

# Evaluating Circles of Support and Accountability

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Successes, Failures and Everything  
In-between

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## Contents

<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Terminology used in this Thesis .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>17</b>
1.1: Research Context .....	20
1.2: Aims and Objectives.....	21
1.3: Research Questions & Structure of the thesis .....	21
<b>Chapter 2 Literature Review .....</b>	<b>24</b>
2.1 The First Circle of Support and Accountability .....	25
2.2: The Development of Circles UK .....	26
2.3: Applying Theory to Circles: Retrospectively Applied Theory .....	27
2.4: Circle Principles: Support, Monitor, Maintain .....	30
2.5: Applying Theory to Circles: Newly Proposed Theory.....	33
2.6: Circle Volunteers.....	34
2.7: Circles: The Research .....	35
2.7a: Development of the UK based Pilot Projects.....	35
2.7b: Case Study Research .....	35
2.7c: Theories of Motivation Applied to Circles .....	36
2.7d: Minnesota Circles .....	38
2.7e: A UK based Cost-Benefit Analysis .....	39
2.7f: A Matched-Control of UK Circles.....	39
2.7g: Circles in the Netherlands .....	40
2.7h: Vermont Circles .....	42
2.7i: UK Based Qualitative Research.....	43
2.7j: A Return to Minnesota Circles.....	44
2.7k: Defining Success and Failure in Circles.....	45
2.7l: Circles in Australia.....	45
2.8: Conclusion .....	46
<b>Chapter 3 Methodology.....</b>	<b>47</b>
3.1: Selecting a Methodological Approach .....	47
3.2: Alternative Methods .....	49
3.3: Quantitative Data .....	49
3.4: Qualitative Data.....	50
3.5: Measures.....	51

3.6: Mixed Methods Convergent Design .....	51
3.7: Ethical Considerations.....	52
3.7a: Informed Consent .....	52
3.7b: Confidentiality .....	53
3.7c: Data Protection Plan.....	54
3.8: Data Collection .....	54
3.9: Analysis .....	55
3.9a: Statistical Analysis .....	56
3.9b: Thematic Analysis .....	57
<b>Chapter 4 Conceptualising Success and Failure.....</b>	<b>59</b>
4.1: Abstract .....	59
4.2: Introduction.....	59
4.3: Benefits of Circles .....	61
4.4: Guiding Principles of Circles .....	62
4.5: Defining Success in Circles.....	63
4.6: Defining Failure in Circles.....	65
4.7: Volunteer Disbandment.....	66
4.8: Core Member Exclusion .....	67
4.9: Potential Implications of Circle Attrition and Dropout .....	70
4.10: Conceptualising Success and Failure Beyond the term of the Circle .....	71
4.11 Limitations .....	75
4.12: Summary .....	76
<b>Chapter 5 Developing a Typology of Circles .....</b>	<b>77</b>
5.1: Abstract .....	77
5.2: Introduction.....	77
5.2a: Rationale.....	78
5.2b: Aims and Research Questions .....	79
5.3: Method.....	79
5.3a: Participants .....	80
5.3b: Data Collection.....	80
5.3c: Measures .....	80
5.3d: Procedure .....	81
5.3e: Data Wrangling .....	82
5.3f: Data Coding .....	82
5.3g: Analysis.....	82
5.3h: Part 1: Analysis of Circle Endings .....	85

5.3i: Part 2: Binary Logistic Regression .....	90
5.3j: Part 3: Multinomial Logistic Regression .....	93
5.4: Discussion .....	96
5.5: Limitations .....	98
5.6: Implications .....	100
5.7: Conclusion .....	100
<b>Chapter 6 Dynamic Risk Review: A Factor Analysis .....</b>	<b>101</b>
6.1: Abstract .....	101
6.2: Introduction.....	101
6.2a: Dynamic Risk Review.....	101
6.3: Rationale .....	104
6.3a: Aims and Research Questions .....	104
6.4: DRR Exploratory Factor Analysis.....	104
6.5:Method .....	104
6.5a: Participants and Data Collection.....	104
6.5b: Analysis.....	105
6.5c: Results .....	105
6.6: Factors and Circles Outcomes .....	111
6.7: Discussion.....	111
6.7a: Exploratory Factor Analysis .....	111
6.7b: Poor Emotional Wellbeing.....	112
6.7c: Sexual Preoccupation and Emotional Identification with Children.....	112
6.7d: Poor Problem Solving and Low Pro-social Engagement.....	113
6.8: Limitations.....	115
6.9: Implications .....	115
6.10: Conclusion .....	115
<b>Chapter 7 Investigation into Core Member Dynamic Risk &amp; Emotional Wellbeing .....</b>	<b>116</b>
7.1: Abstract .....	116
7.2: Introduction.....	116
7.2a: Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale .....	117
7.2b Rationale .....	118
7.2c: Aims and Research Questions.....	119
7.3: Risk and Wellbeing: Change over time .....	119
Method .....	119
7.3a: Participants and Data Collection.....	119
7.4: Analysis & Results .....	119

7.4a: Dynamic Risk.....	120
7.4b: Wellbeing.....	125
7.4c: Dynamic Risk and Wellbeing Interactions .....	133
7.4d: Risk and Wellbeing Interactions split by outcome.....	136
7.5: Discussion.....	138
7.5a: Risk and Wellbeing: Change Over Time.....	138
7.6: Limitations.....	142
7.7: Implications .....	142
7.8: Conclusion .....	142
<b>CHAPTER 8 End of Circle Reports .....</b>	<b>143</b>
8.1: Abstract .....	143
8.2: Introduction.....	143
8.2a: Rationale.....	144
8.2b: Aims and Research Questions .....	144
8.3: Method.....	144
8.3a: Participants .....	144
8.3b: Data Collection.....	145
8.3c: Procedure .....	146
8.3d: Analysis.....	146
8.4: Results.....	146
8.4a: Successful Circles .....	150
8.4b: Unsuccessful Circles .....	156
8.5: Discussion.....	162
8.6: Limitations.....	166
8.7: Implications .....	167
8.8: Conclusion .....	168
<b>Chapter 9 Case Studies .....</b>	<b>170</b>
9.1: Abstract .....	170
9.2: Introduction.....	170
9.2a: Rationale.....	171
9.2b: Aims and Research Questions .....	171
9.3: Method.....	171
9.3a: Participants .....	172
9.3b: Data Collection.....	173
9.4: Analysis .....	175
9.5: Results.....	176

9.5a: Case Study one: Martin .....	176
9.5b: Case Study Two: Elaine.....	187
9.5c: Case Study Three: Ryan .....	193
9.6: Discussion.....	197
9.7: Limitations.....	199
9.8 Implications .....	200
9.9 Conclusion .....	200
<b>Chapter 10 Discussion .....</b>	<b>201</b>
10.1: Aim 1: Offer a framework as a means to conceptualise success and failure in Circles .....	203
10.2: Aim 2: Understand what contributes to different Circle outcomes .....	206
10.3: Aim 3: Learn from Failure.....	209
10.4: Aim 4: Contribute toward a large national UK evaluation of Circles .....	211
10.5: Social Exchange, Circle Reciprocity and Relational Desistance .....	211
10.6: Reflections.....	218
10.7: Limitations.....	221
10.8: Implications .....	222
10.9: Conclusions.....	224
<b>References .....</b>	<b>226</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>242</b>



## List of Tables

Table 1 Research Questions and Associated Studies which aim to provide answers .....	22
Table 2 Measures used within each study.....	51
Table 3 Research Process for Mixed Methods Convergent Design.....	52
Table 4 Indicators of Success and Failure in the Literature .....	64
Table 5 Decision Matrix of Circle Endings and Outcome Definitions .....	69
Table 6 Timepoints of data collection for WEMWBS, DRR and EOQR .....	82
Table 7 Circle Endings with Coding Variations and total counts of each coding type.....	89
Table 8 Data Frequencies for Discussion of Risk and Core Member Substance Abuse.....	90
Table 9 Data Frequencies for Volunteer-Core Member Relationship Quality.....	90
Table 10 Raw Data & Merged Data Categories.....	93
Table 11 Descriptive Statistics of Individual Items .....	106
Table 12 Total Variance .....	108
Table 13 Pattern Matrix for Factor Analysis of DRR items .....	110
Table 14 Changes in Mean DRR Scores for (n=59) Core Members .....	120
Table 15 Changes in Mean DRR Scores for (n=42) Successful Outcomes.....	122
Table 16 Changes in Mean DRR Scores for Circles with Unsuccessful Outcomes (Matched Pairs Sample).....	125
Table 17 Core Members mean WEMWBS scores from pre to post Circles compared to a male community sample (n=783, mean=51.3).....	126
Table 18 WEMWBS means and standard deviations for Core Member wellbeing (successful outcomes) over time .....	128
Table 19 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Core Member Wellbeing at Pre-Circle, 3 Months and 6 Months .....	130
Table 20 Changes in Mean WEMWBS Scores for (n=27) Successful Outcomes .....	132
Table 21 Changes in Mean WEMWBS Scores for (n=8) Unsuccessful Outcomes .....	133
Table 22 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of total DRR and WEMWBS Scores at 3, 6 and 9 Months .....	133
Table 23 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of DRR and WEMWBS Scores at 3, 6 and 9 Months for successful Circles.....	136
Table 24 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of DRR and WEMWBS Scores at 3 and 6 Months for unsuccessful Circles.....	138
Table 25 Core Members MAPPA level at beginning and end of Circle.....	145
Table 26 Themes from thematic analysis .....	150
Table 27 Case Studies with Participants and Ending Type.....	173
Table 28 Selected Case Studies with Core Member Demographic data and offence histories .....	175

## List of Figures

Figure 1 Graphic Representation of the Circles Model Comprising Two Concentric Circle .....	19
Figure 2 The Three Key Principles (Saunders & Wilson, 2013) .....	32
Figure 3 Circles Timeline.....	73
Figure 4 Core Member index offences with percentages.....	84
Figure 5 Core Member Sentences for index offences with Percentages .....	84
Figure 6 Circle Endings by Outcome.....	87
Figure 7 Classification of Correctly Predicted Outcomes (Success & Failure) .....	92
Figure 8 Classification of Correctly Predicted Outcomes (Successful Completions, Dropouts, Recall/Rearrests).....	95
Figure 9 Changes in DRR Scores over time for (n=59) Core Members .....	121
Figure 10 Mean Change in DRR Scores for (n=42 Successful Outcomes) .....	124
Figure 11 Changes in Core Member Wellbeing over time and a Population Sample .....	127
Figure 12 Mean wellbeing scores for Core Members and the male general population sample.....	129
Figure 13 Changes in Core Member Wellbeing from Pre-Circle to 6 Months .....	131
Figure 14 Correlation of Dynamic Risk and Wellbeing at 3, 6 and 9 Months (all outcomes) .....	135
Figure 15 Correlation of Dynamic Risk and Wellbeing at 3, 6 and 9 Months (successful outcomes)	137
Figure 16 Circle Endings Reported in EOCR .....	147
Figure 17 Success and Failure categorised by the decision matrix .....	149

## Abstract

Circles of Support and Accountability is an approach that exists to reduce sexual recidivism and encourage reintegration through volunteer support in the community. Prior research has identified that Circles successfully reduce sexual recidivism risk and promote the wellbeing of those receiving support (Core Members). However, there are a small number of instances in which Circles are less effective and Circles have adverse outcomes, for example, Core Members reoffend. The present research was conducted as part of a wider national evaluation into the success and failure of Circles. The research aimed to understand the implications of adverse outcomes and learn from failure. The research also compared success and failure in Circles and further presented variations of successful Circles in practice.

This thesis presents mixed-methods research on Circles of Support and Accountability. The research comprises five empirical research studies and one theoretical chapter. The theoretical chapter presents a conceptualisation of success and failure in Circles utilising the two Core Principles upon which Circles was based: *No more victims* and *No one is disposable*. Combined with a review on the literature surrounding success and failure in Circles, it is argued that without agreed-upon definitions of what constitutes a success or failure, the relative success of Circles cannot be measured consistently.

Study 1 aimed to identify factors associated with specific outcomes in Circles and comprised quantitative data from (n=163) Circles to develop a typology of Circles. Results demonstrated that discussion of risk within Circles, can contribute to both Core Member and volunteer dropout from Circles. Whilst the absence of risk-related discussions predicted Circle success, Circles in which Core Members had substance abuse problems were also predictive of dropouts of both Core Members and volunteers. This study holds implications for Circle approaches and identifies the need for more specialist support in Circles where Core Members have additional complex needs.

Study 2 aimed to investigate the component parts of the Dynamic Risk Review (DRR) through a factor analysis of (n=411) baseline DRR scores. The DRR is a risk assessment tool that was designed specifically for use with Core Members in Circles. The factor analysis identified three factors with good reliability termed: Poor Emotional Wellbeing, Sexual Preoccupation and Emotional Identification with Children, Poor Problem Solving and Low Pro-social Engagement.

There was also the potential for a fourth factor termed: Anger and Hostility, although this item had poor reliability and requires further development.

Study 3 presented changes in dynamic risk of (n=59) Core Members, as measured by the DRR, over time. Results indicated that DRR scores were significantly reduced after three months on a Circle. However, when data was split between successes and failures, DRR scores showed a significant reduction in DRR scores after six months for Circles with a successful outcome. Study 3 also presented changes in Core Member wellbeing as measured by the WEMWBS, over time. Results demonstrated that Core Member wellbeing was significantly increased after three months on a Circle. When data was split between successes and failures, Core Member wellbeing remained significantly increased after three months for the successful sample of Circles.

Study 4 aimed to explore success and failure in Circles through a qualitative analysis of End of Circle Reports (EOCR). (n=84) EOCR were firstly divided into successes and failures before a thematic analysis was conducted on each data set. Six prominent themes emerged from the data consisting of three from each data set. Successful Circles were characterised through the themes: Trusting Relationships, External Support and Reduced Isolation (through active participation). The failed Circles presented a mirror opposite to the successes and were characterised by the themes: Trust Issues, Negative External Influences and Substance Abuse and Isolation. Results were discussed in relation to prior literature.

Study 5 presents the results of (n=3) qualitative case studies of successful and completed Circles. Interviews were conducted with Core Members, volunteers and coordinators to provide multiple perspectives from those involved within the inner Circle. The case studies present the experiences of three different Core Members who each maintained good working relationships with their volunteers, built trusting relationships and were able to work through any difficulties to continue to receive support. These case studies demonstrate the uniqueness of Core Members, each with their own distinctive needs, alongside the shared needs of trust and support needed to thrive in the community.

The five studies comprise mixed methods research into success and failure in Circles, using the conceptualisation provided in the theoretical chapter. The results of this thesis are discussed in relation to the social exchange theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) and the

theory of relational desistance (Weaver & McNeill, 2015). The results of the present research are framed within these theoretical frameworks, with the core theme of this thesis being the importance of human connection. Whilst Circles exist to reduce recidivism, Weaver and McNeill (2015) postulated that social relations are central to the desistance process. Furthermore, social relations have been argued to produce relational goods or relational bads (Weaver & McNeill, 2015). Another recurring theme within the present research was the presence or absence of trust. Trust has been described as a form of social exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Taken together, such relational processes are used to help explain success and failure within Circles. The importance of social exchange, trust development and reciprocity are presented as key components in Circles. The work in this thesis is original, making contributions to the literature on Circles, specifically within the area of failure in Circles. It has been argued that Circles should focus upon support rather than accountability in a bid toward reducing recidivism.

***'Failures, repeated failures, are finger posts on the road to achievement. One fails forward toward success'. C.S. Lewis***

## **List of Abbreviations**

CM – Core Member

Circles – Circles of Support and Accountability

CUK – Circles UK

DRR – Dynamic Risk Review

EOCR – End of Circle Report

GLM – Good Lives Model

HMPPS – Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service

PCSO – People Convicted of a Sexual Offence

MAPPA – Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements

MOJ – Ministry of Justice

MnCoSA – Minnesota Circles of Support and Accountability

ONS – Office for National Statistics

OASys - Offender Assessment System

RCT – Randomised Control Trial

RNR – Risk Need Responsivity

SARN – Structured Assessment of Risk and Need

SET – Social Exchange Theory

SOPO – Sex Offence Prevention Order

WEMWBS – Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

## Terminology used in this Thesis

It is important to consider the use of terminology in research, particularly concerning the use of labels surrounding individuals with previous convictions. Use of negative labelling has numerous implications for those in receipt of treatment and those attempting to reintegrate in the community. The term 'offender' and 'sex offender' in particular are loaded terms, that are often used in the media to sensationalise reporting of offences that elicit moral panic (Critcher, 2010). The use of such negative terminology promotes an emotional public response toward individuals with prior offence convictions which fuels punitive attitudes (Harper & Hogue, 2015). Such stigma and discrimination negatively impact individuals experiences in the community upon release from prison as such individuals face barriers to gaining accommodation (Evans & Porter, 2015) and employment (Lasher & McGrath, 2012). Social stigma of people with previous sexual offence convictions also holds implications for prison-leavers post-release.

The Sex Offenders Act 1997 required that individuals convicted of sexual offences, notify the police of their name and home address which must be kept up to date at all times (Jones & Newburn, 2013). The act was developed to enable police to monitor individuals to reduce risk and the public were not to be informed about the personal details of individuals listed on the register. However, following the high profile case of Sarah Payne, the Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme, commonly known as 'Sarah's law' was introduced in the UK (Home Office, 2010). The scheme enables the general public to request information from the police regarding whether a person of interest holds prior sexual offence convictions against a child (Jones & Newburn, 2013).

Whilst individuals with prior convictions are subject to intense scrutiny in the community and barriers to reintegration (Tewksbury & Lees, 2006), there is a risk that individuals may succumb to the Pygmalion effect (Maruna, Lebel, Mitchell & Naples, 2004), whereby they come to believe all the negative attributes applied to them (Ward & Maruna, 2007). Not only does this hold negative implications for an individual's mental wellbeing, but it may also lead to the risk of a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby they come to behave in a way which they believe is expected of them (Schultz, 2014). Concerns have been raised over the use of negative terms to describe people with prior convictions, arguing for a movement towards de-labelling in academic writing (Willis, 2018; Willis & Lectourneau, 2018). Of particular note

for the present research is the finding that the use of neutral terms over negative labels encourages willingness to volunteer with individuals convicted of sexual offences (Lowe & Willis, 2020).

It is for this reason that negative labelling is avoided as much as possible in this thesis. There are occasional instances whereby such terms are used, for example when describing probation offender-managers. However, for the most part, instances referring to individuals with prior offence convictions are referred to as PCSO (people convicted of a sexual offence).

A separate note on terminology concerns the use of the terms success and failure in Circles. At the time of writing there exists no singular explanation for what constitutes a success or a failure within the context of Circles. For this research, chapter 4 explores the concept of success and failure within Circles and provides a conceptualisation of each. All subsequent studies and discussions presented in this thesis utilise the conceptualisation of success and failure provided within chapter 4.



## Chapter 1 Introduction

In 2019, approximately eighteen per cent of the prison population consisted of individuals with convictions for sexual offences (Ministry of Justice, 2020). Public attitudes towards individuals with convictions of sexual offences are inherently negative. Individuals convicted of sexual offences are subject to resentment and prejudice in the community (Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes & Garcia, 2014). The public support stringent restrictions, intuitively believing this to be the safest option (Kernsmith, Craun & Foster, 2009). Opinions are reinforced through media portrayals which incite moral panic (Cricher, 2010) and use emotional content which fuels punitive attitudes (Harper & Hogue, 2015). Whilst sexual offences are perceived the most critically in society, professionals around the world agree that sexual abuse is a public health concern, and that prevention of sexual abuse is the responsibility of all (McCartan, Uzieblo & Smid, 2020)

The reality is that individuals with sexual offence convictions have the lowest reconviction rates compared to other offence types (Ministry of Justice, 2020). At the time of writing, the latest available quarterly summary reports a recidivism rate of 13.5% for sexual offences conducted between January to March 2018<sup>1</sup>. It should be noted that reconviction rates do not account for unidentified offences. Whilst this is also true for other offence types, serious sexual assault and rape offences are believed to be largely under-reported (Fohring, 2020; White, 2018).

People that are identified to have offended are subject to the tightest restrictions, which may act as a barrier to reintegration (Tewksbury & Lees, 2006). Upon release from prison, such individuals are subject to strict supervision requirements that include monitoring, offence registries, licence conditions and residency restrictions, in addition to community notification schemes (Lieb, Kemshall & Thomas, 2011; Petrunik & Deutschmann, 2008). Public attitudes and the stigma surrounding these offence types often lead to a lack of support from friends and family, which increases isolation for the individual (Bailey & Sample, 2017; Mingus & Burchfield, 2012). As isolation is a leading cause of sexual recidivism (Malinen, Willis &

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<sup>1</sup> This is the latest available release of proven reoffending statistics published by the ministry of justice as of August 2020. The MOJ website notes that the 'Proven reoffending statistics: July to September 2018' release has been cancelled.

Johnston, 2014), community reintegration efforts could assist in combating the risk of recidivism.

A distinct split in public opinion is evident with views ranging from the most punitive, to a more rehabilitative approach, which seeks to provide therapeutic support to those with historical offences, in a bid to promote desistance (Richards & McCartan, 2018). It is those that fall into the latter category, which offer their time voluntarily to Core Members in Circles (Lowe, Willis & Gibson, 2017; Höing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, 2014).

Circles is an approach used to reintegrate individuals convicted of sexual offences. Circles subscribes to the risk need responsivity model (Bonta & Andrews, 2007; see chapter 2.3) and Core Members deemed to be high-risk or very high-risk are prioritised for inclusion in Circles. Circles consist of four to six volunteers from the public, and an individual convicted of sexual offences referred to as the Core Member. In England and Wales, the Circles volunteers are supervised by a Circles Coordinator and the Circle is supported by several professionals involved in the Core Member's life, such as police and probation services. Circles practices are presently guided by the three core principles: support, monitor and maintain (Saunders & Wilson, 2003). Volunteers support the Core Members' practical and emotional needs, such as helping Core Members seek employment and accommodation. Additionally, volunteers support Core Members to build their self-confidence and self-esteem, through group activities and discussion. The Core Members' behaviour is monitored and the Circle shares information with the Coordinator and wider professionals, regarding any potential risk related thoughts or behaviours (Saunders & Wilson, 2003). Honest and open discussion is encouraged in the Circle, where Core Members are encouraged to feel comfortable talking to volunteers about their offence-related behaviour and risk-related thoughts. Support and accountability are maintained consistently throughout the Circle, through a balance of the two core principles *No More Victims* and *No one is disposable* (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007). Core Members report feeling that such support is genuine as it comes from volunteers rather than professionals (Saunders & Wilson, 2003).

