may not be as wary…" (Stakeholder, participant 8)

"for me a lot of it is intelligence collection, not what the offender wants to hear but… it's things that they will say to the offender circle members that they won't say to me" (Stakeholder, participant 5)

The Core Members saw the volunteers as individuals working with their best interests at heart. In this instance the Core Members viewed the volunteers as people who were mainly there to help support them, using their role to help them rehabilitate, to prevent them from offending and to prevent future victimisation. In this instance going to police and probation with information was not

seen as a breach of trust or a breaking of a confidence, but rather as volunteers doing the right thing and this was supported by Core Members.

> *"I'm comfortable with that (that they can go back to probation with concerns) they told us at the start, I knew that that might happen" (Core Member, participant 6)*

> *"I see them in a different way (from probation), but I am aware that anything that we discuss in my circle that they think is worrying they have to tell offender managers or the coordinator" (Core Member, participant 7)*

Interestingly, the volunteers tended to see themselves in the middle of these two definitions, they saw themselves as having a wide remit in terms of reporting and accountability in respect to the Core Members. The volunteers viewed themselves as being there to hear what they Core Members said and then being able to make judge calls on what best to do with that information.

> *".. Also, I don't know if I should say, a bit of surveillance, to keep an eye on them as well. We are in contact with them a lot and they will say things to us, we are not spying but we are there and being told lots of things all the time." (Volunteer, participant 3)*

> *"I hope that it gives the Core Member a place to talk about things that they cannot really talk about with other people, outside of probation..." (Volunteer, participant 4)*

Which meant that volunteers had to tread a fine line been their Core Member facing activities and their responsibilities to the state in terms of risk management, offender integration, and public protection; especially in the eyes of their professional colleagues (Thomas, Thompson & Karstadt, 2014). This meant that the volunteers took their responsibilities very seriously; they saw it as a job and not a role. They stated that where careful about what information they passed on to statutory services, always needing a clear rationale, so they would not damage their relationship with the Core Member. They needed both the Core Members and the State to trust them as well as the important that they pass on.

> *"They know that we are monitoring, that probation are monitoring and doing their stuff … that we are all there to help and support them" (Volunteer, participant 6)*

These findings stress the central role of volunteers in the circles process that Volunteers act as a bridge between Core Members and statutory agencies which reflects recent research (Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014; McCartan et al., 2014), emphasising the supportive role that the volunteers play.

3. _Responsibility, safeguarding and the role of the circle_

In discussing the roles and responsibilities of the circle there was a clear debate about where the responsibility lay, who was responsible for responding to the Core Member, who managed risk and how well-trained people who volunteered with, as well as participate in, the circle should be.

The main feeling was that the circle complemented statutory working (McCartan et al., 2014), this was strongly voiced by criminal justice organisations and Stakeholders who were keen to point out that managing sex offenders and reintegrating them was their responsibility (Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014). Despite this view that risk mitigation and offender management was the role of the Stakeholders there was a view, stated by the same Stakeholders that praised the circle for being present in a way that they could not. The stakeholders thought that the circle and the volunteers provide support and not accountability, which was their job, to Core Members. This emphasises a "them and us" distinction between the stakeholders and volunteers, which runs through all of the themes.

> _"Circles helps us keep an eye on some of sex offender on our caseloads, we can't be everywhere at once so they help; however, they are not doing the work that we do... they do not do treatment, they do not do rehabilitation. They are there to support us, support those (Core Members) and pass information back to us about them". (Stakeholder, participant 9)_

> _"They are able to offer that added degree of support and accountability, we are not able to see offenders as much as we would like to. What you do not want to see is people going in there, and we have talked about this, acting like mini psychologists challenging the offender, challenging their behaviour, challenging their pattern of behaviour because that is not their role quite frankly... but that does not mean they can't do support and accountability" (Stakeholder, participant 1)_

"If probation could do what we do it would be doing it, if public protection could do what we do they would be doing it…but they can't. What circles does is it can offer ordinary people, who have made a commitment, the basis to find the solutions" (Volunteer, participant 2)

The distinction between volunteers and statutory agencies was really reinforced in respect to the training and responsibility afforded to the volunteers with the stakeholders suggesting that Volunteers did not have enough training. The stakeholders argued that Volunteers needed more training to upskill them to police/probation levels; again, reinforcing that the stakeholders believed that the volunteers were not them and that they needed to be to do their work well.

"We know a lot of the men that we work with can be quite manipulative and that some of the volunteers may be taken in by that. Some sex offenders don't look, think or act in a stereotypical way and it's those ones you need to be careful of…" (Stakeholder, participant 1)

"I have been on training courses; I have professional development and training that I need to attend. Do they [Volunteers}? Where are their updates coming from? Where is there drive to be continually trained and educated on best practice?" (Stakeholder, Participant 6)

The volunteers believed that the training they had experienced was well informative and fit for purpose. They believed that it equipped them with the skills that they needed to handle the discussions that they were involved in with the Core Member and the stakeholders, to understand sexual offending in general and to build resilience to protect themselves (Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014; Circles South East, 2012).

"..I thought that it was good (the training), I knew a lot more after it about sexual abuse than I had before. I studied some of this stuff in my degree, but not in the same depth. I felt empowered." (Volunteer, participant 9)

In addition, some of the volunteers talked about how they dealt with the information that the Core Member shared with them in respect to their past offending, fantasies or current risk management strategies. The volunteers recognised that they were working with a challenging population, that they were aware of this from the onset and that they needed internal resilience strategies (Hoing et al., 2015; Hough, 2015); but that circles could do more to assist them by offering them additional training to become more self-resilient and offer the more formal/informal support processes.

"I have no-one to talk about my volunteering with outside of the circle, to share my worries, concerns or issues. I am ok with that most of the time, but every so often xxxxx will say something and I need to talk about it…. Not with my wife, but someone else who knows.." (Volunteer, participant 9)

"When I was a xxxx xxxx I could discuss cases with colleagues, I don't feel that I can do   this here with circles. I would like to talk about my experience more with other staff or volunteers…" (Volunteer, participant 10)

Core Members saw volunteers as being completely different to statutory staff in terms of the way that they engaged, what they said and the training that they had. Core Members did not seem to think that the volunteers had received any training prior to that start of the circle and that this made them different to statutory agencies; which was viewed as a good and bad thing.

"Circle members don't have any of that (probation) training so they can come from a different angle, which is good for me as well." (Core Member, participant 7)

"To me they were too soft... I bluffed them a lot and they did not challenge me; when I started my second circle I told them to challenge me more" (Core Member, participant 10)

Clear roles, responsibilities, and training are essential to the work done by circles, which has been emphasised by the organisation itself and external organisations (Thomas, Thompson & Kardstad, 2014; Hanvey et al., 2011; Circles South East, 2012); but it is important to recognise that although the circle contributes to sex offender management that the legal, safeguarding and public protection responsibility for managing the offender lies with the Criminal Justice System (McCartan et al., 2014). It is important to recognise that circles works with statutory agencies in a productive and collaborative way, it is a form of partnership working and that this needs to be realised as well as enforced by all parties.

4. *Support vs Accountability or Support & Accountability*

A major theme to emerge from the research was the different perceptions of the sometimes complementary, sometimes contradictory and often paradoxical role of "Support and

Accountability" within the circle. All the participants agreed on what the support angle of "Support and Accountability" stood for (Hanvey et al., 2011);

> *"It's another means of support, some of the Core Members that I am aware of have no other means of social support" (Volunteer, participant 6)*

> *"It helps people that the majority of others don't think need help, it's really good" (Volunteer, participant 3)*

> *"I think it's a good thing… a project like this to help people like me in society" (Core Member, participant 5)*

> *"It keeps them on time, in appointments and means that they are less likely to be breach or recalled to prison for a minor infraction. It helps support them in their day to day lives." (Stakeholder, participant 6)*

However, this could be a challenge with some Core Members believing that the volunteers were there to provide more support than was within the role of the circle (Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014).

> *"They will help us with anything; I just need to mention it and they will get it solved" (Core Member, participant 5)*

> *"Oh, they would back us up all the way and if they could not they would point us in the right direction about who to see" (Core Member, participant 2)*

> *"I think that there is a fine line with some Core Members where they treat you like a support group or like a therapy group, where they befriend you and we have to remind them that we are not there to be their friends…" (Volunteer, participant 6)*

The Core Members, misperceptions of the role of the circle was amplified when the Core Members and Volunteers discussed the accountability side of circles as there was a significance difference in what each of the two groups thought accountability meant. Some Core Members understood and embraced the accountability side of the circle, but thought of it in terms of support, whereas other

Core Members misunderstood and disengaged from the idea of accountability in the circle. This meant that the Core Members saw the volunteers, and the circle, having more of a support function than an accountability one.

> *"That's how much I trust them, down to whether I have had any deviant thoughts. I could tell them about these and they could help me with them…"* (Core Member, participant 8)

> *"I think they would help us out with that (potential reoffending) but I cannot see it coming up"* (Core Member, participant 5)

> *"Unless they talk about their offending behaviour it can be quite difficult to get back onto it (accountability), we got stuck for weeks on his laundry and how much fabric conditioner he was using"* (Volunteer, participant 4)

The issue that Core Members had with the accountability side of circles was evidenced by the fact that some Core Members stated that they did not feel able, willing or capable of bringing certain issues to the full circle. Core Members would indicate that for certain issues they would focus on certain volunteers in the group, rather than talk to the group as a whole; which is potentially problematic as it means that the Core Member has difficulties in sharing with other members or the group and them placing more responsibility on one or two group members.