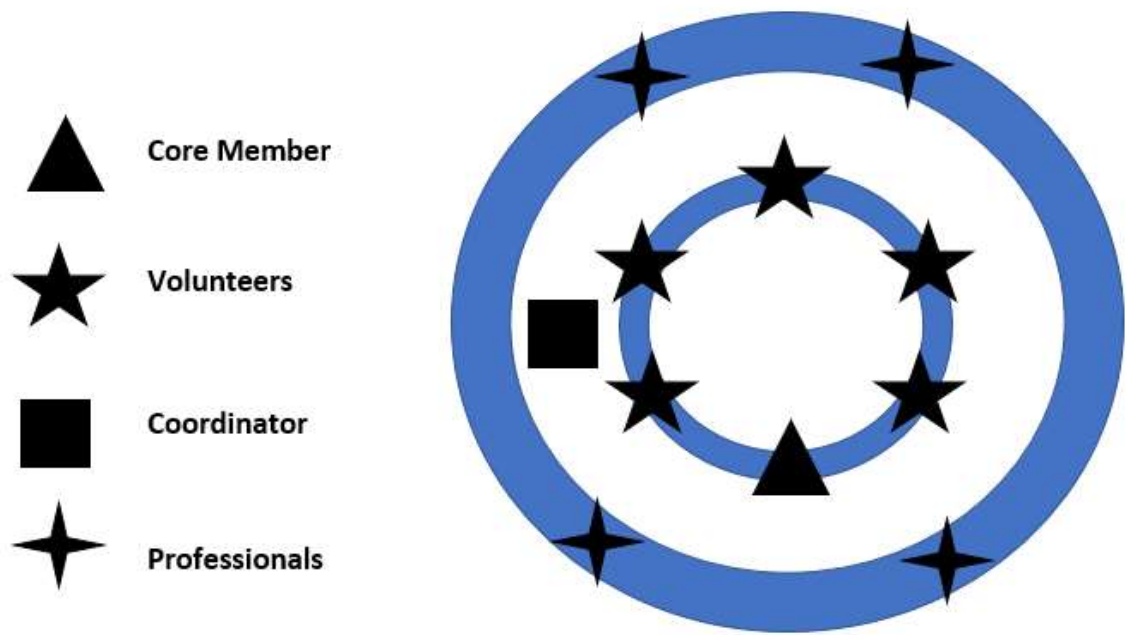


Figure 1 Graphic Representation of the Circles Model Comprising Two Concentric Circle

The inner Circle consists of the Core Member and volunteers. The volunteers support the Core Member in expressive and instrumental ways (Bohmert, Duwe & Hipple, 2018). Expressive support is offered through the encouragement of pro-social activities, open discussion of risk-related thoughts and a safe space to talk. Instrumental support may include such tasks as helping the Core Member seek employment, write a cv or identify community social groups that the Core Member seeks to pursue. The professionals in the Outer Circle are individuals involved in the Core Members' life before commencement of the Circle and are not usually involved in meetings, except for occasional review meetings. The coordinator acts as a conduit between the inner and Outer Circle. The coordinator's role is to provide training to the volunteers and prepare the volunteers for the Circle. Coordinators also supervise the Circle, address any problems which may arise such as disagreements or volunteer dropouts and report on Circle progress to the Outer Circle of professionals.

Similar Circle formats exist in other countries, including Canada, America, New Zealand, Scotland, Netherlands, Ireland, Australia, South Africa, China and Japan (Azoulay, Winder, Murphey & Fedoroff, 2019). However, there is a level of variation, for example in Vermont, Circles are used with individuals convicted for a variety of offence types and not only sexual offences (Fox, 2016). Other differences exist between countries through the communities used, with Minnesota based Circles using government-based communities and Canada using faith-based communities (Azoulay et al., 2019).

### 1.1: Research Context

Circles has a small but growing body of research which has predominantly focussed upon the successes achieved by the approach (Bates, McCrae, Williams & Webb, 2012; Bates, Williams, Wilson & Wilson, 2013; Duwe, 2012; 2018; Fox, 2016; Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015; McCartan, 2016). Other Circles research has explored public perceptions of Circles and the implications of public opinion (McCartan et al., 2020; Richards & McCartan, 2018). Circles projects in the UK work in conjunction with the criminal justice system (Wilson & McWhinnie, 2016). As a key aim of Circles is to reduce recidivism, most research has focussed upon the successes of the approach. Success in Circles has been reported in terms of reduced recidivism (Fox, 2016; 2015a; Höing et al., 2013; Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015), improvements to

Core Member wellbeing (McCartan, 2016; McCartan et al., 2014) and improvements to Core Members' circumstances (Clarke, Brown & Völlm, 2015; McCartan et al., 2014). As a result of the focus upon success, the body of research into Circles has been criticised for being overly positive (Elliott, 2014). Failures and adverse endings do occur, yet these have not yet been explored in-depth, only noted in the literature (Bates et al., 2012; Bates et al, 2013; Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015; McCartan, 2016). Furthermore, academics have called for research into adverse endings and failure in Circles, to further understand the effectiveness of the Circles approach (Azoulay et al., 2019; Clarke et al., 2015; Duwe, 2018; Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015).

## 1.2: Aims and Objectives

The aims of this thesis are to:

1. Offer a framework as a means to conceptualise success and failure in Circles
2. Understand what contributes to different Circle outcomes
3. Learn from Circle failure
4. Contribute toward a large national UK evaluation of Circles

In addressing these aims, the thesis sought to:

- Provide lessons from failures, to improve Circle processes and increase the proportion of successful Circles

## 1.3: Research Questions & Structure of the thesis

This thesis is formed of ten chapters. The research was led by several research questions that aimed to explore success and failure in Circles of Support and Accountability. The research questions are presented in table 1 along with the research studies that attempted to answer them. In addition to the questions in table 1, chapter 4 attempted to address the question:

- How is success and failure defined in Circles?

Table 1 Research Questions and Associated Studies which aim to provide answers

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Chapter 5 Empirical Study 1</b>	<b>Chapter 6 Empirical Study 2</b>	<b>Chapter 7 Empirical Study 3</b>	<b>Chapter 8 Empirical Study 3</b>	<b>Chapter 9 Empirical Study 4</b>
What contributes to success in Circles?	✓			✓	✓
Why do some Circles fail, and others succeed?	✓			✓	✓
Does Circles promote desistance?	✓		✓		
How effective is Circles at reducing recidivism?			✓		
How effective is Circles in promoting Core Member reintegration?			✓	✓	✓
How effective is the DRR as a risk assessment tool?		✓			
Can the DRR effectively predict Core Member risk?		✓			

Chapter 1 presents the context for the research and delineates the research aims.

Chapter 2 presents a literature review documenting the development of Circles inclusive of the theoretical underpinnings of Circles with reference to earlier retrospectively applied theory and a newly proposed theory. The literature review is presented in chronological order to demonstrate how enquiry into Circles has developed over time, across a range of countries. A key focus of the present research relates to Circle failure.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology chapter which introduces the mixed-methods convergent design selected for the present research and justifies the use of a mixed-methods approach. Ethical considerations are discussed.

Chapter 4 presents original work on a conceptualisation of success and failure in Circles, utilising research on Circles and the core principles upon which Circles were formed (Dwerryhouse, Winder, Blagden & Lievesley, 2020).

Chapter 5 presents a quantitative analysis of Circle characteristics through the development of Circle typologies.

Chapter 6 presents a factor analysis of the DRR to present the components that make up the DRR.

Chapter 7 presents a quantitative analysis of Core Member dynamic risk and emotional wellbeing, including the relationship between the two measures over time.

Chapter 8 presents a qualitative analysis of success and failure in Circles utilising End of Circle Reports.

Chapter 9 presents a qualitative analysis of Circles through Case Studies comprising Core Members, coordinators and volunteers.

Chapter 10 completes the thesis and consists of a broader discussion, reflections and conclusion. The discussion chapter draws together the results of the five empirical chapters in the overall evaluation of success and failure in Circles. This chapter includes personal reflections on the research process, including reflections on working with an external agency and the difficulties and barriers this brings, along with how these difficulties have been overcome. Additionally, this chapter reports upon the researcher's personal experience of volunteering within Circles and how this may have shaped and influenced the research process. This chapter closes with a discussion of the limitations and implications of the research completed and suggests some future directions for Circles research.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) '20% of women and 4% of men have experienced some type of sexual assault since the age of 16' (ONS, 2020). The crime survey for England and Wales estimated that for the year ending March 2020, there were 773'000 adults aged 16-74 who were victims of sexual assault, including attempts, with four times as many female victims (ONS, 2020). It is important to note that these statistics account for adults only, for which crimes are reported. It is likely that true offence rates are much higher (Fohring, 2020; White, 2018). Of those individuals who commit an initial offence, around 13.5% will reoffend again at some point in the future (MOJ, 2020). There is evidence to suggest that treatment programmes provide a small yet significant effect upon reducing reoffence (Schmucker & Lösel, 2015). Yet such small effects indicate that more needs to be done to further reduce recidivism rates.

Hanson (2014) identified that the risk of recidivism for someone with prior sexual offence convictions, is highest in the first 5 years following release from prison. Several risk factors have been evidenced to contribute toward offending behaviour such as traumatic brain injury (Farrer & Hedges, 2011), childhood abuse (Margolin & Gordis, 2004) and dysfunctional coping (Purvis, Ward & Willis, 2011). Despite the numerous risk factors for offending, general desistance factors such as good mental health, sobriety, stable employment and secure relationships also exist which encourage desistance from crime (Laws & Ward, 2011). Furthermore, de Vries Robbé, Mann, Maruna and Thornton (2015) identified several protective factors that support desistance from sexual recidivism. The focus upon protective rather than risk factors, encourages people convicted of a sexual offence (PCSO) to step away from an 'offender' identity. This enables individuals to deflect the stigma associated with their historical offences through the adoption of prosocial identities (Giordano, Cernkovich & Rudolph, 2002). Oyserman, Destin and Novin (2015) presented the concept of possible and feared selves to explain how people can be motivated both by what they hope to be and what they fear to be. Protective factors further support the encouragement of possible selves as individuals work towards developing a good life plan (Ward & Stewart, 2003; Purvis et al., 2011). Community intervention initiatives designed to support individuals released from prison exist to help support people to manage their risk in the community as they work to reintegrate in society.



Community reintegration is predominantly defined by a lack of recidivism (Grossi, 2017). Grossi (2017) further recognised the importance of life quality as a contributing factor to reduce recidivism. The authors noted how problems relating to employment, housing and interpersonal relationships can negatively impact upon reintegration and therefore increase recidivism. It is therefore important that both treatment and community initiatives address both risk and wellbeing in PCSO. One such community initiative that works toward these goals is Circles of Support and Accountability.

### 2:1 The First Circle of Support and Accountability

The basis of the Circles model as it is used today was initially established in Canada in 1994, in response to community concerns over the imminent release of a high-risk individual with convictions of sexual offences within a small community (Wilson, McWhinnie, Picheca, Prinzo & Cortoni, 2007). The individual, Charlie Taylor, was due to be released following the completion of a seven-year sentence. Media reporting surrounding Charlie's release led to community demands for twenty-four-hour surveillance. Although, upon his release, there was no planned support from criminal justice agencies to assist Charlie's reintegration into the community. To reduce Charlie's risk and provide some form of support, Charlie's prison psychologist contacted the Reverend Harry Nigh, a pastor at a local congregation in Charlie's hometown, where he was due to be released. Reverend Nigh agreed to support Charlie along with some of his congregation. Together they developed what is now termed a Circle of Support and Accountability (Wilson et al., 2007). Over time, and with the support of his Circle, Charlie continued to live an offence free life for eleven years and six months until his death in December 2005 (Wilson et al., 2007).

Shortly after the release of Charlie, another high-risk individual with convictions for sexual offences, Wray Budreo, was due to be released from prison. Reverend Hugh Kirkegaard, a community corrections chaplain, who was aware of the early success Reverend Nigh had achieved with Charlie, thought it would be worth trying the same approach with Wray. Reverend Hugh brought together members of an Anglican congregation to support Wray in the community. This second support Circle was further supported by a detective from the Toronto police department. Detective Wendy Leaver initially became involved through fear of Wray's risk and concerns over the congregation's inexperience to manage and support such

a high-risk individual as Wray. However, over time Detective Leaver became increasingly supportive of the approach and its subsequent success (Wilson, McWhinnie & Wilson, 2008). Like Charlie, Wray lived his life offence free for almost thirteen years before his death in 2007 (Wilson et al., 2008). Following the initial success of these two instances, Reverend Kirkegaard and a group of supporters approached the solicitor general in Canada to seek funding for development of the support initiative. Although the government held no legal responsibility for prison-leavers, the solicitor general was convinced of the approach and provided initial funding for the development of the project. The project came to be known as Circles of Support and Accountability, and over time, spread across Canadian communities and further afield into American cities.

## 2.2: The Development of Circles UK

In 2000, Canadian innovators of Circles travelled to the United Kingdom to meet with the Quaker society, who were interested in hearing about how Circles work and exploring how Circles could potentially be established in the United Kingdom. Throughout the consultation period, meetings were held with wider agencies and stakeholders, interested in the potential to support individuals convicted of sexual offences leaving prison. Interested parties included the home office, Her Majesty's Prison Service, treatment providers and the Lucy Faithful Foundation (Bates et al., 2013). The Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) required that implementation of the Circles model in the United Kingdom be based within a grounded theoretical framework, suitable for the innovative risk management process (Saunders & Wilson, 2003), along with evidence that the approach would be effective and worthwhile (Bates et al., 2013).

In 2001, three pilot projects, the Lucy Faithful Foundation, Hampshire and Thames Valley were funded by the UK Home Office over three years. Hampshire and Thames Valley later merged and shortly after expanded to include Kent, whereby they became known as Circles South East (Bates et al., 2013). The initial success of the pilot projects, discussed shortly, led to the development of further projects across the UK. In June 2008, the British government founded the charity Circles UK, which is the umbrella body under which all British Circles projects are run (Wilson & McWhinnie, 2016). In 2020, Circles were administered through 13 providers across England and Wales (<http://www.circles-uk.org.uk/local-providers>) with additional providers continually starting up new projects. Circles UK is closely aligned to the

criminal justice service as the outer Circle (see figure 1) consists of individuals from MAPPA and Core Members continue to be monitored by probation throughout the duration of the Circle (Wilson & McWhinnie, 2016).

### 2.3: Applying Theory to Circles: Retrospectively Applied Theory

Circles is unusual in its development. The Circles model developed from the success of one successful approach and, unlike other approaches, it was not designed based on a pre-existing theoretical framework. From the earliest pilot projects in Canada, researchers drew on the Risk-Need-Responsivity model (RNR; Bonta & Andrews, 2007) to utilise evidence-based practice in the development of Circles (Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo, 2005). Bonta and Andrews (2007) proposed the RNR model in response to the 'nothing works' literature (Martinson, 1974). The model comprised three simple components which were argued to be more effective than the punitive correction processes previously used.

The risk principle states that PCSO should receive a level of treatment congruent to their risk level, high-risk PCSO should receive high-intensity treatment, whilst low-risk PCSO should receive lower intensity treatment. Through matching the level of intervention to the level of risk, recidivism risk is argued to reduce (Bonta & Andrews, 2007). The risk principle comprises two elements, risk of reoffence and level of treatment. The risk of reoffence must be carefully measured using appropriate evidence-based risk assessment tools. Once the risk level is identified, the appropriate level of treatment intensity must be used, as higher risk individuals require more intense treatment to reduce recidivism (Bonta & Andrews, 2007).

The need principle states that an PCSO specific needs should be targeted during treatment, individuals with convictions of sexual offences should be treated for problems relating to deviant sexual interests and cognitive distortions, whilst substance misusers should receive treatment which addresses problems of addiction. The need principle addresses the PCSO needs at an individual level and in doing so reduces recidivism. The need principle specifies that only needs associated with criminal behaviour should be targeted, rather than needs that do not influence dynamic risk. For example, needs such as substance abuse, pro-criminal attitudes and criminal associates should be targeted as they are associated with criminal outcomes, whilst needs such as low self-esteem, anxiety and poor physical health, should not

be targeted as they are not directly associated with criminal behaviour (Bonta & Andrews, 2007).

The responsivity principle refers to how the PCSO best responds to treatment interventions. General responsivity advocates that cognitive social learning interventions are the most effective method by which to teach people new behaviours. Such effective learning strategies comprise of two principles. The relationship principle and the structuring principle. The relationship principle refers to the importance of a respectful working relationship between the criminal justice professional and the client. The structuring principle refers to how change can be influenced toward pro-social behaviours through appropriate modelling, reinforcement and problem-solving (Bonta & Andrews, 2007).

The responsivity principle states that PCSO are individuals and should be treated as such. By treating PCSO as individuals with specific needs, interventions can be adapted to the needs of the individual, to encourage PCSO engagement in treatment, for example, to adapt a treatment intervention to better suit an individual's learning style, or managing an individual's mental health difficulties to enable them to fully participate (Bonta & Andrews, 2007). Research conducted on the variability of treatment responsivity identified that higher-risk individuals, with lower levels of treatment motivation, demonstrated poorer post-treatment outcomes (Lester, Basastini, Davis & Bourgon, 2020). It is important to note that this research was conducted in Canada and may not reflect the responsivity of individuals receiving RNR based cognitive interventions in other areas of the world. Despite this, these results demonstrate the importance of tailoring treatment interventions to suit individuals specific needs (Lester et al., 2020).

Circles adopts these principles in the following way: potential Core Members are selected based on their perceived risk of recidivism. Only those assessed as high to medium risk are offered the opportunity to join a Circle, whilst those deemed to be the highest risk are prioritised for inclusion (Wilson & McWhinnie, 2016). Circles addresses the need principle through an individualised approach taken within each Circle. The Core Members' personal aims and objectives are addressed at the beginning of the Circle, for the Circle to work towards. Whilst Circles is not a treatment intervention, the process of treating the Core Member as an individual with specific needs, addresses the responsivity principle. Circles has developed quickly and developments in volunteer training have enabled Circles to be

designed specifically for minority groups, such as Core Members with intellectual disabilities, autistic spectrum conditions, young people, transgender and deaf individuals (Hocken et al., 2018). Some Circles projects have also developed to offer Circles to young people who demonstrate concerning sexual behaviours (Circles South East, 2020). Whilst the RNR model has been subject to criticism relating to the model's theoretical grounding, delivery in practice and blanket approach (Ward, Melser & Yates, 2007), the three principals were used as a basis on which to build a theoretical model of Circles (Wilson et al., 2005). A key criticism of the RNR model is the way recidivism is addressed through punitive measures that target risk rather than positivist measures which address individual needs (Ward et al., 2006). The Good Lives Model (GLM) developed by Ward and Stewart (2003) addresses some weaknesses of the RNR model. The GLM has been retrospectively applied to Circles' practices, with elements of the GLM drawn upon in the development of Circle specific principles (Wilson et al., 2008).

The GLM is a positivist, strength-based approach to PCSO rehabilitation. Within the GLM, PCSO, like individuals with other types of offence convictions, are argued to be driven by desires and needs in the same way that people without offence convictions are. These desires and needs are referred to in the GLM as primary human goods and take many forms, from achievement in work and relationships to happiness, community, and autonomy (Ward, Mann & Gannon, 2006). However, due to a range of personal and environmental problems and deficits, some individuals resort to maladaptive means of achieving their goals (Barnao, Ward & Casey, 2015). For example, a law-abiding individual seeking to earn money would find appropriate employment, whereas someone with deficits such as no formal education and an abusive childhood, may seek to earn money through criminal means.

It has been argued that people with offence convictions differ from the non-offending public because they use maladaptive techniques to obtain their primary goods (Purvis et al., 2011). Therefore, the GLM encourages people with offence convictions to first identify and amend these maladaptive techniques for acquiring primary goods, to obtain primary goods in a pro-social way. Unlike the RNR model, the GLM encourages people with offence convictions to be viewed as an individual who is more than the offence they have committed (Ward & Stewart, 2003). The GLM was designed to be used with people who have committed any offence type, although research has shown how it can be adapted to work specifically with individuals who commit sexual offences (Willis, Yates, Gannon & Ward, 2012). The GLM has been utilised in

the earliest development of UK based Circles, through the adoption of GLM principles (Wilson et al., 2008). Core Members are treated respectfully and encouraged to develop a new positive identity, whilst supported to pursue positive life goals through pro-social means (Bates et al., 2012). The first step toward this goal is evident in the way Circles refer to individuals with prior convictions of sexual offences as Core Members. This provides the Core Member with a positive identity to live up to, whilst simultaneously leaving behind the 'offender' identity (Höing et al, 2013). This identity transformation offers the first basic step in which Core Members can work towards their future as they build their good life plan (Purvis et al., 2011).

Whilst the RNR model and GLM were retrospectively applied to the Circles approach, to explain how and why Circles work, other theoretical models have been developed specifically for Circles. During the UK consultation period in 2000, MAPPA required that the UK implementation of the Circles model be grounded in a theoretical framework, suitable for the risk management of individuals convicted of sexual offences. The three initial pilot projects began in 2001 and during this time the founders developed three core principles of Circles, illustrated in figure 2 below (reproduced with the permission of Christopher Wilson), termed support, monitor and maintain (Saunders & Wilson, 2003).

#### 2.4: Circle Principles: Support, Monitor, Maintain

The three key principles of support, monitor and maintain were the original principles on which the UK model was based, and which is still used throughout Circle practices to this day. Core Members are supported by volunteers in practical ways, from finding employment and accommodation to managing their finances. Core Members are also provided with emotional support through a caring and compassionate volunteer approach. The combination of expressive and instrumental support work in combination to help reduce Core Member isolation (Bohmet, Duwe & Hipple, 2016). Volunteers further demonstrate appropriate relationships and support Core Members to engage with others through social activities and employment. The Circle monitors Core Member progress through information sharing with relevant professionals in the criminal justice service. The outer Circle comprises professionals involved in the Core Members' life who work to create safer communities and maintain public protection. Whilst the safety of the public is the top priority of professionals, Core Members are encouraged and praised for their achievements through the duration of the Circle. The

support and accountability of the Core Member is maintained through a relationship of trust in which the Core Member is held to account for past offences and future behaviour (Bohmet et al., 2016). It has been theorised that all three components work together to reduce recidivism (Saunders & Wilson, 2003).

The support principle aligns well with the GLM, by supporting Core Members to identify and achieve their primary goods through pro-social means. The monitor principle is more closely aligned to the RNR model, by focussing upon the potential risk of the Core Member. The maintain principle may be viewed as a halfway point between support and accountability, through both maintaining a positive supportive relationship and holding the Core Member to account for their past and future behaviour. However, it is a fine balance to maintain and it has been argued that over-emphasis on accountability may take place in certain Circles because of individual volunteer approaches (Höing et al, 2013). Such an emphasis upon risk may tip the scales in favour of accountability which has been evidenced to be detrimental to Circle working relationships (Fox, 2016). Therefore, volunteers must be carefully selected and trained before commencing work with a Core Member, as a Circle can only be as successful as its constituent parts. Similarly, any change to the accountability function of Circles, such as a reduced focus on accountability in favour of a more supportive approach, may impact the balance of the three key components. However, it has been argued that a validation of the constituent parts has not taken place, meaning that what works in theory, may not map over to what works in practice (Höing et al., 2013).

## The Three Key Principles

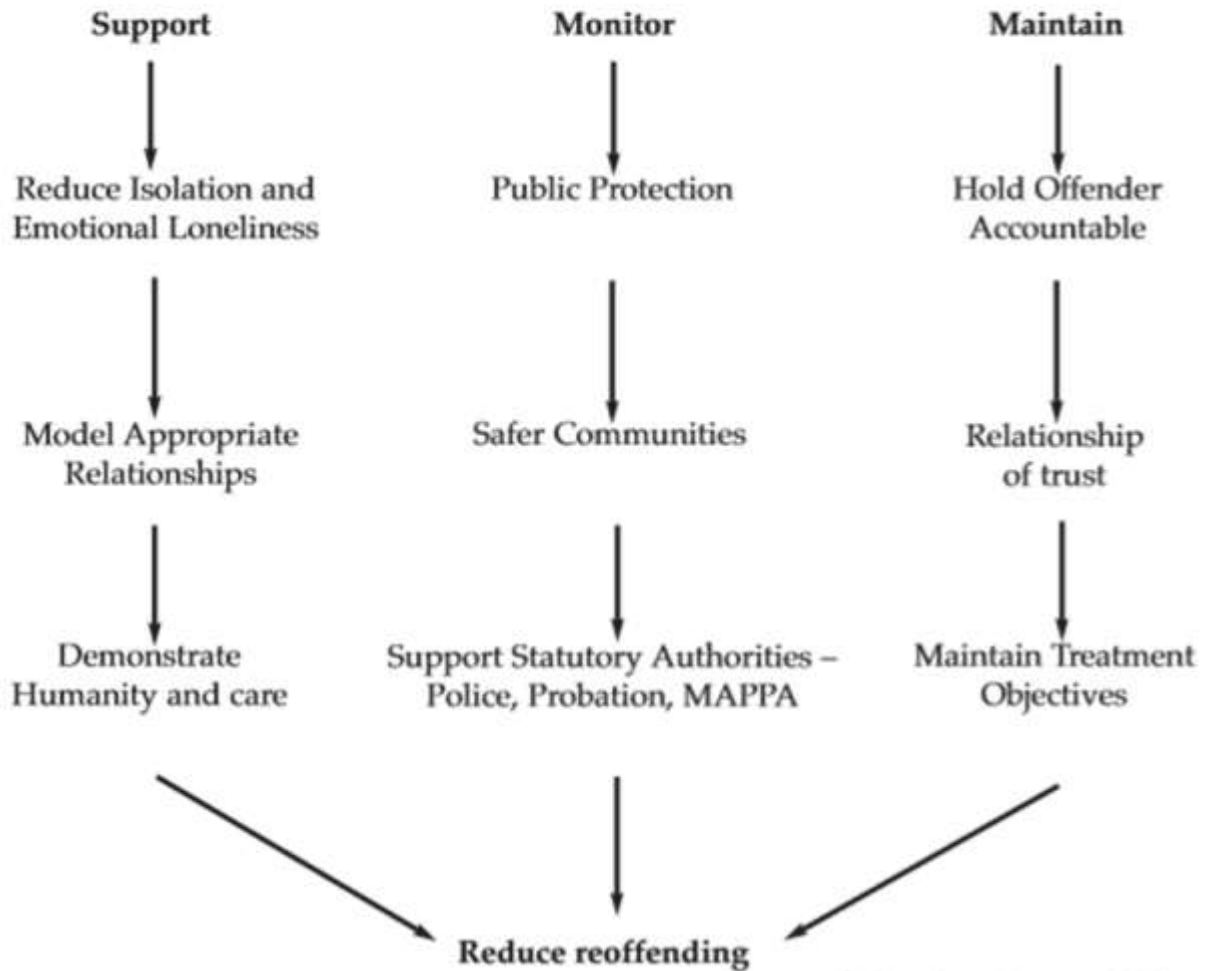


Figure 2 The Three Key Principles (Saunders & Wilson, 2013)



## 2.5: Applying Theory to Circles: Newly Proposed Theory

Höing et al. (2013) argued that the early intervention model of support, monitor, maintain proposed by Saunders and Wilson (2003) was theoretical in nature and developed based on policies, practices and anecdotal data. It was argued that practice-based research should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of Circle practices. The researchers utilised knowledge on PCSO rehabilitation, personal narratives of individuals involved in Circles and follow up interviews to develop a revised Circles intervention model. The model comprises four core functions and strategies: inclusion, promoting change, risk reduction and process-orientated strategies (Höing et al., 2013). The revised intervention model demonstrates how the functions and strategies are theorised to work together to promote desistance. Unlike the three key principles, the revised intervention model was developed through consultation with individuals involved with Circles (Höing et al., 2013). The authors of the model identified key conditions which must be met for the Circle to meet its full potential of success. The model would be likely to prove useful in practice by providing Circle coordinators with a structured process to follow. This would be beneficial for the selection and training of volunteers and the selection of appropriate Core Members. It is of note, however, that the revised intervention model was developed based on Circles first core principle of *no more victims* and did not take account of Circles other core principle of *no one is disposable*, the latter of which refers to the wellbeing of the Core Member in receipt of support (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007). The research question was concerned with Core Member recidivism alone meaning the subsequent revised intervention model was developed to explain how and why Circles work, to reduce recidivism, but did not take account of Core Members' wellbeing in the process. Therefore, the revised intervention model may be viewed to be risk-focused, which may be detrimental to Core Member reintegration efforts (Fox, 2015a).

Unfortunately, there is evidence that the revised intervention model has not been widely implemented, as research has documented Circles that have ended earlier than planned due to a lack of volunteer commitment (Höing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, 2016), poor Core Member motivation (Bates et al., 2013) and poor relationships between Core Members and volunteers (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). The revised intervention model stipulates numerous conditions that are argued to produce an effective intervention, capable of reducing recidivism. However, meeting these conditions may prove difficult if Core Members and

volunteers appear keen to engage with the process at an early stage and later lose interest, potentially resulting in withdrawal from the Circle. The intervention model further specifies the importance of external support and cooperation from the outer Circle. Therefore, the inner Circle cannot reliably progress without full investment from the outer Circle of professionals, which may be variable dependent upon individual professionals support capacity. Despite these limitations, the model may prove useful in offering a framework to guide practice. The authors stated that the revised intervention model needs to be refined and tested across various national contexts (Höing et al., 2013). Therefore, the model should be viewed as a provisional model which may be subject to change.

## 2.6: Circle Volunteers

Circle volunteers comprise a range of individuals from the community, with various motivations to support the Core Members in society. A recent national evaluation of Circles in the UK identified that almost half of Circle volunteers were aged between eighteen and twenty-four and over 40% were students and over 77% percent were female. This evaluation comprised of 441 volunteers so provides a representative example of volunteers in the UK (Winder et al, 2020). Lowe, Willis and Gibson (2017) identified three key motivators in Circle volunteers which were Restorative and Justice-Based Motivation, Altruistic Motivation, and Faith-Based Motivation. This research took place in New Zealand and motivations for individuals in other countries may differ as there are differences in the way Circles are run internationally, as will be discussed shortly. In Canada and the UK, the outer Circle of professionals are often included in the process of training volunteers (Lowe & Willis, 2018). Volunteers are therefore offered the opportunity to learn about the criminal justice system, laws and procedures.

Gilliam, Novak, Bohmert and Duwe (2020) explored volunteer and Core Members desires for involvement in Circles. The researchers identified that volunteers valued the educational aspect of Circles as they learned about the criminal justice service through their training. Volunteers also benefitted from supporting their Core Members and further appreciated the social benefits of Circles as they engaged with other volunteers on a regular basis.

## 2.7: Circles: The Research

### 2.7a: Development of the UK based Pilot Projects

The earliest Circles research in the United Kingdom was carried out following the development of the three pilot projects. Bates et al. (2012) carried out a descriptive study using the case files of the first 60 Circles, run in Hampshire and Thames Valley. The authors argued that 70% of Core Members showed improvements in emotional wellbeing, 61% developed pro-social attitudes and behaviours because of participating in a Circle. Whilst the results of this research are positive, it is not possible to distinguish whether these outcomes occurred solely as a result of the Circles approach, or whether other non-Circle factors contributed to these outcomes. The authors also reported that 50% of Core Members had improved work and/or education prospects, whilst another 50% improved their social network. As discussed earlier, whilst a correlation may exist, this cannot be taken as evidence of causation of Circles upon Core Member outcomes and should be interpreted with caution. Bates et al. (2012) further reported that Circle discussions which focused upon offences were found to have better problem-solving tactics, improved social skills and induce more victim empathy in Core Members. However, it is important to note that the latter has been discarded as a risk factor for sexual and violent recidivism (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005) and therefore, cannot be argued to be a factor capable of risk-reduction in Circles. A notable sixteen Core Members were classified as low risk on the RM2000. The researchers did not specify the overall MAPPA risk scores for the Core Members that participated in Circles. Circles is aimed at those classified as medium to high-risk, meaning some of the Core Members may not benefit from inclusion, nor prove to be cost-effective (Elliott & Beech, 2012).

### 2.7b: Case Study Research

Bates et al. (2012) presented three case studies to illustrate the effectiveness of the Circles approach. The first case study described a Core Member who had been involved in a Circle which had ended because the Circle had achieved its aims. However, the Core Member went on to display risky behaviour and later admitted to grooming a child with the intention of sexually abusing the child in the future. The Core Member was placed on another Circle for which success was reported. It could be argued that the success of the second Circle has been used to mask the failure of the first. If the first Circle had succeeded in its aims, assuming one

of which was to prevent the risk of reoffence, the Core Member would not have presented with such risky behaviour. However, the honesty the Core Member presented in discussing his behaviour with his first Circle may be viewed as an achievement. Through the supportive function of Circles, the Core Member felt able to discuss his behaviour and admit to his prior intentions. Without the support of the Circle, the Core Member may likely have gone on to re-offend. This example illustrates how Circle outcomes in terms of success and failure can be quite complex and demonstrate that when evaluating the success of Circles, transparency is vital.

Bates et al. (2012) further noted the early drop-out of seven Core Members who were not followed up. These Core Members are said to have withdrawn early due to limited motivation. This conclusion was drawn from case file information and reported anecdotal data which may reflect the subjective views of Circles coordinators. The authors distinguished between Core Members who withdrew less than five months into the Circle, and those that withdrew between seven and fourteen months into a Circle, reporting that the latter should not necessarily be described as drop-outs. Alternatively, it was suggested that the latter group may have benefitted from closer monitoring to ensure the objectives were met (Bates et al., 2012). Arguably, this suggestion could be suitably applied to all Circles in an attempt to reduce dropout from Core Members who might withdraw earlier. The researchers stated that four Core Members were recalled to prison during their Circles. It was reported the Core Members who were recalled were not suitably motivated to succeed and should not have been offered the opportunity to engage in Circles. An alternative view is that any Core Member willing to participate in Circles, be allowed to do so. Any evaluation of the effectiveness of Circles would not be genuine if Core Members were selected specifically based on their expected success. Furthermore, if a Core Member showed the willingness to engage in Circles, this would demonstrate a level of motivation. Core Member drop-out is an area which would benefit from further research.

#### 2.7c: Theories of Motivation Applied to Circles

Barret, Wilson and young (2003) measured motivational changes in individuals with convictions of sexual offences. The research assessed motivation using motivational subscales of the Goal Attainment Scale (GAS). The GAS motivational subscales were: disclosure of personal information, participation in treatment, motivation to change, acceptance of

responsibility and acceptance of guilt. Each of the first three sub-scales can be applied to Circle processes. Upon their first meeting with their Circle, Core Members are required to disclose the nature of their offence. Although not a treatment, Core Members are required to actively engage with the Circles. Furthermore, Core Members must agree to change their past offending behaviour in the pursuit of a positive future. The two remaining sub-scales of acceptance of responsibility and acceptance of guilt may also be more loosely applied to the accountability aspect of Circles. Results indicated that participants motivation decreased from their first institutional assessment at the point of community release. The authors postulated that the changes in motivation may be due to environmental factors, arguing that motivation is a dynamic process with numerous internal and external influences. The authors advocate for the importance of a therapeutic relationship between service users and professionals (Barret et al., 2003), which may be argued to be equally important in Circle relationships.

Crocker, Canevello and Brown (2017) distinguished between selfish and otherish motivation. Selfish motivation was defined as motivation that benefits the self at the cost of others, whilst otherish motivation was defined as motivation that benefits another because of care for their wellbeing. Circle volunteers choose to volunteer their time for a variety of reasons, they may volunteer with otherish motivations, to offer help and support to an individual in need. They may have selfish motivations, to gain experience volunteering in a forensic context, to enhance their employment opportunities. Volunteers may also show a self-other overlap (Crocker et al., 2017). Lowe et al. (2017) conducted interviews with volunteers to explore their reasons for volunteering with Circles in New Zealand. The researchers identified three overarching themes which they labelled Restorative and Justice-Based Motivation, Altruistic Motivation and Faith-Based Motivation. The volunteers in this research were opposed to punitive measures and sought to humanize Core Members. Volunteers believed that Core Members should be held accountable for their previous actions in a supportive environment. This, they believed was the best approach in which to promote Core Member desistance. Volunteer motivations are likely to have a direct effect on Core Member experiences in Circles. Crocker et al. (2017) described selfish motivation to be characterized by low levels of empathetic concern for others and low levels of compassion. Poor relationships within Circles have been linked with Core Member dropout (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). In one instance, a Core Member chose to withdraw 'because he felt accused and condemned by two

of his volunteers' (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015, p14). Alternatively, volunteers with otherish motivations may be more conducive to a positive group climate. Empathetic concern, genuine care for the wellbeing of others and high levels of compassion are characteristics which promote a positive group climate, essential for the model integrity of Circles (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015).

#### 2.7d: Minnesota Circles

In Minnesota, PCSO are categorised into risk levels prior to their release from prison. The risk levels PCSO are assigned determine the level of notification provided to the community they are released into. The three levels comprise level 1 – low risk, level 2 – moderate risk and level 3 – high risk (Duwe, 2012). Minnesota Circles (MnCoSA) were established in 2008 and initially targeted level 2 PCSO. MnCoSA consist of the Core Member and four to six trained volunteers. MnCoSA are designed to last around twelve months, in which time the Circle provides support to the Core Member and attempts to establish an external support network (Duwe, 2012). Unlike the grass-roots Canadian origins of Circles, MnCoSA differ as they were developed systematically in conjunction with a government agency that promoted and drove volunteer participation. MnCoSA further differ to Canadian Circles as MnCoSA often begin in prison four weeks prior to PCSO release, rather than following their release and MnCoSA meetings take place in secure public venues rather than in volunteers homes as they do in Canadian Circles (Duwe, 2012).

In 2008, the Minnesota department of corrections piloted a Circles project. Between 2008-2011, 62 individuals were selected for inclusion in a randomised control trial (RCT) used to evaluate the Minnesota pilot project. Duwe (2012) was able to ethically randomise 62 participants due to the number of potential Core Members, greatly outnumbering the number of available volunteers. Results of the study indicated that the Circles group had lower rates of recidivism than those in the matched control group for the five measures examined, which covered re-arrest, reconviction and reincarceration. However, the only statistically significant difference between the two groups was re-arrest, due to one PCSO in the control group being arrested for a new sexual offence. The author suggested that the small sample size may have contributed to the non-significant results and argue for further RCTs to be carried out upon larger cohorts with lengthier follow-up periods (Duwe, 2012). To date, no RCTs have been carried out upon Core Members of Circles in the UK and few studies

have attempted to use matched controls within the study design. In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of Circles upon reducing recidivism, Duwe (2012) carried out a cost-benefit analysis of Circles. Results indicated that in the first four years of the project, Minnesota Circles produced an estimated benefit of US\$363,211, approximately US\$11,716 per participant.

#### 2.7e: A UK based Cost-Benefit Analysis

Elliott and Beech (2012) carried out a cost-benefit analysis of Circles in the UK and reported similar results. Through calculating the cost of Circles against criminal justice costs that occur in the event of reoffence within a hypothetical cohort of 100 PCSO, the authors estimated a net benefit of £23'494 per year for 50 individuals provided with a Circle.

#### 2.7f: A Matched-Control of UK Circles

Bates et al. (2013) evaluated the outcomes of seventy-one Circles which took place in the south-east of England, compared against seventy-one matched controls. Most individuals taking part in the study had committed contact offences against children. Matched controls consisted of those deemed suitable for a Circle who did not receive one, or who began a Circle and withdrew early, a concerning issue because it makes intuitive sense that Circle-completers and Circle-withdrawers differ in their commitment to change (Hanson & Harris, 2000). Furthermore, Elliott (2014) criticised the research for using Circle withdrawers within the comparison group, suggesting that to do so may bias the results in favour of Circles. Results indicated that fifty-four of the seventy-one Core Members did not go on to re-offend. Of the seventeen Core Member reconvictions, four were for sexual offences. The remaining thirteen reconvictions were for non-sexual offences. Three were for non-sexual reconvictions, four were recalled to prison for violations of their conditional release, four failed to comply with sex offender's register (SOR) requirements and two had breached their sex offence prevention order (SOPO). In comparison, there were seven violent and three sexual contact offences carried out by the matched control group. Furthermore, the number of matched controls who failed to comply with the sex offender register was double that of the Core Member group. Bates et al. (2013) reported statistically significant differences between the two groups across violent and contact sexual offences (10 vs 0) and recidivism (12 vs 3) which were both lower for Core Members. Elliott (2014) criticised the combining of violent and sexual offences in the reporting of these statistics, arguing that statistically significant

differences were only presented by the grouping of offence type, reducing the validity of the reported effectiveness of Circles on reducing recidivism.

#### 2.7g: Circles in the Netherlands

Circles in the Netherlands use a European adaptation of the UK model ([Vogelvang, Duke, Höing & Völlm, 2015](#)). These Circles comprise of three to six trained volunteers who support a Core Member on a weekly basis. Netherland Circles are supported by a trained Circle Coordinator and the Circle is supported by an outer Circle of professionals, similar to UK Circles. Accountability is maintained through the sharing of information about risk related concerns between the inner and outer Circle of professionals ([Höing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, 2013](#)). In the Netherlands, Circles are reserved for Core Members deemed to be at moderate to high risk of reoffence, with a high need for social support. Core Members must also be those who are on a conditional release and undertaking a court supervision for at least twelve months. Furthermore, Core Members must have undergone some form of sexual offending treatment therapy prior to be eligible for a Circle ([Vogelvang et al, 2015](#)).

[Höing, Vogelvang and Bogaerts \(2015\)](#) researched the desistance process of Core Members and their experiences of Circles. The research consisted of qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with seventeen Core Members and twenty-nine professionals. Core Members were interviewed at the beginning of their Circle and again at six and twelve months follow up stages. In addition to interviews, the researchers carried out a quantitative analysis using several scales relating to desistance theory and self-regulation theory ([Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015](#)). Results of the qualitative research indicated that Core Members made improvements in self-reflection, openness and assertiveness after six months in a Circle. Whilst twelve months into a Circle, Core Members reported marked improvements in their problem-solving skills as a direct result from participating in Circles. Furthermore, Core Members continued to report improvements in their interpersonal skills which were associated with improvements in self-esteem and self-confidence. Because of their newly developed social skills, some Core Members were able to increase their social networks, outside that of the Circle ([Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015](#)). The quantitative component of the research reported positive changes to a significant level in emotion regulation and internal locus of control,  $p < .05$ . Furthermore, whilst most variables evaluated showed



improvements, only the variables of (self-esteem,  $p=.06$ ) and (self-soothing,  $p=.06$ ) approached significance (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015).

A benefit of this study is that it enabled the progress of Core Members to be monitored over time. The study highlighted that some Circles end early, with three of the 17 Circles ending prematurely. Untimely ended Circles were not followed up in this research, although the reason for their untimely endings was noted. On one occasion, a decision was taken by the Circles coordinator to terminate the Circle due to a noted lack of Core Member cooperation. On the two other occasions, Core Members voluntarily withdrew from their Circles. One withdrew as a result of tensions between himself and his volunteers (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). The other Core Member withdrew because he felt that his volunteers were not committed enough. It would be beneficial for follow-up interviews to be carried out with Core Members of untimely ended Circles, to capture details of the Core Members' psychological wellbeing. Furthermore, it would be useful to evaluate whether Circles with unplanned endings adversely affect recidivism. The research did not extend past the first year of the Circles and the researchers noted this as a limitation of the study, calling for further research over an extended period. As the sample was relatively small, the results should be interpreted with caution (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015).

Höing, Vogelvang and Bogaerts (2015) conducted further interviews with Core Members' therapists, probation officers or both at two time-points. The topic of discussion focused upon the effect that Circles had upon Core Members. The professionals reported that Core Members showed marked improvements in their social skills because of participating in Circles. Notably, professionals reported such improvements more than the Core Members did. It could be surmised that such changes in behaviour would be more noticeable to the professional who experiences the changed interaction, than the individual displaying the new behaviour. Alternatively, professionals may be subject to enhance reported successes in Core Member reintegration, due to a social desirability bias. Additionally, Circle withdrawers referred to difficulties in working with their volunteers (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). It would have been useful if volunteer accounts of these untimely ended Circles were taken to gain a deeper understanding of the Core Member to volunteer dynamic, particularly concerning the difficulties in working relationships that were raised by Core Members. Research into volunteer experiences of Circles have been gathered in other areas of the globe.

## 2.7h: Vermont Circles

In Vermont, USA, Circles begin when a Core Member is still in prison. Core Members must be deemed of moderate to high risk for inclusion in a Circle. Volunteers are selected and trained before meeting their assigned Core Member and Circles are designed to last approximately twelve months. In Vermont Circles are not only used for PCSO, but also for other kinds of high-risk individuals who have prior convictions of other offences such as homicide (Fox, 2015a). Vermont Circles also differ across locations as some sites are run by corrections and others are funded by corrections but run through charitable organisations. Additionally, some sites rely upon faith-based communities to support and volunteer, whilst other locations do not (Fox, 2015a).

In Vermont, Fox (2016) carried out semi-structured interviews with twenty Core Members, their respective Circle volunteers and Circle coordinators to evaluate the process of desistance. Using desistance theory and literature, Fox (2016) asserted that the most successful Circles were those in which the volunteers were most involved with the Core Member. Such successful Circles had a stronger focus on support rather than accountability, allowing for the Core Member to feel supported as an equal. In comparison, Fox noted that the more unsuccessful Circles were defined by a lack of volunteer investment in the Core Member as an individual, with a stronger focus upon Core Member accountability. Success was not defined in this research, so it cannot be ascertained what specifically was measured when evaluating the reported successes, such as reduced risk or Core Member wellbeing. However, Core Member appreciation of support was evident in the extracts provided by Circles deemed to have been more successful.

It could be argued that the Core Member does not need reminding of their accountability within the Circle. If Circles is to be a strengths-based approach, the needs of the Core Member must come first. Höing et al. (2013) identified the importance of a positive group climate and balanced execution of Circle functions within their intervention model. Fox (2016) supported the importance of a balanced approach, arguing that volunteers in Circles that focus discussions around accountability rather than support are at best unnecessary and at worst damaging (Fox, 2016). It appears that it is the supportive function of volunteers toward Core Members which has a positive effect upon successfully completed Circles. Considering recidivism alone, it may be the case that it is volunteer support which reduces recidivism,

whereas an emphasis on Core Member accountability may have a negative effect in terms of further stigmatising the Core Member.