> *"I think if I did have did have urges I would say to xxxx because I feel more comfortable with him and he would say to the others. I don't think that I could say to the whole group'* (Core Member, participant 6)

Volunteers tended to see their role as both support and accountability, believing that they were there to support the Core Member in turning their lives around and preventing reoffending while at the same time holding them accountable for their actions (Hanvey et al., 2011; Thomas, Thompson and Karstedt, 2014). The volunteers talked a lot about their role in modelling pro-social behaviour and being a test board for the Core Members to use when discussing issues, problems, and dilemmas.

> *"We have to be a benchmark for what he can achieve, put him in a situation where he can make his own friendships..."* (Volunteer, participant 1)

"It was like when I was a xxxx xxx, you had to be the change you wanted them to be. I am not saying that you needed to be a saint, rather lead by example…" (Volunteer, participant 10)

Which was reiterated by the stakeholders who, in the main, saw the role of circles as a supportive ad pro-social modelling one (Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014; Hanvey et al., 2014; McCartan et al., 2014); the circle was there to help the statutory agencies manage the sex offender by offering them a safe environment to have these conversations and test ideas.

"It helps them build their skills, internally, and that helps them reduce their risk of reoffending" (Stakeholder, participant 7)

"That safeguard is invaluable as it allows them to start reintegrating back into the community in a safe way. It means that they learn what they can say, what they can't say and the most appropriate times to do it. It means they realise what they can and can't do, and why. We say these things to them, but do they listen? It helps to have someone else say it too….." (Stakeholder, volunteer 9)

These findings suggest that the different groups of participants have different views on the role, function and viability of "Support and Accountability" within the circle with the Core Members perceiving it to be about having someone to assist them, someone to talk to and someone to confide in; volunteers believed that it was about supporting reintegration, holding Core Members accountable for present and future actions; and stakeholders believing it to be about risk management, public protection, and past behaviours. When looking at circles in different jurisdictions there are different models with Canada focusing more on supporting the Core Member, whereas in the UK the balance between support and accountability does have significance as the Circle is integrated into the Criminal Justice System and is thought to parallel statutory working (Hanvey et al., 2011; McCartan et al., 2014; Thomas, Thompson & Karstedt, 2014); if the individuals working in and working with the circle are not clear on its role(s), how can it be seen to achieve its goals? In addition, if Core Members believe that the circle is about support more than or instead of accountability how is the circle responding to this and does it need to rethink it?

KEY LEARNINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The current research reinforces previous research suggesting that CoSA assists in the reintegration of sexual offenders back into the community by providing pro-social support, role modelling, a positive platform and grounded assistance (including., Bates, Saunders, Wilson, 2007; Bates, Macrae, Williams & Webb, 2012; Cesaroni, 2001; Duwe, 201; Wilson, Cortoni & McWhinnie, 2009; Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo, 2007; Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo, 2005; Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo, 2007; Thomas, Thompson and Kardstat, 2014; McCartan et al., 2014). Core Members, in general, seem to leave the circle with jobs, improved accommodation, less dependency on alcohol or drugs and better mental health. Volunteers and Core Members reported an increase in positivity, self-esteem, pro-social functioning and confidence in the Core Member by the end of the circle; however, their views of the Core Members progress, outcomes and status at different points in the circles process were not the same.

The real challenge that this project poses for CoSA as an organisation is its relationships with statutory agencies working in the sexual harm arena in sex offender and how it achieves the accountability element of its programme. Although, the research indicates that the circle has helped some individuals on their path in desisting from sexual abuse and may have prevented those Core Members who were going to offend from offending there is still a misperception and mistrust between circle volunteers and the statutory agencies they work with. Therefore, it is important to stress that the role of the volunteers are central to the circles process that volunteers act as a bridge between Core Members and the community, with more work needing to be done in this area with Stakeholders to alleviate their fears. The research also emphasises that clear roles, responsibilities and training are essential to the work done by circles (Thomas, Thompson & Kardstad, 2014; Hanvey et al., 2011; Circles South East, 2012), with circles being a form of partnership working and that this needs to be realised as well as enforced by all parties.

It must be stated that although this research supports previous findings and offers a continued insight into the work that CoSA does reintegrate sex offenders back into the community this is a small snapshot of the ongoing national work and, based on its small sample size, is not nationally representative or generalizable. The current research gives us insights into the reality CoSA and the impact of individual circles; therefore, the evaluation raises points of interest, poses questions and allows us to discuss CoSA in regard to past research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A clearer more defined role for the "service user" (i.e. the Core Member) voice within the Circles process, especially in respect to defining and evaluating success factors.

- Work needs to be done streamlining and improving the roll out of new data collection tools and their implementation to new, as well as established projects.

- More reflection, planning and development focused on how CoSA conducts research with Circles UK, as well as each individual project; the need to consider how they collect, collate and analysis information on Core Members (especially their social, emotional, psychological and physical well-being) before, as well as post the circle.

- There needs to be consideration of how volunteers receive additional support regarding their work with circles; especially in terms of more (or adapted) resilience building, self-support and informal/formal support from the projects.

- CoSA needs to consider how best to reconcile the roles and responsibilities of the circle and with those of statutory agencies so that everyone knows what their role and responsibilities are.

- CoSA needs to consider what "Support and Accountability" means to all participants (volunteers, Core Members and stakeholders) and how best to measure if this is happening; this is important in the UK version of CoSA as it is tied to the Criminal Justice System in a way that other international variants are not.

References

Bates A., Saunders R., Wilson C. (2007). Doing something about it: a follow-up study of sex offenders participating in Thames Valley Circles of Support and Accountability. *British Journal of Community Justice; 5:19-*42.

Bates, A., Macrae R., Williams D., Webb C. (2012). Ever-increasing circles: a descriptive study of Hampshire and Thames Valley Circles of Support and Accountability 2002-09. *Journal of Sexual Aggression, 18 (2)* 335-373 First published on: 22 February 2011 (iFirst).

Bates, A. and Wager, N. (2012) Assessing Dynamic Risk in the Community: the DRR and Circles of Support and Accountability. *Forensic Update, 108*, October 2012, pp: 5-13.

British Psychological Society (2010) .*Code of Human Research Ethics*. BPS: London.

British Society of Criminology (2015) . *Statement of Ethics 2015*. Accessed on 18th November 2015 via http://britsoccrim.org/new/?q=node/22

Cesaroni C. (2001). Releasing Sex Offenders into the Community through "Circles of Support"- A Means of Reintegrating the "Worst of the Worst". *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation; 34:85*.

Circles-UK (2016) http://www.circles-uk.org.uk (accessed January 20th 2016).

Circles South East (2012). *Ten Years One Hundred Circles Community Safety - What Can Be Done: Ten Year Report. April 2002 - March 2012*. Circles South East

Clarke, M., Brown, S., & Völlm, B. (2015). Circles of Support and Accountability for Sex Offenders: A Systematic Review of Outcomes. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, available through Ifirst http://sax.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/09/11/1079063215603691.full.pdf+html

College of Policing (2016). *Number of current sex offenders in England and Wales.* Personal email, dated 11th March 2016.

Duwe, G. (2012) Can Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) Work in   the United States? Preliminary Results from a Randomized Experiment in Minnesota. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, on-line access August 1st 2012 at: http://sax.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/07/26/1079063212453942.abstract

Elliot, I. A. and Beech, A. R. (2012). A UK Cost-Benefit Analysis of Circles of Support and Accountability Interventions. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, on-line access 7 May 2012 at: http://sax.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/05/03/1079063212443385

Elliott, I. A., Zajac, G., & Meyer, C. A. (2013). *Evaluability assessments of the Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) model: Cross site report*. Retrieved from https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/243832.pdf

ESRC (2015). *ESRC Framework for research ethics*. Accessed on the 20th November 2015 via http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/funding/guidance-for-applicants/esrc-framework-for-research-ethics-2015/

Hannem, S. (2011) Experiences in Reconciling Risk Management and Restorative Justice: How Circles of Support and Accountability Work Restoratively in the Risk Society. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology,* Advanced on-line version at: http://ijo.sagepub.com/content/early/2011/12/19/0306624X11432538

Hanvey S., Philpot T., Wilson C. (20110). *A community-based approach to the reduction of sexual reoffending.* Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London.

Hoing, M., Bogaerts, S., & Vogelvang, B. (2015). Volunteers in Circles of Support and Accountability Job Demands, Job Resources, and Outcome. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*. On-line version, available from http://sax.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/10/20/1079063215612441.abstract

Hough, A. (2015). *Examining resilience, motivation and emotional impact in volunteers working with sexual offenders.* Unpublished PhD thesis. University of York.

Hudson, K. J. (2005). *Offending identities: sex offenders' perspectives of their treatment and management.* Uffculme: Willan Publishing.

Ministry of Justice (2015). *Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements Annual Report 2014/15*. Ministry of Justice: Statistics Bulletin.

McCartan K., Kemshall H., Westwood S., Solle J., MacKenzie G., & Pollard A. (2014). *Circles of Support and accountability (CoSA): A case file review of two pilots*. London, England: Ministry of Justice.

Nellis, M.(2009). Circles of Support and Accountability for sex offenders in England and Wales: their origins and implementation between 1999 -2005. British Journal of Community Justice; 7:23-44.

Robson, C., & McCartan, K.F. (2016). *Real World Research, 4th Ed*. Wiley.

Thomas, T., Thompson, D., & Karstedt, S. (2014). *Assessing the impact of Circles of Support and Accountability on the reintegration of adults convicted of sexual offences in the community.* Centre for Criminal Justice Studies, School of Law, University of Leeds.

Ministry of Justice (2010). *Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders*. Ministry of Justice.

Ministry of Justice (2013). *Transforming Rehabilitation: A Strategy for Reform*. Ministry of Justice.

Warwick, L. (2014). The Evidence Base for Circles. Presented on the 2nd December 2014 at CoSA Research and Evaluation Seminar at UWE, Bristol.

Wilson C., Bates A., Vollm B. (2010). Circles of Support and Accountability: An Innovative Approach to Manage High-Risk Sex Offenders in the Community. *Open Criminology Journal; 3:48*-57.

Wilson, R. J., Cortoni, F., & McWhinnie, A. J. (2009). Circles of Support & Accountability: A Canadian National Replication of Outcome Findings. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research & Treatment; 21:412*-430.

Wilson, R. J., Picheca, J., & Prinzo, M. (2007a). Evaluating the Effectiveness of Professionally-Facilitated Volunteerism in the Community-Based Management of High-Risk Sexual Offenders: Part One - Effects on Participants and Stakeholders. *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice; 46:289*-302.

Wilson, R. J., Picheca, J. E., & Prinzo, M. (2005). *Circles of Support & Accountability: An evaluation of the pilot project in south-central Ontario*. Correctional Service of Canada, Ottawa, Canada.

Wilson, R. J., Picheca, J. E., & Prinzo, M. (2007b). Evaluating the Effectiveness of Professionally-Facilitated Volunteerism in the Community-Based Management of High-Risk Sexual Offenders: Part Two - A Comparison of Recidivism Rates. *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice; 46:327*-337.

Wilson, R.J., Cortoni, F., & Vermani, M. (2007). *Circles of Support & Accountability: A National Replication of Outcome Findings*. (Research Report R-185) Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

Wilson, R. J., Huculak, B., & McWhinnie, A. (2002). Restorative justice innovations in Canada. *Behavioural Sciences & the Law, 20*, 4, 363 -380.

Winder, B. (2015). The Safer Living Foundation and Prison based Circles of Support and Accountability: what, why, how and what next? Presented at the Nottingham Trent Study day, 18th December 2015.

APPENDENCES

Appendix 1   ## Core Member Dynamic Risk Review Form

Circle Code	
Date of Review	
Review number	
Frequency of Circle meetings	
Circle Coordinator	

1. **Is there evidence that the CM is struggling with problematic sexual thoughts?**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Not at all   A great deal

Please give brief details:

2. **Has the CM spoken to an excessive and/or inappropriate degree about sexual matters in general?**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Not at all   A great deal

Please give brief details:

3. **Has the CM expressed any sexualised attitudes towards children?**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Not at all   A great deal

Please give brief details:

4. **Has the CM expressed hostile or negative views towards women?**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Not at all   A great deal

Please give brief details:

_____

_____

5.   **Is there evidence that the CM is displaying a high emotional identification with children?**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Not at all   A great deal

Please give brief details:

_____

_____

6.   **Is there evidence that the CM is experiencing feelings of emotional loneliness?**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Not at all   A great deal

Please give brief details:

_____

_____

1.   **Is there evidence that the CM is experiencing feelings of inadequacy in relationships?**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Not at all   A great deal

Please give brief details:

_____

_____

8.   Does the CM have stable emotional relationships with any other people outside the Circle?

No-one   1 person   2 people   3 or more

Please give brief details:

_____

_____

_____

9.   Is there evidence that the CM is experiencing feelings of powerlessness or hopelessness?

0   1   2   3   4   5   6

Not at all   A great deal

Please give brief details:

_____

_____

_____

10.Has the CM demonstrated reckless behaviour?

0   1   2   3   4   5   6

Not at all   A great deal

11. Has the CM expressed any hostile feelings or angry outbursts?

0   1   2   3   4   5   6

Not at all   A great deal

Please give brief details:

_____

_____

_____

12. Does the CM demonstrate appropriate problem solving abilities?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Not at all   A great deal

Please give brief details:

_____

_____

13. Does the CM maintain realistic relapse prevention strategies?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Not at all   A great deal

Please give brief details:

_____

_____

14. Is there evidence that the CM is experiencing any feelings of low self-esteem?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Not at all   A great deal

Please give brief details:

_____

_____

15. Does the CM engage in appropriate activities and hobbies?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Not at all   A great deal

Please give brief details:

_____

_____

16. Is the CM in stable and suitable accommodation?　　　　Yes ☐　No ☐

17. Is the CM involved in any paid or voluntary work?　　　　Yes ☐　No ☐

Appendix 2: Adapted DRR

This is a semi-structured interview which should take place been the Core Member and a Co-ordinator at, or near to, the same time that the Core Members DRR is being done with the volunteers. This is a semi structured interview which mirrors the DRR; the related questions have been listed, where appropriate, for your information. (PLEASE NOTE THAT THE SCORES ADD UP TO A TOTAL OF 60 –indicating positive change/involvement – WHICH WILL BE COMPARED TO THE TOTAL ON THE VOLUTNEER/C0-ORDINATOR DRR).

Core Member code:

Date of interview:

Review Number:

Format: Telephone / In person:

1. How do you feel you are you getting on with managing and controlling your sexual behaviour and attitudes? (*looking particularly for attraction to children, women and sexual deviance*) (Links to DRR questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all						a great deal

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. To what degree do you feel that you have people you can share your feelings with? (Links to DRR question 6)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all						a great deal

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. How would you say your relationships are developing? (q7) Especially regarding any outside of your Circle? (Links to DRR question 8)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all						a great deal

_____
_____
_____

_____

_____

4. How do you think that your sense of self-worth/self-esteem may be changing, if it is? Either for the better or the worse? (Links to DRR question 14)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all						a great deal

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. To what extent do you think you are making more careful decisions? Could you give an example (Links to DRR questions 10, 12)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all						a great deal

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. How do you feel that you are getting on with managing difficult feelings? i.e., being angry or upset, etc. (Links to DRR question 11)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all						a great deal

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

7. Can you say how you think that you are managing to keep to your original relapse prevention plan? (Links to DRR question 13)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all						a great deal

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

8. Tell me about some of the hobbies and activities that you enjoy? Have you started any new ones recently or further developed existing ones? (Links to DRR questions 13 & 15)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
No change						a great deal
		of change				

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

9. Can you tell me how your circumstances? Is your accommodation ok, have you been able to get a job, take up any voluntary activities? (Links to DRR questions 16, 17)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
None at all						a great deal

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

10. Has being involved with Circles of Support and Accountability impacted, positively or negatively, with your social reintegration? Could you please give an example?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all						a great deal

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix 3: Socio-demographic data collected in the circle

Unique Circle Identifier Code
Age at Acceptance to Circle
Year of Birth
Gender Ethnicity
Sexuality
Religion/Belief   Disability
If Disability: Specific Learning Disability
If Disability: General Learning Disability
If Disability: Cognitive Impairment
If Disability: Mental Health Condition
If Disability: Physical/Mobility Impairment
If Disability: Deaf or Serious Hearing Impairment
If Disability: Other
Prefers Not To Say
Registered Disabled?
Relationship Status
Education
Rape Adult Female
Rape Adult Male
Rape Child Female
Rape Child Male
Sexual Assault
Adult Female
Sexual Assault
Adult Male
Sexual Assault Child Female
Sexual Assault Child Male
Incest
Abduction of Child
Indecent Exposure
Voyeurism
Internet Offences
Possession of Child Sexual Abuse Images
Other
On Licence at Point of Circles Referral?
On SOPO at Point of Circles Referral?
Sentence for Index Offence(s)
Most Recent Date Released from Custody
PNC Record Date
Total Number of Offences according to PNC
Total Number of Convictions according to PNC   Offence against the Person
Offence against Property
Theft and Kindred Offences
Fraud and Kindred Offences
Drug Offences
Offences relating to Police/Courts/Prisons
Public Order Offences   Firearms/Shotguns/
Offensive Weapons Offences
Miscellaneous Offences

Rape Adult Female
Rape Adult Male
Rape Child Female
Rape Child Male
Sexual Assault
 Adult Female
Sexual Assault
Adult Male
Sexual Assault Child Female
Sexual Assault Child Male
Incest
Abduction of Child
Indecent Exposure
Voyeurism
Internet Offences
Possession of Child Sexual Abuse Images
Other
Most Severe Sentence for Any Offence
Age at First Conviction for Any Offence
Prison Sex Offender Programme
Community Sex Offender Programme   Therapeutic Community
Forensic-Psychiatric In-Patient Treatment
Other Psychiatric In-Patient Treatment
Residential Substance Misuse Programme Community
Forensic-Psychiatric Treatment
Other Community Psychiatric Treatment
MAPPA Level
OAsys Risk of Harm General Public
OAsys Risk of Harm Children
OAsys Risk of Harm Professional Staff
OAsys Risk of Harm Known Adult
Risk Matrix 2000
S-Scale Other Risk Assessment Tools Used
Date of Referral to Circle
Referred From   Date of First Circle Meeting
Community Sex Offender Programme
Community Forensic-Psychiatric Treatment
Community General Psychiatric Treatment
Substance Abuse Treatment
Other Current Treatment
Relationship
Employment
Accommodation
Benefits
Debts
Family Contact Mental Health Difficulties
Problems with Alcohol   Problems with Drugs
END of data entry for time point beginning of Circle
Date of End of Circle
Type of Ending Community Sex Offender Programme
Community Forensic-Psychiatric Treatment

Community General Psychiatric Treatment
Substance Abuse Treatment
Other Current Treatment
Relationship
Employment
Accommodation
Benefits
Debts
Family Contact Mental Health Difficulties
Problems with Alcohol   Problems with Drugs
Arrest
Arrest Details   (if applicable)
Reconviction
Reconviction Details   (if applicable)
Recall
Recall Details   (if applicable)
Breach
Breach Details   (if applicable)

This concludes the follow up data collection

Appendix 4: CoSA Volunteers on-line questionnaire

My name is Dr Kieran McCartan and I am a researcher in Criminology at the University of the West of England, Bristol. I am contacting you in regard to your potential involvement in a current research project involving myself, your Circles project and Circles UK, funded by the Cabinet Office, which focuses on the impact of social action on the reintegration of disadvantaged groups; in this instance sex offender.