#### 2.7i: UK Based Qualitative Research

As part of a social action fund evaluation, McCartan (2016) carried out in-depth interviews with 19 Core Members, 15 stakeholders, and 10 volunteers. McCartan (2016) reported that all participants felt Circles made a positive impact on Core Member integration and management. All participants viewed volunteers as an extra set of eyes and ears, used to increase surveillance of Core Member behaviour in the community. Whilst all participants agreed on this, there were differences in how the participant group viewed the purpose of surveillance. Core Members viewed volunteers in a supportive capacity, as did stakeholders. Stakeholders viewed accountability as the role and responsibility of the professionals toward Core Members and not something for the volunteers to be involved with, due to their lack of experience and training. Volunteers held different views and saw themselves as responsible for delivering both support and accountability functions (McCartan, 2016). The research reported the difficulties the volunteers faced when attempting to encourage Core Members to engage in discussions which focussed around accountability. Whilst the Core Members were happy to be supported in many areas of their life, they were less forthcoming when faced with topics relating to their risk and potential for reoffending. Volunteers described themselves as pro-social role models and viewed Circles as a safe place in which the Core Member is free to discuss their views openly and without persecution (McCartan, 2016). In this sense, volunteers view the discussion of risk as a supportive function. However, regardless of volunteer intent, it is the Core Members' perception of such discussions which influence the level of success achieved. As noted previously, the balance between support and accountability is a key contributor to success in Circles (Höing et al., 2013).

In terms of Core Member views, McCartan (2016) reported that Core Members believed that participation in a Circle was beneficial for several reasons such as providing a social Circle and emotional support. Core Members viewed the Circle as being different from other criminal justice interventions and services, often positioning the Circle as a midway point between the public and the criminal justice service. Furthermore, Core Members noted the importance of the Circle being voluntary, which the Core Members felt indicated the positive impact the Circle had upon them, because of their attendance. The sample of (n=19) Core Members

interviewed all had planned endings so it is unsurprising that Core Members reported positive experiences of Circles. McCartan's research included a sample of (n=10) Core Members with unplanned endings due to: recall (n=4) and breach of licence (n=6). Furthermore, two of the Core Members with unplanned endings were arrested. It is unfortunate that these Core Members were not interviewed, as it would be beneficial to conduct research with individuals who leave Circles earlier than planned. Such research would provide a balanced view of Circles from the perspective of Core Members with less successful experiences of Circles. Failure in Circles is an area which has not yet been investigated. Yet, it is an area which may provide opportunities to understand what leads to adverse outcomes. Previous research has reported upon Core Member drop-out because of a strong focus upon accountability and lack of volunteer support (Fox, 2016; Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). Whilst these findings were a result of research carried out in countries other than the UK, such explanations are likely universal. However, further research in the context of the UK is required to confirm this. Clarke, Warwick and Völlm (2017) argued that unplanned endings do not necessarily imply Circle failure, although they also support the need for further research to contextualise unplanned endings.

#### 2.7j: A Return to Minnesota Circles

Duwe (2018) built upon the preliminary findings of the RCT completed in 2012. The study comprised of 100 people with sexual offence convictions, inclusive of the original 62 included in the 2012 evaluation. As per the 2012 evaluation, the author was able to ethically randomise the selection of Core Members due to limited volunteer resource. The extended evaluation yielded positive results for Minnesota Circles (MnCoSA) with Core Members demonstrating lower rates of recidivism for six measures in comparison to the control group. The control group had seven convictions for new sexual offences compared to one in MnCoSA. Furthermore, the control group had more reconvictions than MnCoSA. In terms of recidivism impact, Cox regression models indicated that MnCoSA participants presented with lower hazard ratings than the control group to a statistically significant level for rearrests, reconvictions, resentences and revocations. Whilst results also indicated that MnCoSA lowered the risk of sexual offence by 88% (Duwe, 2018). The extended evaluation of MnCoSA built upon the original cost-benefit analysis. Results indicated that over eight years, MnCoSA produced a benefit of approximately US\$2,046,163, approximately US\$40,923 per participant, a marked increase on the preliminary results of the 2012 RCT. Duwe (2018)

explained the difference in results was due to a difference in sexual recidivism results between the two evaluations. Duwe (2018) noted some difficulties in implementing and sustaining Circle programmes including the dual principles of 'no more victims' and 'no one is disposable', with the former often being at odds with the public's perception of individuals with prior convictions of sexual offences. Furthermore, Duwe (2018) stated that future research should explore failed Circles in a bid to determine whether Circles can be implemented more effectively (Duwe, 2018). This is a key feature of the present research which seeks to explore failure in Circles.

#### 2.7k: Defining Success and Failure in Circles

To understand both success and failure in Circles it is important to first define them. Interventions that seek to support the reintegration of PCSO tend to focus upon reduced recidivism when measuring success (Grossi, 2017). Humanistic approaches also address life goals of PCSO, although these too are targeted to promote desistance as an outcome of achievement in life domains such as employment, stable relationships and leisure activities (Grossi, 2017). Chapter 4 explores how success and failure are understood in the context of Circles.

#### 2.7l: Circles in Australia

Richards and McCartan (2018) researched public perceptions of Circles in Australia utilizing naturally occurring discussion forum and social media data. The qualitative analysis revealed a majority opposition to Circles in the community, largely based around the belief that individuals convicted of sexual offences could not be rehabilitated and misunderstandings around the purpose and process of the approach. Whilst the majority of responses to the introduction of Circles in Australia were negative, there were a smaller number of supportive comments, demonstrating the variability in public perceptions. Richards and McCartan (2018) highlighted the importance of increasing public knowledge on the purpose of Circles existing to reduce future reoffence. Being as the relative success of Circles is partly dependent upon the availability of willing and suitable volunteers, education of the public to develop support is an important venture. Furthermore, research on professionals perceptions of sexual abuse prevention identified that professionals perceived the issue as a community issue rather than something to be dealt with by professionals alone (McCartan et al., 2020).

## 2.8: Conclusion

The literature presented to date has demonstrated the potential effectiveness of Circles to reduce recidivism and improve Core Member wellbeing in a range of countries. However, there is a paucity of research that explores the small number of Circles that are less successful for example those in which Core Members reoffend or Circles in which either volunteers or Core Members withdraw early.

The present research aims to offer a framework as a means to conceptualise success and failure in Circles, understand what contributes to different Circle outcomes, learn from Circle failure and contribute toward a large national UK evaluation of Circles. Though addressing these aims, it is hoped that it will be possible to provide lessons from failures, to improve Circle processes and increase the proportion of successful Circles. The next chapter presents the methodological approach chosen to address these topics.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter details the methodological approaches utilised in this research including selection and justification of methods, data collection and analysis procedures. Ethical considerations are discussed. Also, difficulties faced in the development of the research studies are highlighted. The research aimed to provide a representative example of Circles in the UK, understand what contributes to different Circle outcomes and, learn from Circle failure.

### 3.1: Selecting a Methodological Approach

Morgan (2007) presented research paradigms on four levels. The first level presented paradigms as worldviews, described as ways of thinking about the world. The second level was paradigms as epistemological stances, explained as the philosophy of knowledge which incorporates the research questions that are used and answered. The third level presented paradigms as belief sharing systems, used to provide a consensus about the most appropriate and meaningful questions and how they should be answered. The fourth level described paradigms as exemplars of how research should be conducted. Morgan argued that these levels merge to explain what is meant when discussing research paradigms. On the broadest level, research paradigms describe ways of looking at the world, reality and how knowledge is formed through the selection of suitable and appropriate research questions and answers (Morgan, 2007).

Traditionally, there has been a divide between two prominent research paradigms of Positivism/Post-positivism and Constructivism/Interpretivism. Positivism/Post-positivism takes the stance that there is a singular objective reality available for discovery. Positivism is concerned with direct experience and observable, measurable phenomenon (Al-Ababneh, 2020). Positivist researchers use quantitative methods to measure and investigate reality (Feilzer, 2010). The alternate view is that of Constructivism/Interpretivism. This latter view contests the prior, taking the stance that there is no singular reality and that it is only possible to subjectively explore reality. Constructivists use qualitative methods to explore reality, taking account of subjective interpretations (Feilzer, 2010). Both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research each have their strengths and weaknesses.

Quantitative methods seek to explain human behaviour through measurement, predictions and replicability and are the traditional scientific approach (Ochieng, 2009). Quantitative methods are considered reliable, suitable for quick administration and offer the opportunity to generalise to a population (Choy, 2014). However, it is not possible to extract meaning from quantitative methods as they do not account for the human experience and important human characteristics are often transformed into numeric values (Choy, 2014). Furthermore, quantitative results can indicate an event has occurred, but it cannot explain why (Ochieng, 2009).

Qualitative methods are relatively new by comparison and seek to explain human behaviour through interpretation. Qualitative methods take account of that which is unique, placing importance on the intricate detail and differences at an individual level to explore meaning (Ochieng, 2009). Whilst the strength of qualitative methods allows for an in-depth understanding of human experiences, behaviours and emotions (Choy, 2014). Unlike a quantitative approach, the results of qualitative research cannot be extended to a population to explain a phenomena at large (Ochieng, 2009). Qualitative research is also a lengthy process that requires availability from research participants in the case of interviews (Choy, 2014).

Quantitative research tends to be confirmatory and deductive whilst qualitative research tends to be exploratory and inductive. However, Ochieng (2009) argued that this view is narrow and that many research questions can be answered using either approach. What is most important, is that the most suitable approach is selected for the research question.

Mixed methods research has become known as the third prominent research paradigm in recent years (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007). Pragmatism provides the opportunity to select the most appropriate method to answer specific research questions (Yardley & Bishop, 2015). Pragmatism is concerned with that which is practical for addressing the specified research questions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The approach supports a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches and has been argued to be the best paradigm for mixed-methods research. In the present research, methodological approaches were selected upon their suitability to answer specific research questions. Therefore, the research was situated within the paradigm of pragmatism.



Whilst purist approaches each have their strengths and weaknesses, as discussed above, the same is true for mixed methods. However, a mixed-methods approach offers the opportunity to utilise the strengths of each, whilst minimising the weaknesses (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Minimisation of the weaknesses of each approach is said to occur through a process of offsetting, whereby one method makes up for the other's limitations (Turner, Cardinal & Burton, 2017). However, Turner et al (2017) argues that for the process of offsetting to be successful, one must ensure that the selected methods are compatible so that the strengths of one method are capable of offsetting the weaknesses of another. Such triangulation of research methods enables a detailed and in-depth exploration into the phenomenon of interest (Turner et al., 2017). Furthermore, a pragmatic mixed-methods approach allows for a specific data set to be analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively to gain the most accurate explanations. This process was illustrated by Feilzer (2010) in which a piece of research data was analysed using statistical and qualitative methods. It is important to note that a mixed-methods approach is not exempt from weaknesses. Careful consideration would be required if the results of one method differed to the results of another, that investigated the same topic of interest. Such discrepancy would require careful interpretation to explain the difference in results (Turner et al., 2017). However, if one is vigilant to the possibility of such discrepancies, a mixed-methods approach is a worthwhile endeavour.

### 3.2: Alternative Methods

A mixed-methods approach was used in the present research to address a range of research questions in the most appropriate way. Due to the initial research questions and pragmatic paradigm, a mixed-methods approach was deemed most suitable from the beginning. However, there were some changes to the initial planned studies, specifically relating to the use of case studies. This is further discussed under the limitations of Chapter 9.

### 3.3: Quantitative Data

Quantitative methods were used in this research in instances whereby measurement was required. Mandara (2003) stated the importance of variable selection, and argued that variables should reflect the topic of investigation. The quantitative studies in this thesis aimed to investigate the contributing factors that influence success and failure in Circles, the ability of Circles to reduce recidivism and promote desistance in Core Members. To address these aims, the quantitative studies investigated Core Member dynamic risk and emotional

wellbeing. Furthermore, another quantitative study aimed to identify typologies of Circles. The quantitative data consisted of two psychometric Likert scales, the Dynamic Risk Review (DRR) and the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). Each scale is detailed in the respective chapters. Norman (2010) reported upon the strengths of parametric methods, inclusive of those conducted on Likert scale data. Further demonstrating the reliability and robustness of such methods, inclusive of small data sets and non-normally distributed data.

End of Circle Report (EOCR) data were also used. EOCR are a report completed at the end of a Circle, that reports on Circle progress. EOCR may be considered to be more qualitative due to the textual content contained within. EOCR data were utilised qualitatively in Chapter 8. However, aspects of EOCR were quantified to be used within statistical analyses in the development of Circle typologies, as detailed in chapter 5.

#### 3.4: Qualitative Data

Qualitative methods were used in this research in instances whereby a detailed exploration into a specific phenomenon was required (Ochieng, 2009). EOCR data were used for qualitative analysis to explore what contributes toward success and failure in Circles and how effective Circles are in promoting Core Member reintegration. This research explored success and failure through textual accounts of completed Circles that reported upon Circle progress, regardless of how long the Circle lasted.

Interviews were conducted with Core Members, volunteers and coordinators to build case studies. Case studies were also used to explore success and failure in Circles in addition to exploring how effective Circles were at promoting Core Member reintegration. Whilst each of these qualitative studies shared the same aims, a key difference between studies was that the EOCR study utilised pre-existing naturally occurring data, whilst the case studies comprised of interviews conducted upon completion of Circles in combination with pre-existing data. Further information on the case studies is presented below. Thematic analysis was used in each of these qualitative studies. Braun and Clarke (2008) advocate for the flexibility of thematic analysis, stating that it can be applied to a range of contexts and suits numerous theoretical frameworks.

### 3.5: Measures

This section details the three measures used within this research. Each measure was utilised in more than one study. Table 2 details where each measure was used. Details on each measure are detailed in their respective chapters. Details on how the four studies tie together are explained below as a mixed methods convergent design.

Table 2 Measures used within each study

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Study</b>	<b>Measures Used</b>
5	Developing a Typology of Circles	Warwick & Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale Dynamic Risk Review End of Circle Reports
6	Factor Analysis of the Dynamic Risk Review	Dynamic Risk Review
7	Investigation into Core Member Dynamic Risk and Emotional Wellbeing	Warwick & Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale Dynamic Risk Review
8	End of Circle Reports	End of Circle Reports
9	Case Studies	Warwick & Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale Dynamic Risk Review End of Circle Reports

### 3.6: Mixed Methods Convergent Design

The mixed-methods convergent design consisted of five empirical studies. Each study addressed different aspects of Circles. Data for all studies were collected at the same time which allowed for an interaction between the qualitative and quantitative strands. Both the qualitative and quantitative strands were deemed of equal priority as each strand and their embedded studies were used to address different research questions. In study one, quantitative data is taken from study two and merged along with quantified data from study three. Together the combined data is used to develop Core Member typologies. In Study five, data relevant to Core Members used in the case studies, was gathered from study three and four and used to build upon the case studies to evaluate success and failure in Circles. Table 2 details the split between qualitative and quantitative methods and the three stages of data collection, data merge and analysis.

Table 3 Research Process for Mixed Methods Convergent Design

	Quantitative Strand			Qualitative Strand	
Study Stage	1 Typology Development	2 DRR Factor Analysis	3 Risk & Wellbeing	4 End of Circle Reports	5 Case Studies
Data Collection	Data from Circles providers via Circles UK			Researcher Interviews	
Data Merge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk &amp; Wellbeing Data</li> <li>End of Circle Report Data</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk &amp; Wellbeing Data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk &amp; Wellbeing Data</li> <li>End of Circle Report Data</li> </ul>	
Analysis	Statistical Analysis			Thematic Analysis	

The rationale for this approach was to use the quantitative data and subsequent analysis to provide a general understanding of success and failure in Circles. The qualitative data and subsequent analysis further provide a more in-depth understanding of success and failure in Circles from the perspectives of those involved. Several benefits were identified for mixing methods. Firstly, by combining methods, results from studies can be triangulated for validation. Secondly, mixing methods offsets the weaknesses of each approach whilst drawing on the strengths. Thirdly, combining methods provides completeness in research through a comprehensive account of the data. Fourthly, mixed methods account for process as quantitative data presents the structures in social life whilst qualitative data presents the process. Lastly, mixing methods enables different research questions to be addressed using the most appropriate methods (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

### 3.7: Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was sought and obtained from Nottingham Trent University’s college research ethics committee, Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and Circles UK. Data collection did not begin until ethical approval was obtained from each.

#### 3.7a: Informed Consent

Most of the data used in the research were secondary data obtained from Circles UK and shared for analysis. This included detailed Core Member demographics, DRR and WEMWBS

and EOCR data. Circles UK obtained informed consent from all Core Members before collecting this data. Core Members were made aware that their information may be shared for research and evaluation purposes, before deciding whether to participate in Circles. Interview data obtained for case studies were collected directly. More information on this process is provided in Chapter 9.

### 3.7b: Confidentiality

#### *Access and Participants*

Participants consisted of Core Members, volunteers and coordinators previously or presently involved in Circles. Access to participants was sought via Circles UK as part of a national evaluation.

#### *Participant Recruitment*

Active participant recruitment was minimal for this research as much of the data were secondary data, routinely collected and readily available from Circles UK. Consent for the use of participant data in research was obtained by Circles UK before being shared for analysis. Any secondary data which did not receive participant consent was not used in the present research.

All secondary data was received in an anonymous format which meant that it would not be possible for a participant to withdraw from the research once they had consented to their data being used. However, no identifiable data was used in the present research and any identifiable information that was received such as date of birth, was removed from the dataset.

Secondary data, obtained from Circles UK was shared via secure email using Egress and documents were individually password protected. Case study participants were informed that any data collected would be stored securely and never passed on in any way that might jeopardise their well-being or safety. Participants were made aware that the results of the research may be published. Participants were informed that every effort would be made to ensure they are not personally identifiable from the write-up. Participants were advised that identifying information would be removed or anonymised, i.e. names and locations would be removed or changed appropriately. Participants were informed that whilst anonymity cannot be guaranteed i.e. quotations being used in research dissemination, participants are unlikely to be identified within the information used, thereby maintaining integrity through openness

and transparency (BPS, 2018). Furthermore, Core Member data were stored using unique participant identifiers, for example, 01\_23\_4567\_8BL.

#### *Sample Size*

Potential participants were limited to those partaking in the Big Lottery funded evaluation. As such, there was a limited participant pool from which to recruit. The evaluation consisted of a maximum of 188 Circles which were funded to go ahead. However, not all Circles were formed by the completion of the present research. Therefore, sample sizes differed between studies. Additionally, chapter 6 included a separate study which utilised pre-existing Circles data which was not a part of the original evaluation. Participant and data numbers are detailed below:

Chapter 5 consisted (n=163) Core Member participants

Chapter 6 consisted (n=411) Core Member Participants

Chapter 7 consisted (n=59) Core Member Participants

Chapter 8 consisted (n=84) End of Circle Reports

Chapter 9 consisted (n=3) Case Studies comprised of Core Members, Volunteers and Coordinators

#### 3.7c: Data Protection Plan

The British Psychological Society code of ethics and conduct (BPS, 2018) exists to guide psychological research and ensure research is conducted ethically using the four primary principles of respect, competence, responsibility and integrity. To comply with these principles, it was decided early in the process to create a data protection plan (appendix 1). The data protection plan was used as a protocol document to guide the handling and storage of data throughout the research, therefore complying with the BPS principle of respect for the protection of sensitive participant data. The data protection plan documented the handling and storage guidelines developed specifically for the present research to ensure participant confidentiality, thereby demonstrating responsibility for participants data protection and competence in managing the research process.

#### 3.8: Data Collection

Data relating to the Dynamic Risk Review (DRR), Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), End of Circle Reports (EOCR) and demographic information was routinely

collected by Circles UK and shared with the researcher for analysis. DRR data were received on an anonymised spreadsheet consisting of Core Member personal identifiers and DRR scores. WEMWBS data were received individually as they were completed, regularly. WEMWBS data contained Core Member personal identifiers and WEMWBS scores. EOCRs were sent individually, as they were completed, regularly. EOCRs contained Core Member personal identifiers, brief offence histories and in some instances volunteer names. All identifiable volunteer information was removed from the EOCRs upon receipt for confidentiality. Core Member demographics were received on a spreadsheet containing personal identifiers. No Core Member names were used in any data received.

Interview data for use in the case studies were collected by the researcher via telephone interviews. The interviews were carried out in a private location and recorded on an encrypted dictaphone. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes to an hour. The interviews were designed to be short as they would be used within case studies consisting of small groups of individuals. All interviews were semi-structured in design, allowing the flexibility for discussions to move toward appropriate topic areas of interest, which may not have been previously accounted for. Six interview schedules were used in the research (see appendix 4). Interview schedules were designed specifically for use with the different participant groups, Core Members, volunteers and coordinators.

### 3.9: Analysis

Methods of analysis were selected based on the ability to suitably address the specified research questions. Through using mixed methods research there were areas of overlap between studies as detailed below:

Study one utilised statistical analysis to address the research questions:

RQ1. What contributes to success in Circles?

RQ2. Why do some Circles fail and others succeed?

RQ3. Do Circles promote desistance?

Study two also utilised statistical analysis to address the research questions:

RQ6. How effective is the DRR as a risk assessment tool?

RQ7. Can the DRR effectively predict Core Member risk?

Study three also utilised statistical analysis to address the research questions:

RQ3. Do Circles promote desistance?

RQ4. How effective is Circles at reducing recidivism?

RQ5. How effective is Circles at promoting Core Member reintegration?

Study four utilised qualitative analysis to address the research questions:

RQ1. What contributes to success in Circles?

RQ2. Why do some Circles fail and others succeed?

RQ5. How effective is Circles at promoting Core Member reintegration?

Study five also utilised qualitative analysis to address the research questions:

RQ1. What contributes to success in Circles?

RQ2. Why do some Circles fail and others succeed?

RQ5. How effective is Circles at promoting Core Member reintegration?

### 3.9a: Statistical Analysis

Study one utilised quantitative data taken from the DRR, WEMWBS, EOCC and Core Member demographic information. Data were compiled into one large excel database and transferred to SPSS v26 for statistical analysis. This study used a series of regressions to identify factors that may contribute to specific outcomes in Circles (Norman, 2010). The rationale for this was to yield useful information which could aid progress in Circles. If it was possible to predict success in Circles based on Core Member traits or wider Circles traits, this had the potential for improving the level of success in Circles overall.

Study two comprised of an exploratory factor analysis of the DRR to uncover the dimensions that underpin the scale. As a relatively new scale, the DRR has been subject to minimal validation, so a factor analysis was deemed an appropriate step before delving further into changes to DRR scores over time.



Study three employed the use of two psychometric scales to measure Core Member dynamic risk and emotional wellbeing over time. The DRR was used to measure Core Member dynamic risk as it is a tool regularly used by Circles, despite limited validation to date. Core Members' dynamic risk over time was analysed using a series of ANOVAs and t-tests. Correlations were further used to identify the relationship between dynamic risk and emotional wellbeing. Whilst the limited validation of the DRR remains a limitation of this research, it was selected for use because it was designed specifically for use with Core Members. Therefore, it was deemed worthy of further investigation to uncover how useful it is as a dynamic risk assessment scale. The WEMWBS was used to measure changes in Core Member emotional wellbeing over time. The WEMWBS was chosen as it is a well-validated and widely used measure of emotional wellbeing.