The aim of the research is to determine whether social action orientated initiatives involving the community, like Circles of Support and Accountability, helps socially disadvantaged groups (re)integrate into the community and enable them to live positive lives.

A large portion of the community engagement work done by Circles of Support and Accountability is achieved through the work of its volunteers; consequentially, this questionnaire will look at volunteer attitudes to and understandings of the work that they do. The research will adhere to regulatory ethical guidelines (UWE; ESRC; British Psychological Society; British Society of Criminology); and the research will be participant focused (i.e., participant(s) having the opportunity to take breaks, ask questions and have access to their transcribed data as well as the resulting publications). As the research is asking for the participants' personal perspectives and opinions there is absolutely no deception involved in this study. Hence, the research is only a gauge your perspectives and not trying to catch you out, confuse you or trying to gain your support unawares. It is only your true perspective that matters, so please be as honest as possible. The research will be conducted by me and all the questionnaires will be returned to and analysed by me; neither Circles UK nor your Circles will have any access to primary data. Therefore please feel free to be as candid as you wish >All the personal participant information gathered throughout the research (including but not limited to your name, contact details or your transcript/recorded data) will remain strictly confidential. No-one will know who completed the research or which opinions/attitudes are linked to specific participants. The only person that will have access to the material will be the researcher with all the participant records (i.e., audio recordings, transcriptions, participant list) being securely stored. In the final written documentation no-one will be mentioned by name and all information will be described in qualitative or quantitative terms.

All participants have the right to withdraw from the experiment at any stage; they do not have to give any reason for doing so. The researcher will be available before, during and after the study to answer any questions relating to the material covered within. However, in saying this it does not mean that they will be expert enough to answer all potential questions that are raised. In response to this they will be able to provide reading material and/or agency contacts to help the participants deal with any relevant queries.

All the material collected in the experiment will be destroyed in due course, with the data being kept for the period of the research, data analysis and write up in line with British Psychological Society and British Society of Criminology publication recommendations. Unless the participant withdraws from the research, then it will be destroyed immediately (please note: that the participants' involvement in the focus group would be ignored and removed with the remainder of the group discussion remaining intact).

It is important that you fully understand all the ethical issues involved in this piece of research and that you take them into account when deciding to participate in this study. If you have any questions

please do not hesitate to contact the researcher (Kieran.mccartan@uwe.ac.uk) who will be only too happy to help.

The questionnaire will take between 10 - 15 minutes to complete

Thank you for reading this

I understand the remit of the research and what is being asked of me as a participant. I hereby give my explicit consent to participate in the research.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Gender
- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

Which sexual orientation would you identify yourself as being?
- ◯ Heterosexual
- ◯ Homosexual
- ◯ Bisexual
- ◯ Prefer not to answer

Age
- ◯ 18-21
- ◯ 22 - 30
- ◯ 31 - 40
- ◯ 41 - 50
- ◯ 51 - 60
- ◯ 61 - 70
- ◯ 70+

<p>how would you describe your faith or belief
- ◯ Christian (Catholic)
- ◯ Christian (Protestant)
- ◯ Jewish
- ◯ Muslim
- ◯ Hindu
- ◯ Sikh
- ◯ Buddhist
- ◯ Agonistic
- ◯ Atheist
- ◯ Other _____

Please indicate the highest level of education completed.

- ⭕ GCSE
- ⭕ A-Level
- ⭕ Vocational/Technical School (2 year)
- ⭕ Some Further Education
- ⭕ University Graduate
- ⭕ Master's Degree
- ⭕ Doctoral Degree (PhD)
- ⭕ Professional Degree (MD, JD, etc.)
- ⭕ Other _____

What is your current employment status?

- ⭕ Retired
- ⭕ Full time employment
- ⭕ Part time employment
- ⭕ Full time student
- ⭕ Part-time student
- ⭕ Self-employed
- ⭕ Homemaker
- ⭕ Unemployed

What is your current relationship status?

- ⭕ Rather not say
- ⭕ Divorced
- ⭕ Living with another
- ⭕ Married
- ⭕ Separated
- ⭕ Single
- ⭕ Widowed

Are you a parent?

- ⭕ Yes
- ⭕ No

What ethnic minority do you define yourself as coming from?

- ⭕ White (British)
- ⭕ White (Irish)
- ⭕ White (any other background)
- ⭕ Black (British)
- ⭕ Black (African)
- ⭕ Black (Caribbean)
- ⭕ Chinese
- ⭕ Black (any other background)
- ⭕ Asian
- ⭕ Indian
- ⭕ Pakistani
- ⭕ Bangladeshi
- ⭕ Mixed Race
- ⭕ Prefer not to say
- ⭕ Other _____

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Please state the nature of the aforementioned disability

Which is your current Circles of Support and Accountability project?

- ○ Yorkshire/Humberside
- ○ South West
- ○ North East
- ○ South East

How did you find out about Circles of Support and Accountability?

- ○ On-line/Internet
- ○ Through the recommendation of a friend/peer/colleague
- ○ Word of mouth
- ○ Through CoSA advertising
- ○ Through the media
- ○ Other _____

What attracted you to want to participate in Circles of Support and Accountability?

How many Circles have you been involved in?

- ○ 1
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5+

How long have you volunteered with Circles of Support and Accountability?

- ○ Less than 1 year
- ○ 1 year
- ○ 2 years
- ○ 3 years
- ○ 4 years
- ○ 5+ years

Do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability enables you to assist Core Members reintegrate back into society?

- ○ Definitely yes
- ○ Probably yes
- ○ Maybe
- ○ Probably not
- ○ Definitely not

Do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability enables you to assist Core Members confront their offending behaviour?
- ○ Definitely yes
- ○ Probably yes
- ○ Maybe
- ○ Probably not
- ○ Definitely not

<p>Do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability enables you to assist Core Members reduce any reoffending?</p>
- ○ Definitely yes
- ○ Probably yes
- ○ Maybe
- ○ Probably not
- ○ Definitely not

Do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability enables you to assist Core Members broaden their social network?
- ○ Definitely yes
- ○ Probably yes
- ○ Maybe
- ○ Probably not
- ○ Definitely not

Do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability enables you to assist Core Members develop positive social relationships?
- ○ Definitely yes
- ○ Probably yes
- ○ Maybe
- ○ Probably not
- ○ Definitely not

Do you think the volunteer training that Circles of Support and Accountability provides is?
- ○ Very Inappropriate
- ○ Inappropriate
- ○ Somewhat Inappropriate
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Somewhat Appropriate
- ○ Appropriate
- ○ Very Appropriate

Do you think that your time as a volunteer with Circles of Support & Accountability has been?
- ○ a positive experience
- ○ a negative experience

What do you think that you have gained from participating in Circles of Support and Accountability?

Would you recommend joining Circles of Support and Accountability as a lay member to another person?
- ○ Yes
- ○ Maybe
- ○ No

What do you see as the main function of Circles of Support and Accountability?
- ❑ Supporting the Core Member in their reintegration back into society
- ❑ Holding the Core Member accountability for their past offences
- ❑ Holding the Core Member accountable to their intention not to reoffend
- ❑ Counselling the Core Member
- ❑ Befriending the Core Member
- ❑ Managing the Core Member in the community
- ❑ All of the above
- ❑ None of the Above
- ❑ Other _____

What additional training, if any, do you think could be provided to assist the volunteers in their work with Core Members?

Do you feel that you have developed an improved understanding of sexual offenders as a result of your volunteering?
- ○ Definitely yes
- ○ Probably yes
- ○ Maybe
- ○ Probably not
- ○ Definitely not

Apart from Circles of Support and Accountability have you ever volunteered with any other socially disadvantaged groups?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If yes which socially disadvantaged groups
- ❑ Ex-offenders
- ❑ Prisoners
- ❑ Victims
- ❑ People living with Learning Disabilities
- ❑ People living with Mental Illness
- ❑ People living with Disability
- ❑ Homeless
- ❑ Children
- ❑ Elderly
- ❑ Immigrants
- ❑ Other _____

Would your experience volunteering with Circles of Support & Accountability encourage you to volunteer with another organisation?
- ○ Yes
- ○ Maybe
- ○ No

Do you tell people about your work with Circles of Support and Accountability?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Sometimes

If so who do you tell?
- ❑ Partner/significant other
- ❑ Children
- ❑ Friends
- ❑ Colleagues
- ❑ Other _____

If not, why not?

Are there any circumstances in which you feel it might ever be appropriate to introduce a Core Member to any of your friends?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If so, what might they be…?

If not, why not?

Appendix 5: Semi Structured interview schedule

All participants (Practitioner, CM and Volunteer) will receive the same semi-structured interview so that consistency across the board maybe maintained, this means that the phasing may change with each interview but the content will remain the same.

1. How did you find out about Circles of Support and Accountability?

2. What attracted you to want to participate in Circles of Support and Accountability?

3. Please let me a bit about your degree of involvement in circles (i.e., length of time involved, role, etc.)

4. What role do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability plays in the management of offenders in the community?

5. Where do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability sits within the criminal justice system currently?

6. Do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability enables Core Members to reintegrate back into society?

7. Do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability enables Core Members to confront their offending behaviour?

8. Do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability enables Core Members to reduce reoffending?

9. Do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability enables Core Members to develop a positive social network?

10. Do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability enables Core Members to make as well as maintain new relationships?

11. What do you think that you have gained from your involvement with Circles of Support and Accountability?

12. Would you recommend Circles of Support and Accountability to another person?

Appendix 6: Consent form

Dear Participant,

My name is Dr Kieran McCartan and I am a researcher in Criminology at the University of the West of England, Bristol. I am contacting you in regard to your potential involvement in a current research project involving myself and Circles UK, funded by the Cabinet Office, which focuses on the impact of social action on the reintegration of disadvantaged groups; in the case of this research project, sex offenders.

The aim of the current research is to determine whether social action orientated initiatives involving the community, like Circles of Support and Accountability, helps socially disadvantaged groups (re)integrate into the community and enable them to live positive lives.

A large portion of the community engagement work done by Circles of Support and Accountability is achieved through the work of its volunteers; consequentially, this questionnaire will look at volunteer attitudes to and understandings of the work that they do. The research will adhere to regulatory ethical guidelines (UWE; ESRC; British Psychological Society; British Society of Criminology); and the research will be participant focused (i.e., participant(s) having the opportunity to take breaks, ask questions and have access to their transcribed data as well as the resulting publications). As the research is asking for the participants' personal perspectives and opinions there is absolutely no deception involved in this study. Hence, the researcher is only gauge your perspectives and not trying to catch you out, confuse you or trying to gain your support unawares. It is only your true perspective that matters, so please be as honest as possible. The research will be conducted by me and all the questionnaires will be returned to and analysed by me, Circles of Support and Accountability will have no access to primary data. Therefore please feel free to be as candid as you wish.

All the personal participant information gathered throughout the research (including but not limited to your name, contact details or your transcript/recorded data) will remain strictly confidential. No-one will know who completed the research or which opinions/attitudes are linked to specific participants. The only person that will have access to the material will be the researcher with all the participant records (audio recordings, transcriptions, participant list) being securely stored. In the final written documentation (i.e., data, spss output, etc.) no-one will be mentioned by name and all information will be described in qualitative or quantitative terms.

All participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage; they do not have to give any reason for doing so. The researcher will be available before, during and after the study to answer any questions relating to the material covered within. However, in saying this it does not mean that they will be expert enough to answer all potential questions that are raised. In response to this they will be able to provide reading material and/or agency contacts to help the participants deal with any relevant queries.

All the material collected in the experiment will be destroyed in due course, with the data being kept for the period of the research, data analysis and write up in line with British Psychological Society and British Society of Criminology publication recommendations. Unless the participant withdraws from the research, then it will be destroyed immediately (please note: that the participants' involvement in the focus group would be ignored and removed with the remainder of the group discussion remaining intact).

It is important that you fully understand all the ethical issues involved in this piece of research and that you take them into account when deciding to participate in this study. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me (Kieran.mccartan@uwe.ac.uk).

I understand the remit of the research and what is being asked of me as a participant. I hereby give my explicit consent to participate in the research.

Yes   no

Appendix 7

An ethics submission was made to NOMS. Due to the format of the submission, this can be made available on request.

Appendix 8

University of the
West of England
BRISTOL

University Research Ethics Committee

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

Guidance Notes

These notes are intended to be read when completing the application form for ethical review of research involving human participants. The University's policy and procedures on research ethics may be found at http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/researchethics/. Please address any enquiries which are not covered in these notes to the contact (named below) for the Faculty Research Ethics Committee to which you are submitting your application.

This form may also be completed by researchers outside UWE who plan to conduct research within the University. (Note: Where a researcher has already obtained REC approval from another institution it may not be necessary to submit another application but you will need to send details of the research and evidence of approval to the REC chair before access may be granted to UWE staff and students.)

Research Ethics Committee contacts:

	Name	Email	Telephone
University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)	Alison Vaughton (Officer)	res.admin@uwe.ac.uk	0117 32 82872
Note: UREC reviews applications for ESRC-funded research, research involving surveying on a University-wide basis, and research conducted by staff in the Central Services. All other applications should be directed to the appropriate Faculty committee.			
Faculty Research Ethics Committees			
ACE	Lesley Brock (Officer)	lesley.brock@uwe.ac.uk	0117 32 84222
FBL	FBL REC Officer	bbs.researchethics@uwe.ac.uk	0117 32 86890
FET	Tom Brossard (Officer)	tom.brossard@uwe.ac.uk	0117 32 84250
HLS	Leigh Taylor	leigh.taylor@uwe.ac.uk	0117 32 81170

(Officer)		

External ethics approval

Where the work has already been subjected to ethical scrutiny, for example, by an NHS Research Ethics Committee through the National Research Ethics Service (NRES), you should indicate this on the form.

If your research involves NHS patients (including tissue or organs), or NHS data, you will usually need to get NHS REC approval. The UWE procedures recognise the burden placed on the researcher in applying for NHS REC approval. In order to assist PIs in this as far as possible, you are recommended to apply for NHS REC ethics approval first (using the IRAS form) and submit the letter of approval to your FREC or to UREC (as applicable). Where UWE is the sponsor for the study your FREC Chair will need to see the application before it can be authorised by the sponsor representative. This approach has been designed to retain the right of ultimate 'sign off' by the University without having to go through a separate protracted University process. It is important that PIs conducting research in the NHS appreciate that both UWE and NHS Ethics clearance will be needed and are separate. (Achievement of the one does not guarantee success with the other).

If you have already received ethical approval from an external Research Ethics Committee, you should provide evidence of this to UREC/FREC.

Student applications

For student applications, supervisors should ensure that all of the following are satisfied before the study begins:

- The topic merits further research;

- The student has the skills to carry out the research;

- The participant information sheet or leaflet is appropriate;

- The procedures for recruitment of research participants and obtaining informed consent are appropriate.

Declaration

This should be completed once all the following questions have been answered. Where the application is from a student, **a counter-signature from the supervisor is also necessary**. Applications without a supervisor signature will not be processed.

Question 1: Details of the proposed research – aims and objectives of the research

This should provide the reviewer of the application with sufficient detail to allow him/her to understand the nature of the project and its rationale, in terms which are clear to a lay reader. Do not assume that the reader knows you or your area of work. It may be appropriate to provide a copy of your research proposal.

Question 2: Details of the proposed research – Research methodology to be used

You should explain how you plan to undertake your research. A copy of the interview schedule/ questionnaire/observation schedule/focus group topic guide should be attached where applicable.

Question 3: Participant details – Participants from vulnerable groups

You must indicate if any of the participants in your sample group are in the categories listed. Any Department of Health funded research involving participants who might not have the capacity to consent may need to go through the new Social Care Research Ethics Committee (http://www.screc.org.uk/), unless it is already being reviewed through NRES. If your research subjects fall into any of the specified groups, you will need to justify their inclusion in the study, and find out whether you will require a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) (formerly Criminal Records Bureau -CRB) check.

Members of staff requiring DBS checks should contact Human Resources hr@uwe.ac.uk. DBS checks for students will usually be organised through the student's faculty, but students in faculties without a DBS countersignatory should contact Leigh Taylor (Leigh.Taylor@uwe.ac.uk).

Please note: Evidence of a DBS check should take the form of an email from the relevant countersignatory confirming the researcher has a valid DBS check for working with children and/or vulnerable adults. It will be the responsibility of the applicant to provide this confirmation.

Question 4: Participant details – Determination of sample size, identification and recruitment of participants

In this section, you should explain the rationale for your sample size and describe how you will identify and approach potential participants and recruit them to your study.

Question 5: Informed consent and withdrawal

Informed consent is an ethical requirement of the research process. Applicants should demonstrate that they are conversant with and have given due consideration to the need for informed consent and that any consent forms prepared for the study ensure that potential research participants are given sufficient information about a study, in a format they understand, to enable them to exercise their right to make an informed decision whether or not to participate in a research study.

Consent must be freely given with sufficient detail to indicate what participating in the study will involve. Withdrawal from future participation in research is always at the discretion of the participant. There should be no penalty for withdrawing and the participant is not required to provide any reason.

You should describe how you will obtain informed consent from the participants and, where this is written consent, include copies of participant information sheets and consent forms. Where other forms of consent are obtained (eg verbal, recorded) you should explain the processes you intend to use. See also data access, storage and security below.

Question 6: Confidentiality/anonymity

You should explain what measures you plan to take to ensure that the information provided by research participants is anonymised/pseudonymised (where appropriate) and how it will be kept confidential. In the event that the data are not to be anonymised/pseudonymised, please provide a justification.

Personal data is defined as 'personal information about a living person which is being, or which will be processed as part of a relevant filing system. This personal information includes for example, opinions, photographs and voice recordings' (UWE Data Protection Act 1998, Guidance for Employees).

Question 7: Data access, storage and security

Describe how you will store the data, who will have access to it, and what happens to it at the end of the project. If your research is externally funded, the research sponsors may have specific requirements for retention of records. You should consult the terms and conditions of grant awards for details.

It may be appropriate for the research data to be offered to a data archive. If this is the case, it is important that consent for this is included in the participant consent form.

UWE IT Services provides data protection and encryption facilities - see http://www.uwe.ac.uk/its-staff/corporate/ourpolicies/intranet/encryption_facilities_provided_by_uwe_itservices.shtml

Question 8: Risk and risk management – Risks faced by participants

Describe ethical issues related to the physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing of the participants, and what you will do to protect their wellbeing. If you do not envisage there being any risks to the participants, please make it clear that you have considered the possibility and justify your approach.

Question 9: Risk and risk management – Potential risks to researchers

Describe any health and safety issues including risks and dangers for both the participants and yourself (if appropriate) and what you will do about them. This might include, for instance, arrangements to ensure that a supervisor or co-researcher has details of your whereabouts and a means of contacting you when you conduct interviews away from your base; or ensuring that a 'chaperone' is available if necessary for one-to-one interviews.

Question 10: Publication and dissemination of research results

Please indicate in which forms and formats the results of the research will be communicated.