### 3.9b: Thematic Analysis

Study four consisted of EOCR data which were analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The decision to use the EOCR was due to the breadth of naturally occurring data. EOCR data has previously been utilised in Circles research (McCartan, 2016; McCartan et al, 2014) and was therefore deemed a suitable point of qualitative enquiry. EOCRs capture the stories of individual Circles and their progress throughout time. A large proportion of information is documented in EOCRs, yet this information is usually stored away. Due to the variability in data quality, the data was analysed thematically. EOCRs were completed by Circle coordinators based within six regional projects and varied in the amount of detail provided.

Study five consisted of qualitative analysis of interviews completed with Core Members, volunteers and Coordinators. Interviews were analysed thematically. The decision to analyse the interviews thematically was taken due to interview design. Interviews were designed to be relatively short, providing a snapshot of perspectives which would later be brought together to form full case studies. The use of thematic analysis was deemed suitable because it did not require the length and breadth of discussion that other methods would require (Braun & Clarke, 2008). This methodological approach was also deemed suitable because the research sought information from a range of perspectives. Alternative methods such as interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) seek to explore individual's personal

experiences and would not be suitable for the present research which aimed to bring together a range of views to form a coherent whole.

## Chapter 4 Conceptualising Success and Failure

### 4.1: Abstract

*Research into Circles has predominantly focussed upon the successes of the approach with little consideration given to those that are less successful, for example, reoffence during the Circle. This chapter presents a conceptualisation of success and failure in Circles. It is argued that without agreed-upon definitions of what constitutes a success or failure, the relative success of Circles cannot be measured consistently. This chapter uses the two core principles upon which Circles are based, no more victims and no one is disposable, along with a review of the literature, to present a means by which to categorise success and failure within the context of Circles.*

### 4.2: Introduction

Failure is an under-researched topic in Circles as much research has instead reported upon the successes of the approach see (Clarke et al., 2015) for a detailed review. Successes are usually reported in terms of desistance or a reduction in the severity of the crime committed (Duwe, 2018). Successes have also been reported as improvements to Core Members' personal circumstances such as housing and employment (Clarke et al., 2015) and improvements to Core Members' emotional wellbeing (Höing et al., 2013). Improvements in these domains are beneficial as they have been identified as protective factors that promote desistance (de Vries Robbé et al., 2015). Yet, there is a paucity of research that explores the small number of instances whereby the approach is less successful or fails in some way. Academics have called for further research into the resultant effects of the different causes leading to failed Circles (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015) and Circle processes (Bates et al., 2013). Whilst Clarke et al. (2015) have argued that Circle effectiveness can only be evaluated through the inclusion of Circle non-completers and Duwe (2018) stated that future research should consider failed Circle start-ups to improve practices. Furthermore, Elliott and Zajac (2015) stated the importance of defining what constitutes success in Circles. Without clear guidelines upon which to measure success and failure within Circles, it is difficult to ensure measures of success and failure are being assessed to the same degree (Dwerryhouse et al., 2020).

Circles are designed to run for approximately twelve to eighteen months and occasionally some Circles may last longer, dependent upon the Core Members' circumstances and needs. Despite the limited research into Circle failures, studies have noted some factors which lead to early unplanned Circle endings. Unplanned endings imply that the Circle ending was not expected. Such endings often occur as a result of Core Member dropout. The term failure is not used in the literature and therefore it is unclear whether instances of 'unsuccessful' or 'unplanned endings' are deemed as failures. Although there is a paucity of research into unsuccessful Circles, studies have noted some factors which lead to early unplanned Circle endings which can be broadly defined as: Core Member exclusion, recall to prison and Core Member dropout (Bates et al., 2013; Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). Core Members have been excluded from Circles due to a lack of cooperation (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). There have been occasions where Core Members have been recalled to prison for non-recent offences (Bates et al., 2013). There have also been instances of Core Member voluntary withdrawal, reported to be the result of a lack of motivation (Bates et al., 2012). The reported lack of motivation is presented as the explanation for Core Member withdrawal. However, without speaking to individuals that withdrew, it cannot be ascertained that this was the case, as Core Members may have withdrawn for other reasons relating to personal circumstances or difficulties in forming relationships with their volunteers. Furthermore, Bates et al. (2013) argued that it is the role of the Circle to maintain and promote Core Member motivation. This being the case, the Core Member cannot be fully accountable for their engagement, should their motivation waiver. Other Circles have ended due to Core Member concerns over a lack of volunteer commitment or cooperation, for example, one Core Member voluntarily withdrew because his volunteers chose not to meet the Core Members' new partner, which left the Core Member feeling a 'conflict of loyalties' (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015, p14). It should be noted, however, that although this Circle officially came to an end, members of the Circle continued to meet with the Core Member in an unofficial capacity upon closure of the Circle. However, not all Circles end as positively as one Core Member chose to withdraw from his Circle because he felt 'accused and condemned by two of his volunteers' (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015, p14). This Core Member also reported that he felt the Circle was interfering with his therapy. Whilst it may be taken as a positive step that the Core Member was able to identify his specific needs at the time and prioritised his ongoing therapy, it is concerning that his experience of the Circle was negatively influenced by two of his

volunteers. However, being that only two volunteers were singled out may imply that relationships between the Core Member and other members of the Circle were positive. Although this Core Members' experience may also hold implications for the careful selection and training of suitable volunteers. Core Member, voluntary withdrawal has also been reported due to a strong focus on accountability (Fox, 2016). Höing, Vogelvang and Bogaerts (2015) capture these issues in their Intervention model. The careful selection of suitable Core Members and volunteers is explained to be further moderated by Core Member motivation and behaviour and volunteer characteristics within the Circle. A balanced execution of the Circle functions is also advocated. The model presents the processes and functions which are theorised to accumulate to success in Circles. The intervention model may also be used to understand how some Circles may be less successful or fail if these functions are not met. The intervention model, which is based on desistance theory is yet to be tested (Höing et al, 2013).

The purpose of this chapter is to propose a mechanism in which to measure success and failure within Circles. This will enable success to be measured consistently and provide the opportunity to learn from failure by identifying behaviours that are less helpful to Core Member reintegration. The present conceptualisation of success and failure was developed through a critical exploration of indicators of success and failure reported in the Circles literature (Bates et al., 2013; Clarke et al., 2015; Clarke et al., 2017; Duwe, 2018; Fox, 2016; 2015; Höing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, 2015; Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015; McCartan, 2016; Wilson & McWhinnie, 2016) combined with a critical review of the two key principles upon which Circles was based (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007). In this chapter, each of these topics are reviewed before the present proposal of how success and failure should be conceptualised and categorised is presented.

#### 4.3: Benefits of Circles

Success in Circles is predominantly measured through a reduction in sexual recidivism (Elliott & Zajac, 2015), especially by funding bodies. Clarke et al. (2015) argued that due to the numerous methodological limitations of studies investigating the effectiveness of Circles, a reduction in sexual reconvictions by Core Members cannot be claimed as an outcome. However, researchers have identified other, softer benefits of Circle participation. Clarke et

al. (2015) identified that Circle participation reduced Core Member isolation through community integration, improvements in pro-social attitudes and activities such as volunteering and employment, improvements in age-appropriate relationships and improvements in emotional well-being such as increased self-esteem. Furthermore, Höing, Vogelvang and Bogaerts (2015) reported that participation in Circles improved Core Member self-reflection, openness and assertiveness and Core Members demonstrated improvements in self-esteem and self-confidence. Whilst improvements in soft benefits are positive, organisations that seek to secure funding are more interested in hard benefits of reduced recidivism. Public attitudes towards individuals with sexual offence convictions are inherently negative (Tewksbury & Lees, 2006). Because funders decisions are influenced by public opinion, a reduction in Core Member recidivism has become the key focus. Duwe (2018) conducted a randomised control trial (RCT) in Minnesota and demonstrated that Circles do reduce Core Member Recidivism. To date, there have been no RCTs in the UK so the effectiveness of Circles upon Core Member desistance in the UK, cannot yet be ascertained. Although mixed-methods research in the UK has indicated that Circles do promote Core Member desistance and wellbeing (McCartan 2016; McCartan et al., 2014).

#### 4.4: Guiding Principles of Circles

Circles were originally established in Canada using two core principles, *no more victims* and *no one is disposable* (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007). It is these core principles which steer the aims of Circles and therefore influence perceptions of success and failure. Taking the first core principle, *no more victims*, one goal of Circles is to promote desistance so that the Core Member receiving support does not go on to re-offend again in the future (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007; Höing et al, 2013;). The second core principle, *no one is disposable*, refers to the Core Members in receipt of support, a goal of Circles being to support the Core Members reintegration with society (Elliott & Beech, 2012). The Core Member is viewed as an individual with the potential to positively contribute to society, as a person that should not be left behind or excluded. Therefore, success, as defined by the two core principles, means a Core Member will not go on to re-offend and is positively reintegrated with society (Elliott & Beech, 2012; Hannem & Petrunik, 2007; Höing et al, 2013). Arguably, if either of these two core principles are not met, the Circle may be deemed to have failed. There are several ways in which success and failure could be defined in Circles and several outcomes which would be

deemed as less than successful. Failure in Circles is not straightforward but it is an area which requires attention. Without the presence of a universally employed definition of success and failure, we cannot be sure that facilitators and researchers are evaluating outcomes to the same degree, which would bring into question the validity of such evaluations.

#### 4.5: Defining Success in Circles

The aim of Circles is to prevent reoffence (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). Whilst of clear importance for the safety of the public, desistance is further beneficial to the Core Member. However, in some cases, Core Members may not see the immediate benefit of desisting whilst they focus instead upon their additional needs with which they require support. It can be easy to view the guiding principles of *no more victims* and *no one is disposable* (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007) in terms of the needs of the public and criminal justice service versus the needs of the Core Member. This is not a helpful view. Whilst funding for Circle initiatives are sought on the basis that Circles reduce recidivism directly, it is likely that through supporting Core Members' practical needs and emotional wellbeing, Core Member desistance will develop organically (Höing et al., 2013). Therefore, it may be beneficial to measure success on several levels. Improvements to Core Member wellbeing maintain the core principle of *no one is disposable*. However, if a Core Member chooses to re-offend despite receiving support, the Circle must be deemed a failure due to the violation of the core principle of *no more victims*. Much of the Circles literature has reported upon areas of achievement within Circles such as those relating to improved wellbeing and social skills (see table 4 below). Many Circles with such achievements go on to have successful outcomes. However, Core Members that make gains in their wellbeing and social skills but go on to re-offend may be argued to be distinctively different from those that make positive gains and choose to lead an offence free life, as the latter chooses a life of desistance whilst the former does not. It is important to differentiate between the two, to learn from those that more successful and identify the reasons why some people are less successful and continue with reoffending behaviours despite being provided with support. Table 4 details some indicators of success and failure as captured in the literature.

Table 4 Indicators of Success and Failure in the Literature

<b>Research and Evaluation</b>	<b>Indicators of Success</b>	<b>Indicators of Failure</b>
Bates, Williams, Wilson & Wilson (2013)		Recidivism outcomes: Violent, non-violent, failure to comply with sex offender registry, non-contact sexual offence, contact sexual offence, breach of SOPO.
Clarke, Brown & Völlm (2015)	Psychosocial adaptation, housing, relationships, and employment.	Recidivism outcomes: reconviction for any offence and any sexual offence, reoffending, arrest, recall, and breach of license.
Clarke, Warwick & Völlm (2017)		Non-engagement, Withdrawal, Recall.
Duwe (2018)		Recidivism measures: re-arrest, reconviction, resentenced to prison for a new felony conviction or reimprisonment for a technical violation revocation.
Fox (2015a)	Reduced recidivism, Desistance.	
Fox (2016)	Reduced recidivism, Desistance.	
Höing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang (2013)	Prevention of sexual and general recidivism. Development of a positive identity and pro-social lifestyle.	
Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts (2015)	Full desistance, development of a pro-social lifestyle.	Core Member dropout and lack of cooperation with Circles.
McCartan et al. (2014)		Recidivism
McCartan (2016)	Improvements to CM wellbeing	
Wilson & McWhinnie (2016)	Reduced recidivism, Desistance.	



Whilst it has been argued that differences amongst outcomes should be further explored and considered as distinct entities. Achievements throughout the duration of the Circle should equally be monitored and appraised. Core Members are individuals with their individual life goals. Some Core Members may wish to reintegrate with society in positive ways such as, through gaining employment, finding new hobbies, making new friends or reconnecting with old friends and family. As social isolation is among one of the most widely accepted risk factors for recidivism (Malinen et al., 2014), it is very likely that, through the process of reintegration and reduced isolation, desistance may occur as a byproduct (Höing et al., 2013). Additionally, through concentrating efforts on reintegration processes, Core Members are further supported in stepping away from their PCSO identity (Fox, 2016). In terms of measuring success in Circles, achievements in obtained accommodation, employment, volunteering, inclusion in social activities, development of new social connections outside of the Circle, increases in self-esteem, confidence and other measures of wellbeing should be viewed and celebrated as successes on the Core Members' journey toward tertiary desistance. The Circle intervention model developed by Höing et al. (2013) illustrates such factors as intermediate effects that should be acknowledged as successes in the Circle as they are achieved. Arguably, positive progress could be identified by individuals supporting any Core Member in any Circle. Some Core Members may demonstrate minimal progress whilst others demonstrate significant improvements. To date, success in Circles has been measured in numerous ways. However, Circles was developed based on two core principles and whilst all achievements made within the Circle should be acknowledged and celebrated, if Circles are to be measured critically, it is the outcomes which should ultimately define whether a Circle is deemed to have succeeded or failed.

#### 4.6: Defining Failure in Circles

Table 4 listed some descriptors of failure as recorded in the literature which broadly cover Core Member recidivism and poor engagement, inclusive of Core Member withdrawal. Voluntary withdrawal from Circles at the decision of the Core Member should be disregarded as a failure, as this does not violate either of the two core principles. Additionally, Core Member attendance is voluntary. Therefore, Core Members should have the right to withdraw, without the Circle being deemed an automatic failure. As Clarke et al. (2017) stated, unplanned endings do not always imply failure. The present discussion argues that

failures are more accurately measured by the outcomes of volunteer disbandment, Core Member Exclusion and Core Member re-offence.

Volunteer disbandment and Core Member Exclusion are common amongst unplanned endings, yet each are potentially avoidable. Volunteer disbandment refers to cases whereby the volunteer's drop-out of the Circle, either due to personal commitments outside of the Circle or a lack of motivation to continue. Core Member exclusion refers to cases whereby the Core Member is forced out of the Circle for reasons relating to the Core Members' lack of cooperation or motivation to engage, despite the volunteers being otherwise available to offer support. Whilst the categories appear similar, they can be differentiated in the reasoning behind the volunteer's disengagement. The prior reasoning relates to volunteers' circumstances and willingness to engage, whilst the latter relates to volunteer and/or Coordinator perceptions of Core Member willingness to engage. Each of these shall be considered in turn.

#### 4.7: Volunteer Disbandment

Höing et al. (2013) explored the experiences of individuals involved in Circles through qualitative research with Circle members inclusive of volunteers, Core Members, and coordinators. In 6 of the 21 Circles investigated, it was reported that a dysfunctional stage took place. Dysfunctional stages were characterised by low levels of trust and openness, and exclusionary behaviour of volunteers toward the Core Member amongst other behaviours (Höing et al., 2013). Such exclusive behaviours are inverse to the desired characteristics of volunteers advocated in the Intervention Model (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015) and breed a poor therapeutic environment. The authors argued that the selection of suitable volunteers is crucial to the success of Circles. Volunteers with questionable motivations, non-inclusive behaviour toward the Core Member or limited commitment to Circles can lead to ruptures in the Circle. Such ruptures can lead to the Circle ending prematurely through disbandment of the volunteers or Core Member drop-out (Höing et al., 2013). It would be beneficial to evaluate group cohesion in Circles to see if dysfunctional stages can be avoided.

Kerr, Tully and Völlm (2017) investigated the attitudes of Circle volunteers towards Core Members and reported that volunteers viewed Core Members' social isolation to a similar level to the public. Additionally, volunteers viewed Core Members to be slightly more

dangerous than the public did, although not to a significant level. Kerr et al. (2017) suggested that such volunteer attitudes may be adaptive in the functions of providing support and accountability. However, volunteer concerns over Core Member dangerousness may impact volunteer commitment to Circles. Particularly so, if volunteers feel unsafe spending time with Core Members.

Research has shown that volunteering within Circles can be a stressful task due to the intensive nature of work involved (Höing et al., 2016). Because a lack of volunteer commitment has been cited as a reason for Core Member voluntary dropout, this holds implications for the selection and recruitment of suitable volunteers. Watson, Thomas and Daffern (2015) noted how the therapeutic environment can negatively affect outcomes for individuals with prior convictions. Research by Höing, Vogelvang and Bogaerts (2015) noted a case where a Core Member voluntarily withdrew, due to the negative attitudes of his volunteers toward him. Whilst Lowe and Willis (2019) reported upon volunteers who dropped out of a Circle because they would not volunteer to work with a gay Core Member. Similar issues were also reported regarding disagreements around religion (Lowe & Willis, 2019).

Volunteer non-attendance may also have a negative impact upon Core Members, whether limited attendance is a result of low motivation for the Circle or limited availability due to personal circumstance (Kitson-Boyce, Blagden, Winder & Dillon, 2019). In the broader volunteering literature, survival analyses indicated that volunteer dropout often occurs when a strong volunteer identity is not developed or maintained (Vecina & Chacón, 2017). Cases such as this highlight the importance of selective volunteer recruitment and subsequent training. Beyko and Wong (2005) argued that good therapeutic relationships can reduce dropout from treatment. Whilst Circles are not a treatment, it is argued that similarly, such negative effects may be reversed through positive relationships.

#### 4.8: Core Member Exclusion

Core Members have been excluded from Circles due to poor cooperation (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). McCartan (2016) reported how Core Members believed Circles existed to support Core Members rather than hold them accountable. It appears that some Core Members choose to participate in Circles with certain ideas about the process, possibly considering Circles to be a support network, and later lack motivation to engage upon the

realisation that the accountability aspect is equally asserted within the Circle. Circles that focus their discussions on support rather than accountability, may be more successful due to the encouragement of new identity formation within the Core Member (Fox, 2016). Whilst Circles that remain focused on accountability, may inhibit the Core Member from exploring positive new identities away from the PCSO stereotype (Fox, 2016). The development of a pro-social identity is also important in the promotion of desistance from crime (Rocque, Posick & Paternoster, 2016).

Circles are designed to be inclusive; all members are viewed as equals within the Circle and agree to behave in such a way upon commencement. If the volunteer members of the Circle choose to focus upon the Core Members' accountability, without concern for the Core Members' wellbeing as an equal, the Core Member is likely to feel excluded and may perceive the approach as a Circle of Accountability (CoA) rather than one which additionally incorporates support. In theory, such volunteer behaviours could lead to Core Member isolation and exclusion from the group, whilst devolving the Core Members' social identity into that of an PCSO.

McCartan (2016) asserted that it is important that all parties involved in Circles understand what is meant by the terms of support and accountability. A clear understanding at the outset would allow potential Core Members to make an informed decision as to whether to participate. Allowing for willing individuals to participate with full knowledge of what they are agreeing to. If Core Members choose to join a Circle with full knowledge of what is expected of them, it seems likely that they would be more cooperative and therefore provide volunteers with less reason to exclude them from Circles. Alternatively, if a potential Core Member was fully informed of how Circles work in practice, inclusive of how the accountability element is equally asserted, some potential Core Members may be dissuaded from participation. However, this should not be considered negatively, as full disclosure of what Circles entail may act to encourage those who feel ready and willing to engage with the process fully.

Furthermore, accountability is concerned with a Core Members' past and future risk-related behaviour. If a Circle is to subscribe to a GLM approach, the accountability aspect is likely to be unhelpful and hinder Core Members' ability to focus on a pro-social future, whilst instead continually raising past risk and potential future risk rather than future goals and goods. In

addition to the importance of transparency, Circles should also maintain a level of compromise when managing Core Member behaviour within the Circle. Ware and Blagden (2016) argue that within a treatment setting, an PCSO disruptive behaviour should not be used as an excuse to exclude individuals from therapy. Similarly, it is argued here, that neither should Core Members' behaviour be used as an excuse to exclude Core Members from Circles.

Using the guiding principles, Table 5 illustrates a simple decision matrix from which the Circle outcome can be defined in terms of success and failure. Table 5 provides an exhaustive list of all potential Circle outcomes. There may be certain circumstances whereby the Circle ends for a specific reason not listed in the matrix, for example, Core Member illness. In such cases, the matrix can still be used to categorise the ending based upon whether the ending was agreed by all or if the Core Member chose to drop out. In either of these examples, the ending would be deemed as a success.

Table 5 Decision Matrix of Circle Endings and Outcome Definitions

<b>Circles Ending</b>	<b>No More Victims</b>	<b>No-one is Disposable</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>New Offence</b>	X		Failure
<b>Recall due to Circles Intelligence preventing a new offence</b>			Success
<b>Planned and agreed ending</b>			Success
<b>CM decision to end</b>			Success
<b>Volunteer Disbandment</b>		X	Failure
<b>Core Member Exclusion</b>		X	Failure

Under this matrix, all Circles with a new reoffence within the term of the Circle are deemed failures with one exception. If a Core Member has been recalled based on Circles intelligence that prevents the Core Member carrying out a new offence, the Circle should be deemed a success due to the accountability aspect of Circles (Elliott & Zajac, 2015). New offences defy the core principle of *no more victims*. Where a new offence or recall does not take place, success and failure are still upheld by the two core principles. Circles with planned and agreed

endings are deemed a success as the two core principles are maintained. In instances whereby the Core Member voluntarily chooses to withdraw from the Circle, the ending should be deemed a success due to the two core principles being upheld. However, if the Circle ends due to volunteer disbandment the core principle of *No one is disposable* is violated and the Circle should be deemed a failure as the Core Member is left without support. It is important to clarify that volunteer disbandment described here, does not refer to instances whereby one or two volunteers leave the Circle and are easily replaced. Volunteer disbandment refers to instances whereby all volunteers choose to leave the Circle, either at the same time or within proximity. In this scenario, a new Circle of volunteers may be offered to the Core Member, yet the initial Circle will have failed through violation of the core principle *No one is disposable*. Finally, if the decision to end the Circles is taken by external agencies and the Core Member is excluded from the Circle, without evidence of recall or reoffence, the ending should also be deemed a failure due to violation of the core principle *No one is disposable*.