Question 11: Other ethical issues

This gives the researcher the opportunity to raise any other ethical issues considered in planning the research or which the researcher feels need raising with the Committee.

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW

This application form should be completed by members of staff and Phd/ Prof Doc students undertaking **research which involves human participants**. U/G and M level students are required to complete this application form where their project has been referred for review by a supervisor to a Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) in accordance with the policy at http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/researchethics/. For **research using human tissues**, please see separate policy, procedures and guidance linked from http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/researchethics/.

Please note that the research should not commence until written approval has been received from the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) or Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC). You should bear this in mind when setting a start date for the project.

This form should be submitted electronically to the Officer of the Research Ethics Committee (see list above at page 1) together with all supporting documentation (research proposal, participant information sheet, consent form etc).

Please provide all the information requested and justify where appropriate.

For further guidance, please see http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/researchethics/ *(applicants' information) or contact the officer for UREC/your Faculty Research Ethics Committee (details at page 1).*

Project Details:

Project title	Circles of Support and Accountability – Social Action Fund			
Is this project externally funded?	Yes X		No	
If externally funded, please give details of project funder	**Cabinet Office –Social Action Fund**			
Proposed project start date	1 November 2013	Anticipated project end date	30th March 2014	

Applicant Details:

Name of researcher	Dr Kieran McCartan

(applicant)	
Faculty and Department	HAS/Social Sciences
Status (Staff/ PG Student/MSc Student/Undergraduate)	staff
Email address	Kieran.mccartan@uwe.ac.uk
Contact postal address	
Contact telephone number	
Name of co-researchers (where applicable)	

For All Applicants:		
Has external ethics approval been sought for this research?	Yes X	No
If yes, please supply details: We are going through the National Offender Management services ethics application procedure so that we can access and interview Probation Officers. This will be submitted in March.		

For student applicants only:	
Name of Supervisor / Director of Studies (for PG/MSc and UG student applicants)[1]	

Details of course/degree for which research is being undertaken	

¹*For student applications, supervisors should ensure that all of the following are satisfied before the study begins:*

- The topic merits further research;

- The student has the skills to carry out the research;

- The participant information sheet or leaflet is appropriate;

- The procedures for recruitment of research participants and obtaining informed consent are appropriate.

Department of Supervisor / Director of Studies	
Supervisor's / Director of Studies' email address	
Supervisor's / Director of Studies' telephone number	
Supervisor's / Director of Studies' comments:	

Details of the proposed work:

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS. IF YOU THINK THE QUESTION IS NOT APPROPRIATE, PLEASE STATE WHY.

---

1. Aims, objectives of and background to the research:

Background – Circles UK

Circles UK will be the lead, co-ordinating the delivery and activities of 5 other partners; Circles South East; Circles South West; Yorkshire and Humberside Circles; Circles North East and the University of the West of England (Dr Kieran Mccartan, researcher). Circles of Support and Accountability work closely with other local partners. The projects partners for instance have formal referral and partnership agreements with 15 Probation Trusts and their corresponding Police forces. Other VCSE partners are indicated elsewhere in this paper. The geographical areas of delivery will be Hampshire; Kent; Thames Valley; Surrey; Sussex; Avon & Somerset; Gloucestershire; Wiltshire; West Yorkshire; Northumbria; and Durham Tees Valley.

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA or 'Circles') is a proven Social Action initiative, using significant numbers of volunteers who work together to create safer communities and reduce sexual offending. A Circle is a group of volunteers from a local community meeting regularly with a sex offender recently released from prison. In Circles, the offender is referred to as the 'Core Member'. Each Circle consists of four to six volunteers, and the Core Member. The Circle aims to provide a unique and supportive social network to counteract the isolation which can be such a dangerous factor in leading to further sexual offences. Circles also affirm the need for the Core Member to be 'accountable' for their on-going risk management. The Circle provides support and practical guidance in developing social skills, finding suitable accommodation, employment and helping the Core Member to find appropriate social activities.

Volunteers are informed of the Core Member's past offending so can assist them in better managing patterns of thought and behaviour that could otherwise result in their re-offending.

Within the Circle, the Core Member can grow in confidence and develop appropriate adult relationships, maximising his or her chances of successfully re-integrating into the community. Circles meet weekly at the beginning of the process and this may reduce as the Core Member progresses. Circles usually last between 12-18 months.
Core Members are referred by their Offender Manager, based on suitability, which is predominantly driven by their commitment to cease offending behaviour; level of risk that they pose to communities; levels of isolation; and preparedness to accept the close liaison between volunteers and statutory agencies.

The volunteers are managed and supported by a Circles Co-ordinator, who is an experienced criminal justice professional. All Co-ordinators and volunteers undertake a comprehensive training programme, designed by Circles UK, who set the national standards (Code of Practice) for all CoSA delivery, as required of them by the Ministry of Justice.

Volunteers provide a weekly report to the Co-ordinator, who reports regularly to the Offender Manager. If there is any concern there is an apparent risk of a further offence, there is no

hesitation in reporting this to the Offender Manager and this has resulted on some occasions in a recall. This is not a 'failure' of the Circle because the prevention of reoffending is the over-riding objective.

Circles volunteers come from all walks of life and from all age groups (late teens to early seventies) and we currently have over 600 volunteers nationwide. Being willing to give their time to CoSA for up to 18 months, demonstrates a strong commitment. One of our volunteers, Seona, said *"I feel if we save one child, even one, in the future from being the victim of abuse, then it's got to be worth it"*.

We recruit our volunteers from the local communities where CoSA have a Core Member requiring a Circle. We recruit in various places including volunteer bureaus, Universities, Magistrates Courts, Police Stations, Probation, Health, Education and Social Services.

Volunteers attend an initial two day training course, covering key areas of work including sex offender typology, role-play, monitoring and self-care, enabling the projects and individuals to assess suitability. Some people may be deselected either by the project or themselves. Volunteers are required to sign a declaration to adhere to appropriate boundaries and safeguarding Codes of Conduct. DBS checks are undertaken and two references prior to volunteers starting their work in a Circle.

Background – current sex offender climate

Transforming Rehabilitation is the Coalition's radical reformation of the justice system, creating greater involvement of the private and voluntary sectors in offender rehabilitation. Having successfully applied the principles of competition to the prison estate, this approach is now being extended to community based offender services, meaning new opportunities for provider organisations to deliver services. The new National Probation Service will retain responsibility for the supervision of high risk offenders, including those subject to MAPPA. Levels of payment will relate directly to reductions in offending, comprising combined 'service fees' and PbR.

Our programme is designed with these changes in mind. We offer a cost effective, specialist intervention for sex offenders which *NOMS Commissioning Intentions 2013/14* highlights as a *'promising approach (more evidence needed)'*.

Evidence of need
- The number of Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs) rose by 32% to over 40,000 between 2006/7 and 2011/12 (MAPPA Annual Report 2011/12)

- Sexual Offender Prevention Orders (SOPOs) have increased year on year to 2,658 in 2011/12

- SOPOs are increasingly being used by the Police to manage sex offenders in the community: the number of sex offenders returned to custody for breach of SOPO has increased 40% from 2010/11.

- Across the programme areas in 2011/12 there were 709 RSOs at MAPPA levels 2 and 3 potentially eligible for a Circle. Of these we had the capacity only to work with 35 (5%).

- Circles services are experiencing increased referrals and most projects have waiting lists

These statistics demonstrate the upward trend in sexual convictions and the significant gap between need and capacity.

Aims

The Circles Social Action programme proposes to utilise the skills and commitment of approximately **300 volunteers to work with and support 60 offenders**, **who are medium or high risk sex offenders** according to 'Risk Matrix 2000'. The majority have committed serious offences against children or young people, have been released from significant prison sentences and are under the management of Probation and /or the Police through MAPPA. They are expressly saying they wish to lead an offence-free-life.

The evaluation will focus on the real world impact of CoSA as a means of social reintegration for offenders and a vehicle for community engagement in Criminal Justice issues. The research will address issues including how we get communities to engage in offender reintegration; how communities and the criminal justice system can work in partnership with ex-offenders; and how in this age of social and institutional change, the big society can operate to respond to austerity. The evaluation will use three types of triangulation:

1) Through the range of participants involved in CoSA process i.e. Core Members, Volunteers and professionals
2) Through the methodologies used i.e. case file reviews, qualitative methodologies and quantitative methodologies
3) Geographical spread of the sites/CoSA projects being used i.e. Circles South West, Circles South East, Circles North East and Circles Yorkshire & Humber.

This ensures that the evaluation will be rigorous, critical and generalizable, enabling us to see the social impact that the programme has in tenable terms both for the individuals involved and society as a whole.

2. Research methodology to be used (include a copy of the interview schedule/ questionnaire/ observation schedule where appropriate):

Methodology

The research will use a mixed methods approach including;

- Core Member case studies (collected via excel and analysed through standard data collection formats(n = 60)
- We intend to undertake a matched studies sample (control group of ex-offenders who were offered CoSA in these regions but did not receive it – matched group provided by Police and/or Probation)
- Mixed methods research with volunteers (n = 300), Core members (n = 60) and practitioners (n = 24) collected through an online questionnaire which will comprise a series of Likert scales, demographic questions, nominal questions and qualitative short

answer questions
- Interviews will identify interim and 'soft' data results such as achievements in securing stable accommodation ; employment and pro-social activities; improved health and 'dependencies' history
- A series of in-depth follow up qualitative interviews with a cross section of all three participant pools.

This approach meets the NESTA guidelines as it shows the impact of CoSA on an individual, community, local, regional and national level and building on the organisations previous internal and external evaluations. The evaluation also will show Core Member change through the case studies which charts their progress throughout the programme, supplemented by the mixed methodology aspect of the evaluation as well as through a comparison to a non-CoSA matched sample.