#### 4.9: Potential Implications of Circle Attrition and Dropout

One way of beginning to explore attrition and dropout in Circles is to consider the reasons for treatment attrition and dropout amongst individuals convicted of sexual offences. Larochelle, Diguier, Laverdière and Greenman (2011) evaluated the literature on treatment attrition and developed three main causes of treatment non-completion. Larochelle et al. (2011) reported causes of treatment attrition as premature termination by the PCSO, exclusion from treatment by the treatment team on the grounds of unacceptable behaviour or lack of participation, and termination of treatment due to recall to prison or a failure to comply with probation release conditions. Each cause can be likened to the three identified reasons for Circle attrition: dropout, exclusion and recall (Bates et al., 2013; Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). Research has evidenced that individuals who drop out of treatment have higher rates of recidivism than treatment completers (Hanson et al., 2002). Furthermore, individuals who have had their treatment terminated early by a therapist have been evidenced to re-offend at a higher rate than those who drop-out from treatment (Romaine, Miner, Poplin, Dwyer & Berg, 2012). Due to the similarities in attrition between treatment interventions and Circles, there may be cause for concern over Core Members who choose to voluntarily withdraw from Circles earlier than planned. In addition to cases whereby Core Members are left without a Circle due to volunteer disbandment or exclusion. In the absence of a theoretical construct of

Circle failure, it is argued that unsuccessful treatment interventions are used as a basis from which to understand the potential implications of unsuccessful Circles. The decision matrix proposed earlier defines success and failure during the term of the Circle. Due to long-term potential implications of unsuccessful Circles, it is important to also evaluate the effectiveness of Circles upon long-term Core Member desistance.

#### 4.10: Conceptualising Success and Failure Beyond the term of the Circle

Identifying individual Circle outcomes to categorise success and failure is useful in acknowledging the level of success achieved by the Circle approach. Furthermore, the use of an agreed-upon definition of what constitutes a success or failure within Circles, would minimise over-reporting of ambiguous Circle completions as successes, such was the case in (Bates et al, 2012).

Whilst Core Member dropout and exclusion from the Circles may occur during the term of the Circle, recall to prison or re-arrest may occur during the Circle or following completion of the Circle. This complicates matters. If a Circle lasts 12 months and completes as planned but the Core Member reoffends three months following the closure of the Circle, it would be a very limiting conceptualisation to consider the Circle a success. It is acknowledged in the literature that the longer an individual is out in society without reoffending, the lower their future risk of reoffence becomes (Hanson, Harris, Helmus & Thornton, 2014). However, some Circles have been deemed successfully completed, even when the Core member has subsequently gone on to re-offend (Bates et al., 2012). If the aim of evaluating Circles is to evaluate the ability of Circles to reduce Core Member risk during the term of the Circle this may be acceptable. However, as a core principle of Circles is *no more victims* it seems unacceptable that the Circles be deemed a success if the Core Member goes on to re-offend following completion of the Circle term. Through participation in Circles, Core Members are provided with a support network which they can use to build upon their self-esteem, confidence and life skills. Arguably, as the support network is gradually removed, it is up to the Core Member to harness their new-found life skills to move forward positively with an offence free life. Thus, it is appropriate to distinguish between the effectiveness of Circles during a Core Member's participation and the lasting effectiveness of Circles post-completion. Success and failure are not clear-cut concepts in Circles and may benefit from being considered in terms of a timeline.

Figure 3 illustrates how success and failure may be considered as a timeline. The timeline illustrates the various ways in which Circles may end, along with when these endings may occur. Essentially the outcomes laid out in table 5 have been mapped onto the timeline presented in Figure 3. In terms of successful Circles, endings may be the result of planned completions or Core Member voluntary withdrawal, both of which occur during the term of the Circle. Alternatively, Circles that end due to recall as the result of Circle intelligence may occur during the Circle or theoretically, they could occur once the Circle has ended if contact is maintained between members of the Circle and the Core Member. In terms of failed Circles, Core Member Exclusion and volunteer disbandment can occur at any time during the term of the Circle, whilst re-arrest can occur either during the Circle or at any point post-Circle.



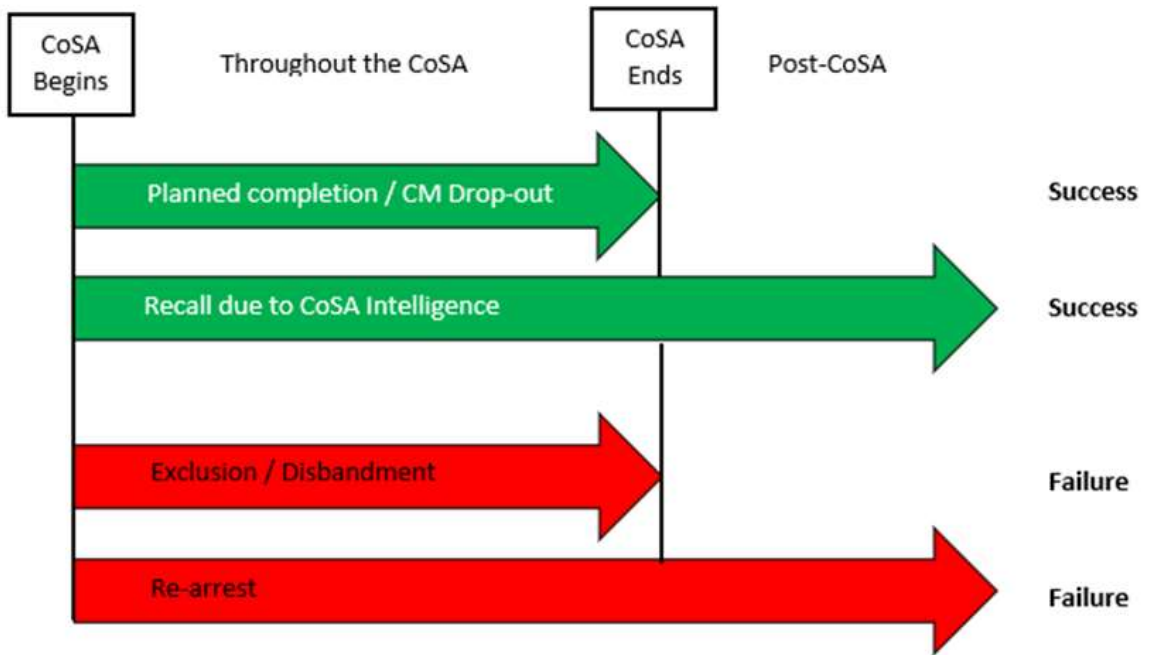


Figure 3 Circles Timeline

If a Circle is only effective during the term of the Circle, it is not particularly helpful in the long term. Core Members are made aware at the beginning that volunteer support will not be available indefinitely and Core Members are required to adjust to a gradual reduction in Circle meetings. For a Core Member to have the best opportunity for ongoing success post-Circle, the Circle must spend time helping the Core Member to build a wider social network outside of Circle. At the time of writing, it is not known how long the positive effects of Circles last, nor if, or how, they 'wear off'. Circles is but one aspect of support, provided in addition to that of professionals in the Criminal Justice System, treatment interventions, and programmes completed whilst in prison.

If a reoffence took place during the term of the Circle, the Circle would automatically be deemed a failure in the decision matrix, except for recall due to Circle intelligence. If the Circle were otherwise be deemed successful during the term of the Circle, the long-term success of the approach can be evaluated post-Circle. At this point the core principle of *no one is disposable* is no longer relevant as the Core Member has already received the support of their Circle. However, the second core principle of *no more victims* still stands. Research has suggested that the benefits gained from Circle participation may promote Core Member desistance (Höing et al., 2013). However, it is presently unknown whether differences in Circle endings may influence Core Members' recidivism risk. This is an area that requires further research. Hanson et al. (2014) carried out longitudinal research and asserted that in (n=1992) high-risk cases, the sexual recidivism risk decreased from 22% upon release, to 8.6% after five years, and further decreased to 4.2% ten years post-release. Additionally, only 7% of individuals reoffended within the first year following release. Individuals participating in Circles are supported to reduce their risk through support and reintegration. Therefore, the norms evidenced in the research of Hanson et al. (2014) may differ from that of those involved in Circles. The only longitudinal study on Core Member recidivism to date, indicates that Circles reduces the risk of sexual recidivism by 88% (Duwe, 2018). The results suggest that Circles are beneficial to Core Members in supporting their desistance and reintegration. Whilst evidence for Core Member desistance relies upon limited longitudinal research, Core Member behaviour following the closure of the Circle is the sole responsibility of the Core Member. Lowe and Willis (2019) reported how some volunteers felt responsible for Core Members that were recalled or reoffended because it meant that more victims were harmed.

It is argued here that Core Member behaviour is the responsibility of the Core Member. Therefore, any reoffence should reflect upon the Core Member as an individual, and not of the wider Circle that offered support. However, the Circle sits within a broader social context and is a part of a wider system that seeks to promote desistance.

The MOJ is comprised of courts, prisons, probation service and attendance centres, (MOJ, 2021). The criminal justice service exists to protect the public, punish crime and support the rehabilitation of those who commit crimes (MOJ, 2021). Success in the MOJ is therefore achieved through the identification of offences committed, the serving of prison sentences and the subsequent rehabilitation of those who commit offences. Whilst a reoffence has been argued to be deemed a failure in Circles, the same cannot be said for the broader CJS. This is because the CJS seeks to protect the public, meaning identification of an offence provides the CJS with the opportunity to fulfil the aim of protecting the public through punishment of the crime. However, a reoffence could equally be argued to be deemed as a failure in the CJS due to a failure to rehabilitate an individual following their initial offence and subsequently, a failure to protect the public. However, it has been argued that desistance is a process, of which recidivism is a part. This indicates that failure, as defined in terms of recidivism, may be argued to be inevitable on one's journey toward full desistance (Göbbels, Ward & Willis, 2012). Success and failure definitions in the broader CJS are therefore difficult to distinguish and are distinct from the definitions of success and failure proposed in Circles.

Core Member success within the Circle may also be influenced by Core Members probation officers. Lewis (2014) reported upon the importance of a supportive and empathetic approach from probation officers and the subsequent impact it can have on reducing recidivism. The Circle as a whole often includes the Core Members probation officer as part of the outer Circle. Professionals such as the probation officer are the link between the inner Circle and society. The Core Members efforts toward desistance can therefore be bolstered by good relationships both within and outside the Circle and good working relationships between members of the inner and outer Circle.

#### 4.11 Limitations

This is the first attempt to conceptualise success and failure within the context of Circles. As a result, the proposed conceptualisation should be considered as one way in which to

understand success and failure. This chapter utilised the two core principles of no more victims and no one is disposable, assigning equal importance to each. Therefore, if this method of categorisation should be used in the future, it should be done so with this in mind.

#### 4.12: Summary

Research into Circles has predominantly focussed upon the successes of the approach without much consideration given toward less successful Circles. Moreover, whilst there is a consensus that success can be measured through Core Member desistance, there have also been calls to evaluate successes in terms of Core Member achievements. Whilst it is important to acknowledge and celebrate Core Members' achievements, instances of failure should be equally recognised and acknowledged. There is nothing to be gained from dismissing Circles that do not meet expectations and there is much potential to learn from Circles that fail. Furthermore, it has been recommended that a consistent approach is used when defining success and failure in Circles. A standardised assessment of success and failure is useful in three ways. Firstly, it provides a set of criteria against which to measure success and failure. Secondly, it allows for consistency in research and evaluation of Circles. Thirdly, it offers the opportunity to categorise success and failure as distinct binary categories. The clear separation of which provides the opportunity for further research into Circle failure. The decision matrix does not propose all-encompassing definitions of what constitutes success and failure in Circles. Rather, it is provided as a starting point to encourage discussion and thought around what exactly should define success and failure in the context of Circles.

## Chapter 5 Developing a Typology of Circles

### 5.1: Abstract

*This chapter presents an investigation into quantitative data of (n=163) Circles. A series of regression analyses were used to investigate whether substance abuse (as identified in Chapter 8), poor relationships (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015) and discussion of risk (Fox, 2016) influenced Circle failure. These variables were also used to investigate whether they had an impact upon other types of adverse or unplanned endings such as recall, reoffence or dropout from the Circle. Results demonstrated that discussion of risk within Circles, can contribute to both Core Member and volunteer dropout from Circles. Whilst the absence of risk-related discussions predicted Circle success, Circles in which Core Members had substance abuse problems were also predictive of dropouts of both Core Members and volunteers. Poor relationship quality did not demonstrate any significant results. This study holds implications for Circle approaches and identifies the need for more specialist support in Circles where Core Members have additional complex needs.*

### 5.2: Introduction

Chapter 4 (conceptualising success and failure) proposed some theoretical explanations for failure in Circles and suggested some ways in which success and failure in Circles may be conceptualised. The research into Circles failure has not been explored in-depth, yet it has been noted as an important next step in evaluating the effectiveness and improving the practices of Circles (Duwe, 2018). In this chapter, definitions of success and failure as conceptualised in the decision matrix in chapter 4, will be used to investigate factors that contribute to different Circle outcomes.

Typology research has been used in the past to investigate the characteristics of individuals with sexual offence convictions to reduce recidivism through better targeting of treatment and reintegration efforts (Robertiello & Terry, 2007). In a similar pursuit, the ability to simplify complex data on Circle progress may mean it is possible to identify Circle characteristics and traits associated with success or failure. Additionally, it would be useful to identify whether certain characteristics or behaviours are associated with more specific Circle outcomes such as recall, reoffence or dropout from the Circle. This information could be used to guide Circle processes in terms of Circle training and development to increase the rate of Circle successes.

So far, research has identified several areas which are said to influence Circle progression, for better or worse.

Höing, Vogelvang and Bogaerts (2015) argued for the importance of good quality relationships between volunteers and Core Members for successful outcomes in Circles. Alternatively, Fox (2016) theorised that a strong focus on accountability in Circles may be detrimental to Core Members and negatively influence Core Members' progression. Additionally, through qualitative research into success and failure utilizing EOCR (see Chapter 8) it emerged that Circles in which Core Members had problems with drugs and alcohol were more likely to result in failures. Taken together, these results were used to build a hypothesis that Circles in which there were discussions of risk, poor relationships or Core Members with substance abuse would result in more Circle failures.

#### 5.2a: Rationale

The purpose of this study was to investigate the characteristics of Circles and identify relationships between Circle characteristics and Circle outcomes. Data were gathered as part of the Big Lottery National evaluation, which offered the opportunity to investigate whether any factors may influence different outcomes. The research aimed to identify any characteristics of Circles, which may better predict Circle outcomes. Therefore, providing the opportunity to emulate the characteristics of successful Circles and learn from the characteristics of failed Circles.

To gain the most out of this study, initial selection criteria were developed to identify the most useful variables to be used in the analysis. The initial selection criteria consisted:

1. Items related to behaviour/factors within the Circle (i.e. discussion of risk).
2. Items were measurable objectively (i.e. Circle length).
3. Dynamic item variables, were those that the Circle could change (i.e. volunteer attendance).

Examples of variables which did not meet these criteria are:

- Employment (as this takes place outside of the Circle and is not always an outcome of Circles, for example, Core Members who join the Circle when already employed).

- Core Member motivation (as subjectively described by Circle volunteers as this provides an outsider perspective which may not reflect the reality of Core Members' motivation).

Dynamic items were identified as suitable variables for inclusion because it was theorised that any emergent results could be used to identify aspects of Circles which would benefit from development.

#### 5.2b: Aims and Research Questions

This chapter aimed to understand what contributes to different Circle outcomes. In addressing this aim, this chapter was associated with the following research questions:

- What contributes to success in Circles?
- Why do some Circles fail, and others succeed?
- Do Circles promote desistance?

#### 5.3: Method

Typologies are used to order and simplify complex data (Guest, 2013). Researchers have used typologies to understand differences between various offending behaviours and offence types, in a bid to reduce recidivism (Robertiello & Terry, 2007). Mandara (2003) described a typology as a system through which to organise objects according to their similarities and differences. Typological analysis provides a means by which to identify and condense large amounts of data into classifications based on types, categories or behavioural patterns (Mandara, 2003). Whilst initial theories may be developed based on prior literature, the use of typological research provides the opportunity to develop a model, a theory that can be used to predict outcomes. A typological approach is useful in the present research as little is known about Circle failure yet several theories exist to explain how and why Circles may work at reducing recidivism and supporting Core Member reintegration. These initial theories, therefore, provide the basis from which to build a typology of Circles, to develop a model which can be used to predict different Circle outcomes. Whilst typologies are useful in categorising behaviours and simplifying complex data, Robertiello and Terry (2007) advocate for caution in interpreting typologies of PCSO, as humans are complex beings who cannot always be categorised into neat categories.

However, typology research is still useful in providing a broad interpretation of complex data in a simplified way.

This study utilised dynamic risk and wellbeing data in addition to quantitative aspects of EOCR data and detailed Core Member demographics to build Core Member typologies. This study aimed to uncover shared behaviours of successful and less successful Circles. The development of Circle typologies is the first of its kind and a unique contribution to the Circles literature. The study aimed to provide insight into Circle styles and approaches most likely to succeed, in addition to behaviours which offer red flag indicators for recidivism risk. Using the newly developed conceptualisation of success and failure discussed in chapter 4, this research identified factors that influence Circle outcomes providing a starting point from which to understand, success and failure.

#### 5.3a: Participants

Participants consisted of (n=163) Core Members participating in UK community-based Circles between January 2016 and April 2019. Circles UK provided secondary data from six geographical areas of the UK.

#### 5.3b: Data Collection

Secondary data relating to Core Member demographics, offence related information and sentencing history were collated by Circles UK as Circles were created. WEMWBS, DRR and EOCR data were gathered by Circles UK throughout the course of Circles.

#### 5.3c: Measures

As part of the National Evaluation for Circles UK, several types of secondary data were collected on an intermittent basis throughout the course of the evaluation. All secondary data were received from Circles UK. Core Member demographics, offence related information and sentencing history data were received in batches as and when it became available. Static and dynamic risk data were utilised from pre-existing assessments: static risk was recorded from Risk Matrix 2000 (RM2000; Thornton et al., 2003) and dynamic risk was reported from the Offender Assessment System (OASys; Home Office, 2002). Secondary data comprising WEMWBS, DRR and EOCR were also received on an intermittent basis throughout the course of the evaluation, as and when available. Details of secondary data are provided in chapter 3.



### *Data Coding for EOCR Data*

Quantitative EOCR data comprised items including the number of volunteer dropouts and replacements, the number of Circles meetings, length of Circles, MAPPA level and Circle ending. Circle endings consisted of items such as successful reintegration, drop-out, recall and re-arrest. Quantitative items were used as raw data. Whilst some of the qualitative data were coded quantitatively into additional variables for use in the analysis.

Qualitative EOCR data were coded quantitatively using the recurrent topics taken from an initial sample of (n=36) EOCR subjected to thematic analysis. Recurrent topics comprised elements of Core Member wellbeing, the quality of Core Members' personal relationships and information on Core Members' personal circumstances concerning employment and accommodation. Some categories were measured in binary terms of yes/no, for example, discussion of risk. Others were categorised based on engagement, for example, Core Member-Volunteer relationships. The latter were recorded as either: Good Throughout, Increased in Quality, Decreased in Quality, Poor Throughout or Erratic, dependent upon behaviour displayed within the Circle. The quantitative coding was conducted by the researcher alone. Any instances of data to be coded that appeared ambiguous were not used to maintain conformity in the process. However, it remains a limitation of the research that categories were subjectively allocated.

### 5.3d: Procedure

All secondary data received were inputted into an excel spreadsheet and imported to SPSS v26 for analysis. Data were received on an intermittent basis, as and when available. All Circles were assigned a unique identifier code by Circles UK, which was used to collate all obtained data to the relevant participants. Categories with potentially recognisable Core Member information such as Core Members' date of birth and sentencing dates were removed from the spreadsheet. Table 6 illustrates data collection time points for WEMWBS, DRR and EOCR data.

Table 6 Timepoints of data collection for WEMWBS, DRR and EOCR

Data Type	Pre-Circle	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	12 Months	15 Months	18 Months	21 Months	24 Months	Post-Circle
WEMWBS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DRR		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
EOCR										✓

### 5.3e: Data Wrangling

Before commencing with the analysis data were cleaned. Frequencies were conducted in SPSS v26 on all variables to allow a superficial analysis of data accuracy, by checking that the variables listed related to the relevant variable options and did not, for example, contain incorrect data. Random spot checks were also carried out upon the data by the researcher and an individual at Circles UK. Spot checks consisted of data lines being selected on a randomised basis and each variable category being checked to ensure the data contained within the category was correct.

### 5.3f: Data Coding

WEMWBS and DRR data were ready for analysis upon completion of data cleaning.

Qualitative aspects of the EOCR data were first coded to be used in a quantitative analysis.

### 5.3g: Analysis

Prior literature was utilised in the selection of two variables to be used in the analysis. Volunteer and Core Member relationship quality formed the first variable (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). The presence or absence of accountability discussions formed the second variable (Fox, 2016). The third variable to be used, the presence of substance abuse, was selected for further enquiry due to novel results that emerged from a qualitative exploration into success and failure in Circles using EOCR data (detailed in Chapter 8). Arguably, the substance abuse variable may be viewed to violate criterion 3, as a Core Member's substance abuse difficulties cannot be said to be within the control of the Circle. However, the selection criteria were initially developed to narrow the choice of variables to be used and whilst it did not conform to criterion 3, it was deemed worthy of further investigation. Furthermore, whilst the Circle may not have the capacity to change Core Members' behaviour concerning

substance abuse, they can encourage help-seeking behaviour or advise of potential sources of external support. To gain the most information, the decision was taken to firstly utilise the decision matrix variables of success and failure. Follow-up analyses are provided on specific outcomes using the EOCR outcome variables.

Descriptive data on Core Member demographics inclusive of Core Member offence histories are presented below. The inclusion of static variables such as offence histories raised initial concerns that decisions on Core Member suitability, could be influenced by typologies that demonstrate specific offence histories and poor Circle outcomes. However, it was determined that decisions around suitability could equally be influenced by other, non-offence history variables and this data were therefore included. Furthermore, offence related data is only presented to provide an overview of the participant group, and inferential statistics were not carried out on these items. Moreover, as a typology of Circles, rather than Core Members, it was reasoned that results may equally influence the selection of volunteers. The use of dynamic variables specific to internal Circle processes aimed to highlight instances for advancement in all Circle types.

#### *Part 1: Descriptive Statistics of data*

Descriptive data relating to Core Member demographics, Circles length and volunteer numbers are presented in part 1. Figures presented relate to data that was available and does not include instances of missing data. It should be noted that the data presented are not exclusive to individual categories and some Core Members have instances recorded in multiple categories within tables, for example, two kinds of index offence.

#### *Core Members*

##### *Personal Demographics*

Core Member age ranged from 22 to 78 with a mean age of 46.5, SD=13.3. There were (n=151) male, (n=1) female and (n=1) transgender female Core Member. (n=98) Core Members identified as heterosexual, (n=24) identified as gay, (n=17) identified as bi-sexual and (n=14) were unspecified. (n=140) Core Members were of British nationality, (n=4) were of Irish nationality and (n=7) were unspecified. (n=138) Core Members were of white ethnicity, (n=5) were Black ethnicity, (n=4) were Asian ethnicity and (n=7) were unspecified. (n=64) Core Members were affiliated to a religion, (n=69) were not and (n=19) were unspecified.

*Index Offences*

Figure 4 illustrates Core Member index offences with figures as percentages.

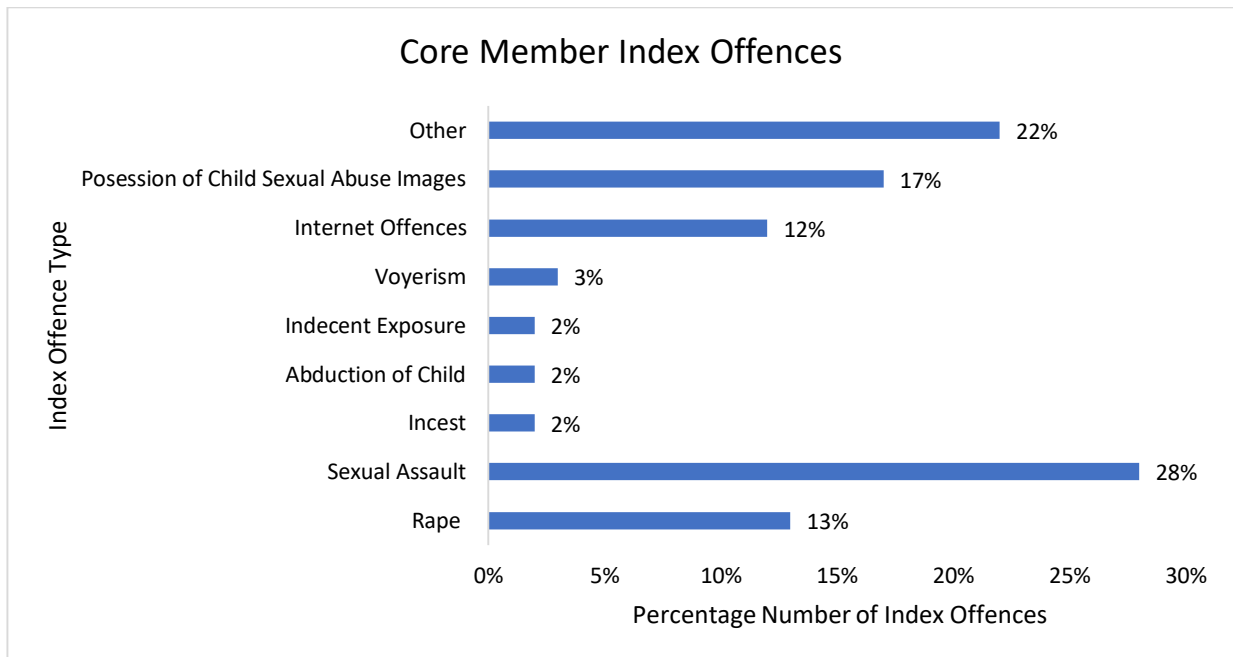


Figure 4 Core Member index offences with percentages

*Sentence for Index Offence/s*

Figure 5 illustrates Core Member Sentences for index offences with figures as percentages.

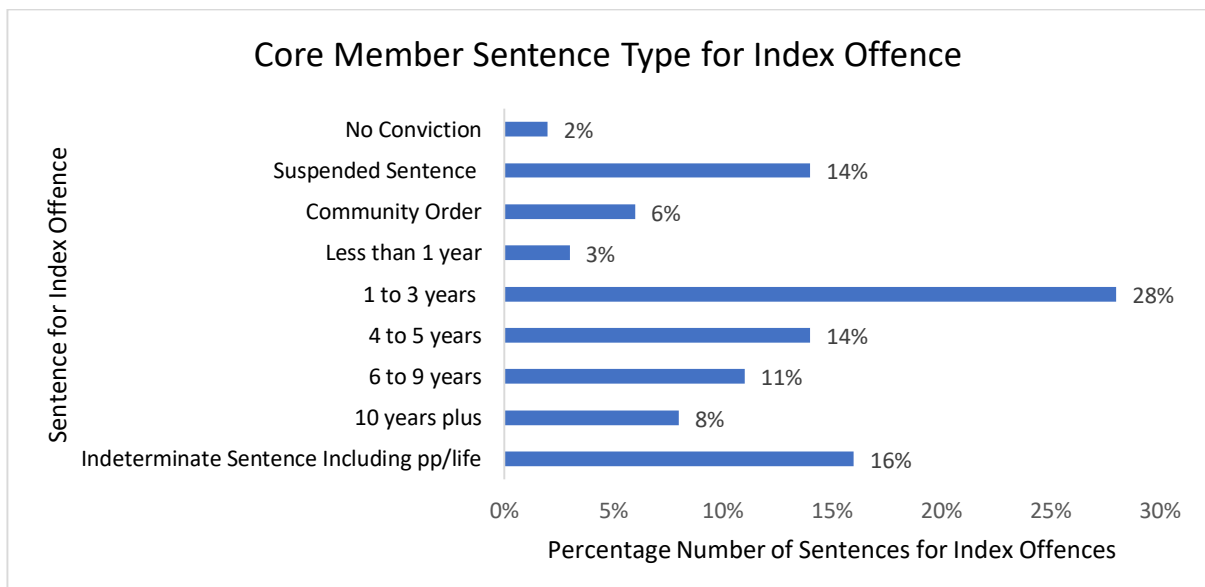


Figure 5 Core Member Sentences for index offences with Percentages

### *MAPPA Level*

Core Members' MAPPA level was recorded at the beginning and end of Circles. Upon commencing Circles, Core Members reported MAPPA levels were: level 1 (n=80), level 2 (n=12) and level 3 (n=1). Upon completion of Circles, Core Members MAPPA levels were: level 1 (n=86), level 2 (n=5) and level 3 (n=0).

### *Circles*

Circles varied in length from less than 1 month up to 21 months (m=11.0; sd=5.7). The number of Circle meetings that took place also varied from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 68 (m=27.94; sd=17.10). Pearson's correlation indicated a statistically significant positive relationship with a strong correlation between number of Circle meetings and length of Circles ( $r = .78, n=95, p < .01$ )

### *Volunteers*

In some instances, volunteers dropped out of the Circle before the Circle ended. Volunteer dropouts were recorded in 49 Circles. The mean number of volunteer dropouts to occur within a single Circle was 1.7 (sd=0.8; range 1-4). Replacement volunteers were recorded in 23 instances. The mean number of replacements to occur within a single Circle was 1.5 (sd=0.8; range 1-4).

### 5.3h: Part 1: Analysis of Circle Endings

When Circles end, an End of Circle Report (EOCR) is completed. The EOCR documents the reason for the Circle ending which is categorised as: Reintegrated (n=43), CM Dropped Out (n=16), Rearrested (n=10), Recalled (n=4), Volunteers Dropped Out (n=4) or Other (n=7). The meaning of each category as follows: Reintegrated refers to Circles that ended as planned because the Core Member completed their Circle and was deemed to have been reintegrated into the community. It should be noted that the term 'reintegrated' is one used by Circles UK. Reintegrated is recorded as one of the potential outcomes in the EOCR document. However, a Circle may successfully complete without the Core Member feeling fully reintegrated in their community. For this reason, the term 'successful completion' is used hereon in this chapter in place of 'Reintegrated'. CM Dropped Out refers to instances whereby the Core Member voluntarily chose to withdraw from their Circle. Rearrested and Recalled refer to Circles ending due to the Core Member being Rearrested or Recalled. Volunteers Dropped Out refers to instances whereby Volunteers dropped out and not enough volunteers were left making

the Circles unviable. The Other category has been used by some Circles for instances that do not fit any of the other categories, for example, Core Member poor health. Figure 6 illustrates Circle outcomes for all Circles with a completed EOCR.

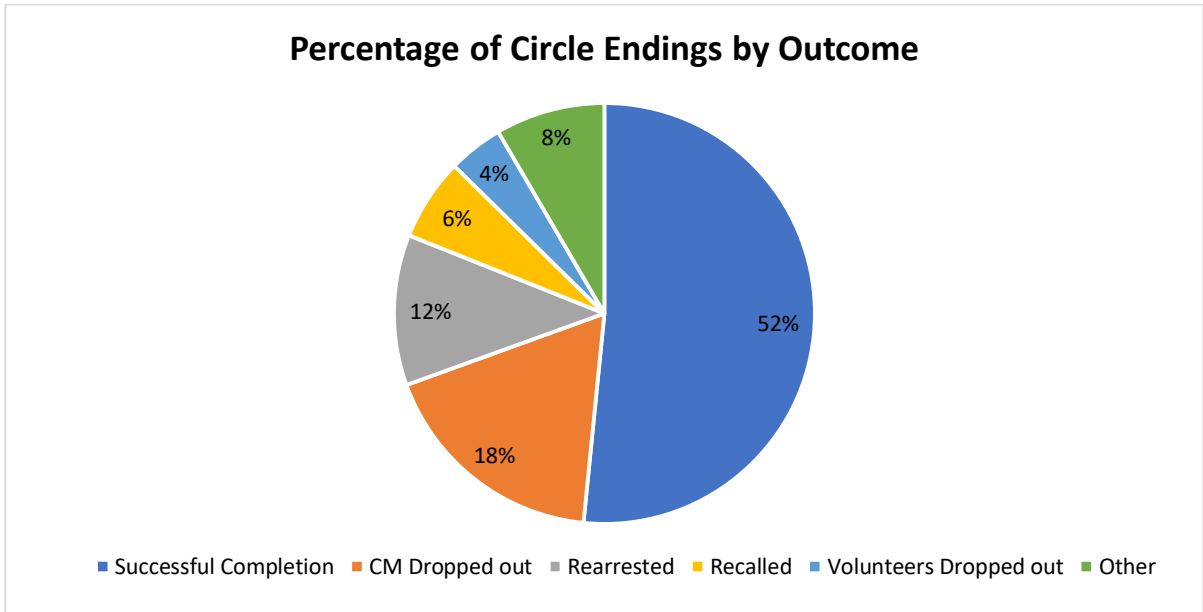


Figure 6 Circle Endings by Outcome

Whilst data were received for more Circles, only (n=95) EOCR were received. 52% of Circles ended as planned and were recorded as successful completions. The remaining 48% ended earlier than planned as a result of Core Member or volunteer dropouts, Core Member recall or rearrest or for another reason categorised as other. EOCR represented in figure 6 include 8% of outcomes categorised as other. The EOCR detail these outcomes as Core Member poor health which meant the Core Member was unable to attend Circle meetings (n=3) and a lack of commitment on the behalf of the Core Member for which the decision was taken to terminate the Circle (n=2). The remaining three instances were specific to each Circle. In one case, the Core Member had learning difficulties which required constant support from carers. This Core Member was also receiving external support from other agencies and it was decided that the Circle was not offering the Core Member any additional support than that which he was already receiving so the decision was taken to close the Circle. In another case, a Circle began whilst the Core Member was residing at an approved premise awaiting confirmation of his release conditions. After beginning his Circle, the Core Member was moved out of the area and began a new Circle whilst his original Circle was closed. The third Circle was recorded as 'other' because the Circle closed having lasted a term of eighteen months, whilst this Circle may have been recorded as a planned ending, the Circle members did not feel that the Core Member had been fully reintegrated, yet the EOCR reported that everyone involved, including the Core Member, felt it was time for the Circle to end.

Figure 6 above, captures Circle endings as recorded in the EOCR data. However, Core Member demographic data also noted Circle endings in terms of planned and unplanned endings. However, it was unclear how these outcomes were reached. Therefore, EOCR data were interrogated to gather evidence of planned and unplanned endings. This data was categorised based on whether the ending was planned, whose decision it was to end the Circle and whether the decision to end was agreed by all concerned. The subsequent Planned/Unplanned endings with decision-maker were split into 10 categories. Finally, Circle outcomes were recorded as successes or failures using the decision matrix detailed in chapter 4. Table 7 details the different ways in which Circle outcomes were coded.



Table 7 Circle Endings with Coding Variations and total counts of each coding type

Coding Type	Coding Categories	n	Total Count
EOCR Outcomes <sup>2</sup>	Reintegrated	49	95
	CM Dropped out	17	
	Rearrested	11	
	Recalled	6	
	Volunteers Dropped Out	4	
	Other	8	
Planned/Unplanned Endings from demographic data <sup>3</sup>	Planned	66	100
	Unplanned	34	
Planned/Unplanned Endings with Decision Maker from Qualitative EOCR data	Planned – Core Member Decision – Ending Agreed	9	95
	Planned – Circle Decision – Ending Agreed	45	
	Planned – Core Member – Ending Disagreed	1	
	Planned – Circle Decision – Ending Disagreed	1	
	Unplanned – Core Member Decision – Ending Agreed	6	
	Unplanned – Circle Decision – Ending Agreed	7	
	Unplanned – Core Member Decision – Ending Disagreed	8	
	Unplanned – Circle Decision – Ending Disagreed	1	
	Unplanned – External Decision – Recall	6	
	Unplanned – External Decision – Rearrested	11	
Decision Matrix Outcomes	Success	74	95
	Failure	21	

Planned/Unplanned endings from demographic data had no clear distinction as to how they were categorised so whilst they were initially useful in developing the idea of categorising Planned/Unplanned endings with decision-makers, they were of no use for further analysis. Furthermore, an additional 5 data points were received for demographic data relating to endings within this category, for which no EOCR was received within the data collection timeframe, meaning it was not possible to categorise these by decision-maker. Planned/Unplanned endings with decision-maker data demonstrated the broad range of Circle outcomes. Excluding instances of recalls and rearrests, there were (n=56) planned

<sup>2</sup> Outcome Labels are those used by Circles UK categorized within End of Circle Reports

<sup>3</sup> Planned and Unplanned Endings were logged by Circles UK in the demographic data supplied. The categorization method was unknown.

endings and (n=22) unplanned endings. Agreements upon the closure of Circles were reached in (n=67) Circles whilst disagreements over Circle endings occurred in (n=11) cases.

In terms of further analysis, the two categories of EOCR Outcomes and Decision Matrix Outcomes were investigated further. These categories were selected for investigation for two reasons. Firstly, the decision matrix categories were developed to define success and failure within Circles and therefore warranted further investigation. Secondly, whilst the decision matrix offered broader terms under which to conceptualise success and failure as Circle outcomes, the categories listed within the EOCR allowed for analysis to investigate specific outcomes such as factors associated with reoffence and Core Member dropout.

### 5.3i: Part 2: Binary Logistic Regression

A binary logistic regression was conducted on the variables (i) *Discussion of risk* (ii) *Volunteer-Core Member relationships* and (iii) *Core Member substance abuse*.

Frequencies of responses to (i) *discussion of risk* and (ii) *Core Member substance abuse* were captured using binary categories of yes/no. Frequencies are presented in table 8 below.

Table 8 Data Frequencies for Discussion of Risk and Core Member Substance Abuse

	Category & Frequency		Total
	Yes	No	
Discussion of Risk	57	20	77
Core Member substance abuse	14	78	92

Data relating to *Volunteer-Core Member relationships* were used to differentiate whether Circle relationships were positive and stable, negative and stable or changeable over time. Frequencies of responses are presented in table 9.

Table 9 Data Frequencies for Volunteer-Core Member Relationship Quality

	Category & Frequency					Total
	Good Throughout	Poor Throughout	Reduced in Quality	Increased in Quality	Erratic	
Volunteer – Core Member Relationships	59	5	2	10	10	86

Because the volunteer-Core Member relationship variable did not use binary categories, dichotomous variables were created from pre-existing data before conducting the regression. The categories of *Poor Throughout* and *Reduced in Quality* were removed from the analysis due to small frequencies.

Results of the binary logistic regression indicated that the model with all the predictors was significantly better than the constant only model (Chi-Square=16.29, df=7, p=.02).

Nagelkerke R Square indicated that 24.2% of the variation in Circle outcomes is accounted for by *discussion of risk, substance abuse* and *Volunteer-Core Member relationships*.

Hosmer and Lemeshow test indicated a good model fit (Chi-Square=6.08, df=6, p=.41).

Figure 7 details the results of the classification table demonstrated that the model does a good job of predicting success (94.6%) and reasonably predicts failure (52.4%) in Circles with an overall correct prediction of 85.3%

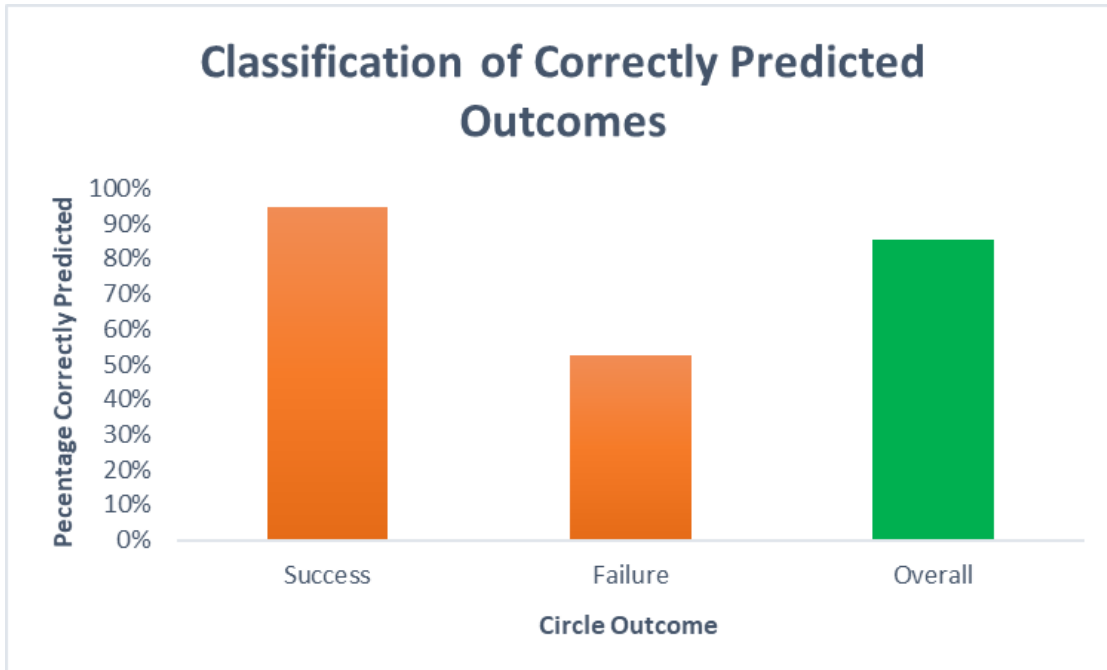


Figure 7 Classification of Correctly Predicted Outcomes (Success & Failure)

Binary logistic regression indicated that no discussion of risk and the presence of Core Member *substance abuse* were significant predictors of Circle outcome. *Core Member-Volunteer relationships* were not significant predictors of Circle outcome. Circles in which risk was not discussed were significantly more likely to result in successes (wald=5.47, p=.01). Circles in which Core Members had substance abuse issues were more likely to result in failures (wald=5.99, p=.01).

### 5.3j: Part 3: Multinomial Logistic Regression

Following the initial analysis, the decision was taken to explore specific Circle outcomes to investigate whether *discussion of risk* and Core Member *substance abuse* were associated with certain outcomes. The outcomes utilised the raw data classified within end of Circle reports and comprised (n=95) Circle outcomes. The raw data gathered from EOCCR outcomes consisted of the categories: successful completion, Core Member Dropped Out, Volunteers Dropped Out, Recalled, Rearrested and Other. Column 2 of Table 10 below details the data numbers for each category. Before conducting the analysis, Core Member and Volunteer dropout data were merged into one category and Recalled and Rearrested data were merged into one category. The Successful Completion category remained as one category. The data category labelled as other was removed for this analysis. Raw data and new merged data are detailed in table 10 below.

Table 10 Raw Data & Merged Data Categories

<b>Raw Data Outcome Categories</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Merged Data Outcome Categories</b>	<b>n</b>
Successful Completion	49	Successful Completion	49
(CM) Dropped Out	17	CM/Volunteer Dropout	21
Volunteers Dropped Out	4		
Recalled	6	Recalled/Re-arrested	17
Rearrested	11		
Other	8	Category Removed	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>

Results of the multinomial logistic regression indicated that the model with both the predictors was significantly better than the constant only model (Chi-Square=23.88, df=6, p=.01). Nagelkerke R Square indicated that 31.2% of the variation in Circle outcomes is accounted for by discussion of risk and substance abuse. Pearson Chi-Square test indicated a good model fit (Chi-Square=6.75, df=4, p=.14).

Figure 8 details the results of the classification table demonstrated that the model does a good job of predicting successful completions (86.7%), reasonably predicts dropouts (55.6%) and fails to predict recalls or rearrests (0.0%) in Circles with an overall correct prediction of 63.6% of 87 Circle outcomes.

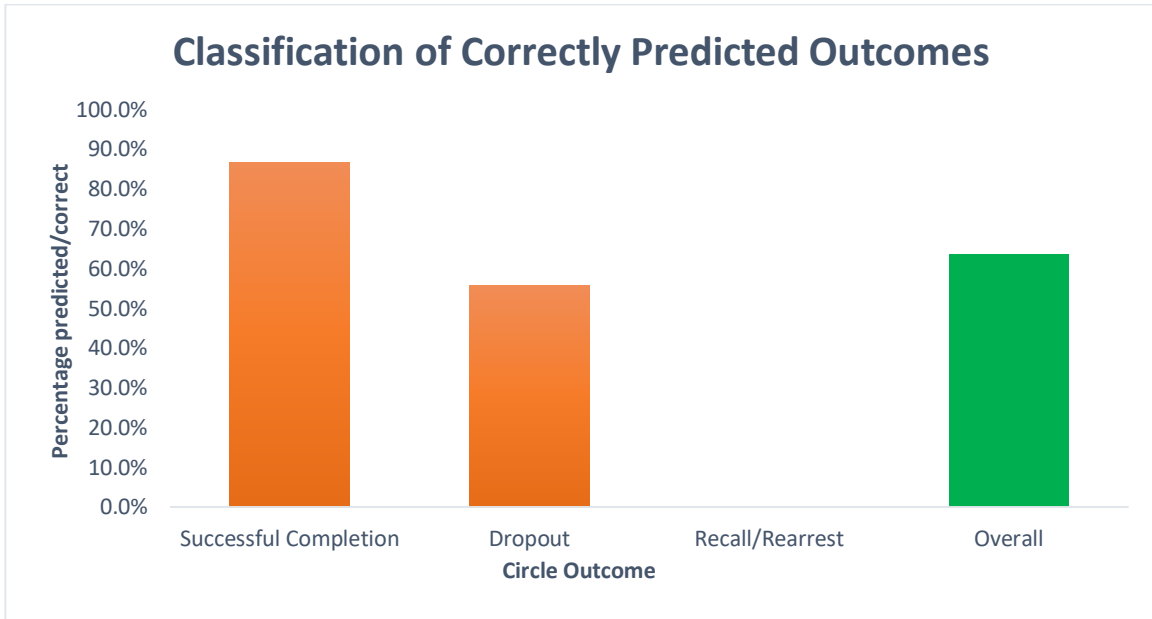


Figure 8 Classification of Correctly Predicted Outcomes (Successful Completions, Dropouts, Recall/Rearrests)

Likelihood ratio tests indicated that both variables had a significant overall effect on the outcome. Core Member *substance abuse* (Chi-Square=6.66, df=2, p=.03) and *Discussion of risk* (Chi-Square=14.83, df=4, p=.01).