Structure and layout[3]

	CM		Volunteers		Practitioners	
Jan / Feb	Develop questionnaire, interview schedules and obtain ethics	Ongoing Quantitative data collection	Develop questionnaires, interview schedules and obtain ethics		Develop questionnaires, interview schedules and obtain ethics	Contact NOMS about access and complete paperwork
Mar						
Apr			Release and complete online questionnaires			
May						
June						
July						
Aug	Contact participants and Conduct interviews			Contact participants and Conduct interviews	Contact participants and Conduct interviews	
Sept						
Oct						
Nov						
Dec						
JAN – APR/MAY 2015 –data analyze and report writing						

Volunteer Research

1. **Quantitative.** An online questionnaire has been developed with myself, the 4 projects and CoSA UK (Appendix 1). This questionnaire is a mix of likert scale, nominal data and short answer questions. This will be released by the early summer, with it being distributed online via qualtrics. It will be distributed to all the volunteers who are working with one of these funded core members.

2. **Qualitative:** This will be captured in the 2nd half of 2014 (JUNE – DECEMBER). I will conduct all the interviews, either by SKYPE or in person interviews. Each of the projects will be asked to

---

[3] All participants will be obtained through structured sampling, with the Core Members, stakeholders/probation as well as Volunteers being recommended by CoSA projects.

volunteer 5 core members to take part in an interview (therefore 20 core member interviews in total). The interviews will be an expansion of the quantitative questionnaire (see appendix 2).

CM research

3. **Quantitative.** This will be captured over the full academic year as CMs enter and progress through a circle. It will be captured as a matter of course for all CMs. We will ask for a range of data including;

   a. A referral form pre circle: this will explain why a person was allocated a circle or refused one (which will help with the matched samples pairing). This is recorded on an excel spreadsheet as a matter of course by all the projects. [**KMC will collect this data directly from the 4 projects**]

   b. DRR (Core Member): The Core Member will complete a DRR (Dynamic Risk Review – this is a quantitative and Qualitative risk assessment tool, a copy can be supplied if the ethics board wish to see it) with the co-ordinator themselves three times a year, at the same time as the one the volunteers complete with the co-ordinator. This is to involve the "user" in the process; get them to think about/reflect upon their experiences as well as progress; and to be able to compare the CM as well as the volunteer DRR to evaluate progress. The CM DRR will not be shared with the volunteers. [**KMC will collect this data directly from CoSA UK**]

   c. DRR (Volunteers): The volunteers will fill out a DRR (Dynamic Risk Review – this is a quantitative and Qualitative risk assessment tool, a copy can e supplied if the ethics board wish to see it) 3 times per year as per normal. **KMC will collect this data directly from CoSA UK**]

   d. Core Member Demographics: This is an excel spreadsheet completed at the start and end of a circle as per normal (a copy can be supplied if the ethics board wish to see it). **KMC will collect this data directly from CoSA UK**]

   e. End of Circle Report: This is a document that is completed at the end of a circle (a copy can be supplied if the ethics board wish to see it). [**KMC will collect this data directly from the 4 projects**]

This data will be collated separately and then placed on to a case study review template and placed onto to a single SPSS database (the format of both have been developed by McCartan & Kemshall as part of the MoJ evaluation of Circles; this can be supled on demand).

All of this data is collected by CoSA as a matter of course through the running of a normal circle, we will not ask them to collect anything additional. I have been permitted access to all of this data by Circles UK and each of the 4 regional projects involved, also I will be doing a number of site visits to collect data and examine their data storage techniques.

Pre-circle	Referral form
Month 1	Core Member Demographic
Month 2	
Month 3	DRR (Core Member), DRR (Volunteers)
Month 4	
Month 5	
Month 6	
Month 7	DRR (Core Member), DRR (Volunteers)
Month 8	
Month 9	
Month 10	
Month 11	DRR (Core Member), DRR (Volunteers)
Month 12	Core Member Demographic, End of Circle Report

4. **Qualitative:** This will be captured in the 2nd half of 2014 (JUNE – DECEMBER). I will conduct all the interviews, either by SKYPE or in person interviews. Each of the projects will be asked to volunteer 5 core members to take part in an interview (therefore 20 core member interviews in total) (see appendix 2).

Practitioner Research

5. **Qualitative:** This will be captured in the 2nd half of 2014 (JUNE – DECEMBER). I will conduct all the interviews, either by SKYPE or in person interviews. Each of the projects will be asked to suggest, or place me in contact with, approximately 8 practitioners to take part in an interview (therefore 36 core member interviews in total) (see appendix 2). These will be police, probation, prison staff and other relevant parties (i.e., therapists, counsellors etc).

This approach to evaluation will be cost effective given that it will analysis data that is already being collated by each circles project (case file data), can be conducted at distance (online mixed methods questionnaire) which results in minimal travel (only for a site visit and in-depth qualitative interviews). This means that we will be setting in place good evaluation practices for circles to reuse in the future as part of their own evaluation and to demonstrate their ability to upscale.

3. Selection of participants:

Will the participants be from any of the following groups?*(Tick as appropriate)*

☐ Children under 18

☐ Adults who are unable to consent for themselves[2]

☐ Adults who are unconscious, very severely ill or have a terminal illness

☐ Adults in emergency situations

☐ Adults with mental illness (particularly if detained under Mental Health Legislation)

☐ Prisoners

☐ Young Offenders

☐ Healthy Volunteers (where procedures may be adverse or invasive)

☐ Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator, e.g. those in care homes, medical students

■ Other vulnerable groups

X☐ None of the above

(² Please note, the Mental Capacity Act requires all intrusive research involving adults who are unable to consent for themselves to be scrutinised by an NHS Local Research Ethics Committee – Please consult the Chair of your Faculty Research Ethics Committee, or Alison Vaughton (RBI) for advice)

If any of the above applies, please justify their inclusion in this research:

Part of this research will involve looking at case files of some of the convicted sex offenders (n = 69) whom circles works with, a selection of these (n = 20) will be approached for interview. These participants are important to the research as the aim of the project is to see how circles assist them in their re-entry post release and positive social network building.

Note: If you are proposing to undertake research which involves contact with children or vulnerable adults, you may need to hold a valid DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service, formerly Criminal Records Bureau – CRB) check.

Where appropriate, please provide evidence of the check with your application.

4. Please explain how you will determine your sample size/recruitment strategy, and identify, approach and recruit your participants. Please explain arrangements made for participants who may not adequately understand verbal explanations or written information in English.

The participants will be obtained through a series of discussions with the relevant Circles projects and NOMs. All participants will be interviewed by the same person (Dr McCartan), have the same consent form (Appendix 3, 4) and be treated the same. Circles of Support and Accountability will not have access to any of the UWE developed tools (online questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews).

Core Members – Each CoSA project involved in the study will nominate a number of Core Members for interview from the specified 69 circles; Dr McCartan will randomly select 20 participants (5 from each project) to interview with the remaining recommendations being reserves in case of emergencies/problems.

Practitioners – Dr McCartan will (1) talk with each CoSA project to identify the key stakeholders that they

work with, and (2) talk with NOMs about their regional leads on sex offender treatment/management. From this combined list a series of names will be shortlisted and then contacted for interview. NOMs require the completion of an ethics form which Dr McCartan is writing currently to submit in late February.

Volunteers – All the volunteers working on the 69 specified circles will be contacted and asked to complete the online questionnaire, a cross section of these will then be contacted to take part in the interview.

5a. What are your arrangements for obtaining informed consent whether written, verbal or other? (where applicable, copies of participant information sheets and consent forms should be provided)

Participants will provide written consent on a prepared form (see appendix 3, 4) before the start of the online questionnaire and/or interview.

b. What arrangements are in place for participants to withdraw from the study?

Participants, in the quantitative and qualitative portions of the research, will have to sign a consent form prior to the start of the research stating, among other things, that they may withdraw from the study at any time prior to the evaluation of the data and this will be reiterated verbally at the start of the session.

6. If the research generates personal data, please describe the arrangements for maintaining anonymity and confidentiality or the reasons for not doing so.

The consent forms and transcripts for the interviews will be in paper form and contain personal data and will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office on Frenchay campus. After the project is complete they will be destroyed in confidential waste.

The online questionnaires will be collected via Qualtrics, the only person with access to the site will be Dr MccCartan, with all the data being ammonised at point of entry.

All the research tools will be completely anonymous will not contain names or identifiable details.

7. Please describe how you will store data collected in the course of your research and maintain data protection.

All computers used in the research are password protected. The device used to record interviews will be password protected. When not in use the recording device will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in a locked staff office on the Frenchay campus. Data stored on computer will be encrypted and the computer will be password protected. Only UWE research team members will have access to the data either in the form of recordings or transcripts. No data will be taken off campus. Once the study has been

published all data relating to the project will be destroyed securely in confidential waste.

The transfer of data amongst the research team will only be done by password protected memory stick and never email. The memory stick will be wiped or destroyed at the end of the project.

The audio recordings of the interviews will be erased once the project has been finalised

8. What risks (eg physical, psychological, social, legal or economic), if any, do the participants face in taking part in this research and how will you overcome these risks?

We are not asking any of the Core Members, Volunteers or Practitioners about their experiences of sexual violence or their personal history; the research is about the role of Circles of Support and Accountability has in the ex-offenders reintegration. The participants are all involved in Circles of Support and Accountability in some capacity (i.e., as a referrer, stakeholder, Core Member or Volunteer) and therefore understand the role and responsibilities of the organisation, this research in many ways is a process evaluation and will address these roles as well as functions. However, the sensitive nature of the material covered, may have impact upon all participants and may trigger emotional reactions as well as embarrassment and stress. Dr McCartan will provide consent forms, briefing materials and then (where appropriate) brief the participants in person. They will be assured there will be no judgements made about their responses and that all data will remain confidential with Dr McCartan, not Circles UK, only having access. Dr McCartan also ensures that contact details of relevant specialist services are available both in writing and verbally; all participants will be given a copy.

One issue that could arise is a disclosure during the interviews (especially with volunteers and/or Core Members) is where an issue of public protection is raised and gives cause for concern or a disclosure reveals that a participant or another person identified in the interview is in significant and immediate danger. The researcher will be obliged to take action in response to that disclosure. UWE Safeguarding procedures will be activated. Dr McCartan is aware of what to do in this situation – i.e stop the focus group and pass on the information to staff and other agencies where relevant and activate UWE safeguarding policy.

Dr McCartan will also take time at the start of the interviews to ensure that the participants understand the implications of making a disclosure and the duty to pass that information on.

9 Are there any potential risks to researchers and any other people impacted by this study as a consequence of undertaking this proposal that are greater than those encountered in normal day to day life?

Dr McCartan has extensive experience in conducting research in and around sexual offending. He is aware

of the impact and consequences of the topic upon himself. Dr McCartan will take part in a number of research and process group meetings throughout the research process which will help him identify and discuss any issues of that he has with the work. Dr McCartan has knowledge of and access to relevant specialist services that can provide support should a team members decide that they need to discuss arise arising from the project.

All research will be carried out on approved premises with members of CoSA and/or related criminal justice agencies nearby; Dr McCartan will not meet ex-offenders or volunteers in their homes or in public spaces.

10 How will the results of the research be reported and disseminated?

(Select all that apply)

X☐ **Peer reviewed journal**

X☐ **Conference presentation**

☐ **Internal report**

☐ **Dissertation/Thesis**

☐ **Other publication**

X☐ **Written feedback to research participants**

X☐ **Presentation to participants or relevant community groups**

☐ **Other (Please specify below)**

11 Are there any other ethical issues that have not been addressed which you would wish to bring to the attention of the Faculty and/or University Research Ethics Committee?

N/A

Checklist

Please complete before submitting the form.

	Yes/No
Is a copy of the research proposal attached?	Y
Have you explained how you will select the participants?	Y
Have you described the ethical issues related to the well-being of participants?	Y
Have you considered health and safety issues for the participants and researchers?	Y
Have you included details of data protection including data storage?	Y
Have you described fully how you will maintain confidentiality?	Y
Is a participant consent form attached?	Y
Is a participant information sheet attached?	Y
Is a copy of your questionnaire/topic guide attached?	Y
Where applicable, is evidence of a current DBS (formerly CRB) check attached?	NA

Declaration

The information contained in this application, including any accompanying information, is to the best of my knowledge, complete and correct. I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting this research and acknowledge my obligations and the right of the participants.

Principal Investigator name	Dr Kieran McCartan
Signature	Kieran McCartan
Date	7/2/14
Supervisor or module leader name (where appropriate)	

Signature	
Date	7/2/14

The signed form should be emailed to the Officer of the Research Ethics Committee (details at page 1) and email copied to the Supervisor/Director of Studies where applicable.

Appendix 1

The questionnaire is online: http://uwehls.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_1AgNk4XTwrrkBP7

If you would like a paper copy please contact me.

Appendix 2

Semi Structured interview schedule

All participants (Practitioner, CM and Volunteer) will receive the same semi-structured interview so that consistency across the board maybe maintained, this means that the phasing may change with each interview but the content will remain the same.

13. How did you find out about Circles of Support and Accountability?

14. What attracted you to want to participate in Circles of Support and Accountability?

15. Please let me a bit about your degree of involvement in circles (i.e., length of time involved, role, etc)

16. What role do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability plays in the management of offenders in the community?

17. Where do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability sits within the criminal justice system currently?

18. Do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability enables core members to reintegrate back into society?

19. Do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability enables core members to confront their offending behaviour?

20. Do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability enables core members to reduce reoffending?

21. Do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability enables core members to develop a positive social network?

22. Do you feel that Circles of Support and Accountability enables core members to make as well as maintain new relationships?

23. What do you think that you have gained from your involvement with Circles of Support and Accountability?

24. Would you recommend Circles of Support and Accountability to another person?

Appendix 3

Dear Participant,

My name is Dr Kieran McCartan and I am a researcher in Criminology at the University of the West of England, Bristol. I am contacting you in regard to your potential involvement in a current research project involving myself and Circles UK, funded by the Cabinet Office, which focuses on the impact of social action on the reintegration of disadvantaged groups; in the case of this research project, sex offenders.

The aim of the current research is to determine whether social action orientated initiatives involving the community, like Circles of Support and Accountability, helps socially disadvantaged groups (re)integrate into the community and enable them to live positive lives.

A large portion of the community engagement work done by Circles of Support and Accountability is achieved through the work of its volunteers; consequentially, this interview will examine your attitudes, based upon your experiences, towards the remit as well as impact of Circles of Support and Accountability. The research will adhere to regulatory ethical guidelines (UWE; ESRC; British Psychological Society; British Society of Criminology); and the research will be participant focused (i.e., participant(s) having the opportunity to take breaks, ask questions and have access to their transcribed data as well as the resulting publications). As the research is asking for the participants' personal perspectives and opinions there is absolutely no deception involved in this study. Hence, the researcher is only gauge your perspectives and not trying to catch you out, confuse you or trying to gain your support unawares. It is only your true perspective that matters, so please be as honest as possible. The research will be conducted by myself and all the questionnaires will be returned to and analyzed by me, Circles of Support and

Accountability will have no access to primary data. Therefore please feel free to be as candid as you wish.

All the personal participant information gathered throughout the research (including but not limited to your name, contact details or your transcript/recorded data) will remain strictly confidential. No-one will know who completed the research or which opinions/attitudes are linked to specific participants. The only person that will have access to the material will be the researcher with all the participant records (audio recordings, transcriptions, participant list) being securely stored. In the final written documentation no-one will be mentioned by name and all information will be described in qualitative or quantitative terms.

All participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage; they do not have to give any reason for doing so. The researcher will be available before, during and after the study to answer any questions relating to the material covered within. However, in saying this it does not mean that they will be expert enough to answer all potential questions that are raised. In response to this they will be able to provide reading material and/or agency contacts to help the participants deal with any relevant queries.

All the material collected in the experiment will be destroyed in due course, with the data being kept for the period of the research, data analysis and write up in line with British Psychological Society and British Society of Criminology publication recommendations. Unless the participant withdraws from the research, then it will be destroyed immediately (please note: that the participants' involvement in the focus group would be ignored and removed with the remainder of the group discussion remaining intact).

It is important that you fully understand all the ethical issues involved in this piece of research and that you take them into account when deciding to participate in this study. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me (Kieran.mccartan@uwe.ac.uk).

I understand the remit of the research and what is being asked of me as a participant. I hereby give my explicit consent to participate in the research.

Participant name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 4

(This will be a completed as part of the online questionnaire)

Dear Participant,

My name is Dr Kieran McCartan and I am a researcher in Criminology at the University of the West of England, Bristol. I am contacting you in regard to your potential involvement in a current research project involving myself and Circles UK, funded by the Cabinet Office, which focuses on the impact of social action on the reintegration of disadvantaged groups; in the case of this research project, sex offenders.

The aim of the current research is to determine whether social action orientated initiatives involving the community, like Circles of Support and Accountability, helps socially disadvantaged groups (re)integrate into the community and enable them to live positive lives.

A large portion of the community engagement work done by Circles of Support and Accountability is achieved through the work of its volunteers; consequentially, this questionnaire will look at volunteer attitudes to and understandings of the work that they do. The research will adhere to regulatory ethical guidelines (UWE; ESRC; British Psychological Society; British Society of Criminology); and the research will be participant focused (i.e., participant(s) having the opportunity to take breaks, ask questions and have access to their transcribed data as well as the resulting publications). As the research is asking for the participants' personal perspectives and opinions there is absolutely no deception involved in this study. Hence, the researcher is only gauge your perspectives and not trying to catch you out, confuse you or trying to gain your support unawares. It is only your true perspective that matters, so please be as honest as possible. The research will be conducted by myself and all the questionnaires will be returned to and analyzed by me, Circles of Support and Accountability will have no access to primary data. Therefore please feel free to be as candid as you wish.

All the personal participant information gathered throughout the research (including but not limited to your name, contact details or your transcript/recorded data) will remain strictly confidential. No-one will know who completed the research or which opinions/attitudes are linked to specific participants. The only person that will have access to the material will be the researcher with all the participant records (audio recordings, transcriptions, participant list) being securely stored. In the final written documentation (i.e., data, spss output, etc) no-one will be mentioned by name and all information will be described in qualitative or quantitative terms.

All participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage; they do not have to give any reason for doing so. The researcher will be available before, during and after the study to answer any questions relating to the material covered within. However, in saying this it does not mean that they will be expert enough to answer all potential questions that are raised. In response to this they will be able to provide reading material and/or agency contacts to help the participants deal with any relevant queries.

All the material collected in the experiment will be destroyed in due course, with the data being kept for the period of the research, data analysis and write up in line with British Psychological Society and British Society of Criminology publication recommendations.

Unless the participant withdraws from the research, then it will be destroyed immediately (please note: that the participants' involvement in the focus group would be ignored and removed with the remainder of the group discussion remaining intact).

It is important that you fully understand all the ethical issues involved in this piece of research and that you take them into account when deciding to participate in this study. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me (Kieran.mccartan@uwe.ac.uk).

I understand the remit of the research and what is being asked of me as a participant. I hereby give my explicit consent to participate in the research.

Yes   no