Results of the multinomial logistic regression indicated that Circles in which a Core Member has *substance abuse* are significantly more likely to end as a result of dropouts by either the Core Member or volunteers (wald=6.05, p=.01). Furthermore, Circles in which there is a *discussion of risk* are significantly more likely to end as a result of dropouts by either the Core Member or volunteers (wald=4.35, p=.03). Additionally, Circles in which there is discussion of risk are significantly more likely to result in Core Member recall or re-arrest (wald=5.23, p=0.22).

Residual tests conducted through two binary regressions indicated assumptions of linearity were met. Normality and equal variance indicated there were 7 outliers from a sample total of 70 between the successful completion and dropout category. There were no valid cases and therefore no outliers between the successful completion and recall/re-arrest category.

#### 5.4: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify the characteristics of Circles and investigate what Circle characteristics were associated with Circle outcomes, inclusive of factors which may predict success or failure within Circles. Additionally, this study aimed to identify whether Circles promoted desistance in Core Members.

Results indicated that Core Member *substance abuse* was predictive of Circle failure whilst no *discussion of risk* was predictive of success. However, this model was poorer at predicting failure with a 52.4% accuracy and was better at predicting success with a 94.6% accuracy. This may hold controversial implications for the non-discussion of risk within Circles. However, this model only accounted for 24.2% of the variation which indicates there are other important factors which influence Circle outcomes. In terms of desistance promotion, due to the limited data on recall/rearrest, it was not possible to identify whether Circles promoted desistance in Core Members. Although the high ratio of successful completion relative to recall/rearrest outcomes and success relative to failure may indicate the positive influence of Circles upon Core Member desistance. Further research is needed to confirm this.



Core Member substance abuse was predictive of dropouts by Core Members and/or volunteers. As the data were merged it was not possible to investigate whether these variables influenced either Core Members or Volunteers to a greater extent. This remains a limitation of the research. Clarke et al. (2017) conducted research into Core Member characteristics in which they identified a portion of Core Members had substance misuse issues, the majority of which had not been referred for specialist support. Furthermore, in the same study, the authors identified that 30% of Circle endings resulted in Core Member dropouts. No information was provided as to whether there was a relationship between dropouts and substance abuse. However, the authors argued that there was a clear unmet need for Core Members with substance abuse issues. The substance abuse variable violated the inclusion criteria. Whilst the variable was deemed worthy of inclusion due to the qualitative results of Chapter 8, it is noteworthy that Core Members' substance abuse is out of the control of volunteers and is therefore unlikely to be something which volunteers have the power to change. Although this finding could be used as a recommendation for Circles to provide referral information to Core Members in need of specialist support.

Discussion of risk was also predictive of dropouts by Core Members and/or volunteers. Circles that focus upon accountability have been evidenced to be damaging to Core Member-volunteer relationships (Fox, 2016). Whilst Circles that focus upon support as opposed to accountability have been evidenced to be more successful (Fox, 2016). There also appears to be a commonality between Circles that focus on risk-related discussions also having low levels of volunteer investment (Fox, 2016; Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). This alludes to a specific kind of volunteer approach that may be detrimental to Circle success (Höing et al, 2013), and in some instances, result in Core Member dropout (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). It appears that volunteer approaches are of key importance to the success of a Circle. In chapter 2, the GLM (Ward & Stewart, 2003) was explained to have been retrospectively applied to Circle practices. However, it is evident that this is not always the case and is dependent upon volunteer approaches. Where volunteers focus upon support rather than accountability, a GLM approach may be employed. However, where volunteers instead choose to focus on accountability, the approach may be viewed to be more in line with an RNR approach (Bonta & Andrews, 2007).

The RNR model has been criticised for holding a negative focus in targeting avoidance goals (Mann, Webster, Schofield & Marshall, 2004). Mann et al. (2004) conducted a study in which approach goals (positive goal focussed) were compared with avoidance goals (negative risk focussed) as a method of relapse prevention with individuals with sexual offence convictions. The research identified that approach goals were more effective in treatment and treatment receivers were more engaged with the work. Whilst Circles is not a treatment, the same principles of human approach are argued to apply, whether received by treatment providers or volunteers. Core Members are less likely to engage with volunteers that continually address Core Member risk, their past offences and their accountability. Whilst Core Members who receive support in addressing their future goals and ambitions whilst maintaining a level of autonomy over Circle discussions likely to engage with their volunteers and progress in their Circle. If Circles wish to utilise a GLM approach, a supportive volunteer approach is essential.

The second model was poorer at predicting dropouts with a 55.6% accuracy and much better at predicting successful completion with an 86.7% accuracy. Similar to the first model, this model accounted for 31.2% of the variation which suggests there are other important factors which influence Circle outcomes. Furthermore, the overall model failed to successfully predict recalls/re-arrests. Therefore, whilst the initial results were statistically significant and contributed to the overall model, discussion of risk cannot be said to predict recalls and/or rearrests and this result should be disregarded. Despite the limitations to the research, this result provided further information on the negative outcomes of Core Member and volunteer dropouts and overall failures associated with discussion of risk within Circle meetings. Both models demonstrate a good rate of predicting success in Circles, more so than that of poor outcomes. This may be due, in part to the larger numbers relating to success and successful completions within the dataset. The results of this study warrant further investigation into negative outcomes in Circles to identify whether certain factors or behaviours may be predictive of Circle failure.

#### 5.5: Limitations

This study comprised secondary data from a range of projects across the UK. As a result, there were differences in the data quality, particularly concerning EOCR data. Some EOCR were detailed whilst others contained minimal information. This meant that when qualitative data

were coded quantitatively, some EOCR offered more information than others. If all EOCR were completed to the same standard, it may have been possible to gain more information. Whilst a large selection of data was available, few items were used in the analysis. Data were selected for analysis using prior research which identified two topics of interest and an additional topic of interest which emerged in Chapter 8. Whilst only three items were investigated, it is likely that other items contained within the data may have offered interesting results. One such item is Core Member motivation. Subjective accounts of Core Member motivation were one available item, not used in the present analysis. Items such as this may benefit from further exploration in future research. However, it would be more beneficial if accounts of motivation could be gathered from Core Members directly.

*Core Member-volunteer relationships* were coded differently to the other two items which were binary categories. This raised two limitations. Firstly, data had to be subjectively categorised and secondly, data were split more broadly between categories. *Core Member-volunteer relationships* did not demonstrate any significant results which was surprising considering the wide coverage of literature reporting upon the importance of quality Circle relationships. It is possible that the categorisation method used for this item, failed to identify the presence of any meaningful results. This is an area which may benefit from further investigation.

Due to the limited numbers of raw data on Circle outcomes, data had to be merged before analysis. Whilst this did not affect the successful completion category, the small number of dropouts meant it was not possible to analyse the dropout categories separately. The same limitation applied to instances of recall and rearrest. The need to merge categories meant that the subsequent analysis was limited and should be interpreted with caution. Because categories were merged, it could not be ascertained whether, with more data and separate categories, the results would still apply. However, despite these limitations, the results indicate that there is room for further research to investigate the effects of *discussion of risk* and *substance abuse* upon Circle outcomes. With more data on each variable, it would be possible to analyse each category individually and identify whether these results still stand or whether any distinct differences between Circle outcomes exist. Further research would be particularly beneficial in terms of Core Member and volunteer dropouts. If contributing

factors that influence dropouts can be identified, it may be possible to use this information to reduce the number of dropouts from Circles, both Core Member and volunteer alike.

Another limitation of this study was that follow-up analyses compared successes and failures as outcomes using the categorisation method outlined in the decision matrix in chapter 4. Therefore, results relating to success and failure should only be considered in line with those proposed definitions.

#### 5.6: Implications

This study holds implications for the use of risk-related discussions within Circles. Circles that did not discuss risk with Core Members were predictive of successful outcomes. The research also demonstrated the importance of further support for those with substance abuse problems as substance abuse was predictive of failure in Circles.

#### 5.7: Conclusion

This study identified the need for specialist support for those with *substance abuse* problems, that may help to reduce the number of Circle dropouts. This study also provided support for the reduction or removal of discussions focussed around risk in Circles. The reduction or removal of risk discussions may help to reduce the number of Circle dropouts, providing Core Members with more opportunities to receive support in their reintegration efforts. However, whilst discussion of risk was predictive of dropouts, it did not predict recall and/or reoffence.

The first model relating to success and failure accounted for 24.2% of the variation which indicated that there are other important factors which influence success and failure in Circles. The second model relating to Circle outcomes accounted for 31.2% of the variation, which also indicated there are other important factors which influence Circle outcomes. In both cases, other influencing factors are as of yet unknown, demonstrating a valid point of future enquiry. Overall, predictors of success were more accurate than predictors of failure (94.6% vs 52.4%) and predictors of successful completion were more accurate than predictors of dropouts (86.7% vs 55.6%). Differences in accuracy may be a result of smaller data sets which were merged for analyses.

## Chapter 6 Dynamic Risk Review: A Factor Analysis

### 6.1: Abstract

*The Dynamic Risk Review (DRR) is a scale that was created specifically for use with Core Members in Circles to measure changes in dynamic risk over time. The DRR is routinely used, yet has been subject to limited validation. This chapter presents a factor analysis on (n=411) baseline scores taken from the DRR. The factor analysis identified three factors with good reliability termed: Poor Emotional Wellbeing, Sexual Preoccupation and Emotional Identification with Children, Poor Problem Solving and Low Pro-social Engagement. There was also the potential for a fourth factor termed: Anger and Hostility, although this presently has poor reliability and requires further development.*

### 6.2: Introduction

Recidivism rates for individuals convicted of sexual offences are highest during the first few years following release (Hanson et al., 2014). Whilst in prison and upon release, individuals convicted of sexual offences are subject to risk assessments, used to determine the level of risk they pose to others, both in the short and long term (Beech, Fisher & Thornton, 2003). There are both static and dynamic risk assessments, which assess fixed and changeable factors relating to risk respectively. A criminal history, gender and antisocial pattern are examples of static risk factors (Eisenberg et al., 2019). They have been shown to influence risk but are not open to intervention and are therefore classed as static or unchangeable although it is important to note they can change over time, for example, a person's offending history can increase (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Mann, Hanson & Thornton, 2010). Alternatively, dynamic risk refers to changeable factors which are amenable to intervention. Poor relationships with friends and family, substance misuse and offence related attitudes are examples of dynamic risk factors (Andrews & Bonta, 2010).

#### 6.2a: Dynamic Risk Review

Historically within the prison setting many individuals convicted of a sexual offence were assessed using a dynamic risk assessment called the Structured Assessment of Risk and Need (SARN; Thornton, 2002). The SARN was in use in prisons when the Dynamic Risk Review (DRR; Circles UK; see appendix 6) was first created. Developed and introduced by Circles UK in 2009,

the DRR is a psychometric measure created to assess Core Members' dynamic risk over time whilst engaging with a Circle. The DRR is completed by Circle volunteers with the support of the coordinator. It is based upon the four dynamic risk domains identified within the SARN, sexual interests, offence related attitudes, relationships and self-management. The DRR was not designed to predict risk, but like the SARN, has been used as a means of considering treatment need. The DRR assesses dynamic risk using seventeen questions. Questions 1-7 and 9-15 use a seven-point Likert scale. Examples of items are: 'Is there evidence that the CM is struggling with problematic sexual thoughts?' and 'Has the CM expressed hostile or negative views towards women?'

Question 8 reports on Core Members' stable emotional relationships, outside of the Circle and is scored on a four-point scale (no one, 1 person, 2 people, 3 or more). Question 8 scores were aligned with the 7-point Likert scale for analysis: (no one equates to a score of 0, 1 person equates to a score of 2, 2 people as 4 and 3 or more as 6). The DRR also includes some items about protective factors such as employment, stable emotional relationships and purposeful activity. The DRR was designed to be used at the start of a Circle and again at three monthly intervals throughout the course of the Circle. This allows for overall dynamic risk to be measured over time as well as enabling monitoring of specific risk domains. The ability to measure changes within risk domains has the potential to be used by Circles to inform interventions specific to individual Core Members and their needs. Whilst the DRR may potentially be used in this way, to date, there is limited evidence that it has been.

Differences of opinion surrounding the role and responsibilities of volunteers exist (McCartan, 2016). Such differences bring into question the usefulness and appropriateness of volunteers attempting to measure and monitor Core Members dynamic risk. Furthermore, simply monitoring changes to DRR scores over time does not indicate to volunteers and coordinators whether statistically significant changes have taken place. Without Circle members running statistical analysis on DRR data gathered, data is redundant at the individual level. Circle members may still monitor changes to DRR scores on an individual basis, however, there is little to be gained in doing so and it is not clear whether this is done on a regular basis, across project areas.

Bates and Wager (2012) attempted to assess the internal validity of the DRR using a Principal Components Analysis on 39 initial completions of the DRR. Data were gathered for 39 core

members with a DRR carried out on each core member on a minimum of one occasion. The researchers determined five risk domains which they defined as 1. hostile coping, 2. inappropriate sexual attitudes, 3. over-confident hostile sexualization, 4. inadequacy and 5. dealing with stress. Each of the domains were tested for internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha and factor one was excluded from further analysis due to poor internal reliability (Bates & Wager, 2012). Subsequent analysis of DRR data for thirteen Core Members indicated that there were significant reductions in the dynamic risk domains of factor two: inappropriate sexual attitudes and factor three: over-confident hostile sexualisation. Such findings may indicate a reduction in Core Member risk although further research is required to assess the predictive validity of the DRR due to the small sample size.

Bates and Wager (2017) assessed Core Members with adverse outcomes following their completion of a Circle. The researchers assessed thirteen Core Members with adverse outcomes, who had completed a minimum of 3 DRRs to track dynamic risk ratings across time. Adverse outcomes were noted as inappropriate or illegal behaviour by the Core Member such as arrest, recall to prison, reconviction or breach of license. However, it is important to note that reconviction may have related to historical offences pre-dating the Circle. The thirteen Core Members with adverse outcomes were compared against a matched control group of Core Members with no adverse outcomes. Controls were matched on the basis that they came from the same Circles project and had the same number of completed DRRs. The researchers noted that age was matched as closely as possible although due to numbers this was not always possible. The results of the study indicated a statistically significant reduction in DRR scores over time in the matched control group, demonstrating a reduction in dynamic risk. In comparison, Core Members in the adverse outcome group did not show such a decline. This research provides evidence for the effectiveness of the DRR in predicting the adverse outcomes noted (which includes its ability to predict reconviction). Additionally, the predictive ability of the DRR can be used to highlight specific Core Members who may present an increased recidivism risk. In the United Kingdom, many individuals are managed in the community by Offender Managers who work within the National Probation Service. Information contained in the DRR may be valuable for Offender Managers who may choose to increase surveillance. It can further be used in conjunction with other aspects of Circles evaluation research to pinpoint areas for improvement. Although utilising a small sample, the

study provides promising results for the effectiveness of the DRR as a dynamic risk assessment scale.

### 6.3: Rationale

A key tenant of Circles is to reduce recidivism and promote reintegration. The first step in evaluating the effectiveness of Circles in achieving these aims is to measure Core Members' baseline risk. Dynamic risk data can be used to develop strategies to reduce recidivism and promote desistance and reintegration. The DRR is a scale developed specifically for use with Core Members yet limited research has been carried out on the reliability and validity of the scale. This research aimed to fill that gap by first validating the scale (as addressed in this chapter) and secondly evaluating the effectiveness of the DRR to successfully measure changes in Core Members' dynamic risk using the DRR (addressed in Chapter 7).

#### 6.3a: Aims and Research Questions

This study aimed to address the following research questions:

- How effective is the DRR as a risk assessment tool?
- Can the DRR effectively predict Core Member risk?

Chapters 6 and 7 present two connected studies. The first (Chapter 6) is an exploratory factor analysis of the DRR which builds on the initial results of Bates and Wager (2012). The second (Chapter 7) addresses change in Core Members' dynamic risk and wellbeing including interactions between Core Member dynamic risk and wellbeing over time.

### 6.4: DRR Exploratory Factor Analysis

#### 6.5: Method

##### 6.5a: Participants and Data Collection

All data were obtained from Circles UK and received in an anonymised format. Circles UK received permission and informed consent from Core Members to use their data for research purposes before sharing.

Participants were taken from two data sets for the initial Factor Analysis and subsequent validation studies of the identified factors. Circles UK provided a data set of baseline DRR data for the Factor Analysis consisting of data from 411 Core Member participants.



#### 6.5b: Analysis

Factor analysis was used to identify the key dimensions underlying the Dynamic Risk Review. The sample consisted of males with prior convictions of sexual offences, including contact and non-contact offences against women and children. Cronbach's alpha was conducted on the identified sub-scales of factors.

#### 6.5c: Results

Factor analysis was used to identify the key dimensions underlying the Dynamic Risk Review. The sample consisted of males with prior convictions of sexual offences, including contact and non-contact offences against women and children. The total sample comprised 411 Core Member participants (missing values, excluded pairwise from the analysis = 0 to 17), giving a sample size of between 394 and 411 for individual items.

#### *Descriptive Statistics*

##### Items

Table 11 details descriptive statistics for the individual items. Core Members scored above average on questions relating to low self-esteem (item 14,  $m=3.2$ ) and emotional loneliness (item 6,  $m=3.7$ ) indicating that, on average, Core Members were experiencing poor emotional wellbeing.

The items with the lowest scores related to excessive discussions of a sexual matter (item 2,  $m=0.4$ ) indicating on average most Core Members did not have an issue with sexual preoccupation, or did not present with such an issue.

Core Members also averaged low scores on emotional identification with children (item 5,  $m=0.7$ ) and sexualised attitudes towards children (item 3,  $m=0.8$ ) indicating most Core Members did not present with inappropriate attitudes towards children.

Additionally, Core members scored low on hostile or negative views towards women (item 4,  $m=0.8$ ) indicating Core Members did not present with negative attitudes. However, there was much variance within each item. Table 11 presents the descriptive statistics for all individual DRR items.

Table 11 Descriptive Statistics of Individual Items

Item	Description	n	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Var	Skew
1	Is there evidence that the CM is struggling with problematic sexual thoughts	411	6	0	6	1.43	1.81	3.26	1.01
2	Has the CM spoken to an excessive and/or inappropriate degree about sexual matters in general	411	6	0	6	0.46	1.10	1.21	2.98
3	Has the CM expressed any sexualised attitudes towards children	409	6	0	6	0.88	1.60	2.55	1.76
4	Has the CM expressed any hostile or negative views towards women	410	6	0	6	0.83	1.43	2.04	1.81
5	Is there evidence that the CM is displaying a high emotional identification with children	406	6	0	6	0.71	1.50	2.26	2.18
6	Is there evidence that the CM is experiencing feelings of emotional loneliness	410	6	0	6	3.70	1.74	3.01	-0.59
7	Is there evidence that the CM is experiencing feelings of inadequacy in relationships	408	6	0	6	2.66	2.05	4.22	0.03
8	Does the CM have stable emotional relationships with any other people outside the Circle	410	6	0	6	2.78	2.30	5.30	0.16
9	Is there evidence that the CM is experiencing feelings of powerlessness or hopelessness	406	6	0	6	2.75	1.90	3.60	-0.05
10	Has the CM demonstrated reckless behaviour	407	6	0	6	1.47	1.95	3.79	1.06
11	Has the CM any hostile feelings or angry outbursts	408	6	0	6	1.54	1.72	2.94	0.88
12	Does the CM demonstrate appropriate problem solving abilities	406	6	0	6	2.90	1.76	3.11	-0.05
13	Does the CM maintain realistic relapse prevention strategies	394	6	0	6	2.66	1.67	2.79	-0.03
14	Is there evidence that the CM is experiencing any feelings of low self-esteem	407	6	0	6	3.27	1.89	3.57	-0.25
15	Does the CM engage in appropriate activities an hobbies	403	6	0	6	2.55	1.77	3.14	0.16

## Factors

Poor Emotional Wellbeing had a minimum possible score of zero and a maximum possible score of 24. With a mean score of 12.4,  $sd=4.9$ , ( $n=403$ ), participants wellbeing was average. Sexual Preoccupation and Emotional Identification with Children had a minimum possible score of zero and a maximum possible score of 24. With a mean score of 3.4,  $sd=4.4$ , ( $n=405$ ), participants sexual preoccupation and Emotional Identification with Children was low. Poor Problem Solving and Low Pro-social Engagement had a minimum possible score of zero and a maximum possible score of 18. With a mean score of 8.0,  $sd= 3.7$ , ( $n=384$ ), participants on average, had some form of Poor Problem Solving and Low Pro-social Engagement present in their life.

## *Inferential Statistics*

The fifteen items were subjected to factor analysis using SPSS v26. Direct oblimin rotation was used since it was hypothesised that the underlying dimensions would be inter-related.

Before performing factor analysis, the suitability of the data was assessed. The determinant was .03 indicating that singularity was not a problem, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .76 supporting the adequacy of the sample size and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance at the  $p<.05$  level, thus demonstrating the factorability of the correlation matrix.

An inspection of the table showing the total variance explained by the extracted dimensions revealed five components with values greater than 1. Having also examined the scree slope, it was decided to retain the five factors for further investigation.

To aid in the interpretation of these five factors, direct oblimin rotation was performed. The rotated solution revealed the presence of a simple structure. With four factors showing several strong loadings. The fifth factor presented no loadings above .29 and therefore the factor analysis was re-run with four factors.

The four-factor solution explained a total of 54.77 per cent of the variance, with factor one contributing 24.44 per cent, factor 2 contributing 12.05 per cent, factor 3 contributing 9.89 per cent and factor 4 contributing 8.38 per cent of the variance respectively. Further details of factor variance are detailed in table 12.

Table 12 Total Variance

Initial eigenvalues				Extraction sum of squared loadings			Rotation sums of squared loadings total
Factor	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	
1	3.66	24.44	24.44	3.11	20.77	20.77	2.35
2	1.80	12.05	36.49	1.30	8.70	29.47	2.20
3	1.48	9.89	46.38	0.93	6.24	35.72	1.51
4	1.25	8.38	54.77	59.00	3.96	39.68	1.61

The four factors outlined by the above analysis were interpreted as follows:

Factor 1 was termed Poor Emotional Wellbeing and incorporated items such as ‘is there evidence that the CM is experiencing feelings of emotional loneliness’ and ‘is there evidence that the CM is experiencing any feelings of low self-esteem’. It was therefore termed ‘Poor Emotional Wellbeing’ since it appears to reflect emotional difficulties that Core Members may experience, including feelings of inadequacy, hopelessness and powerlessness. Reliability analyses were carried out on Factor 1 comprising 4 items (Q6, Q7, Q9, Q11). Cronbach’s alpha showed Factor 1 to reach modest reliability  $\alpha = .77$ .

Factor 2 was termed Sexual Preoccupation and Emotional Identification with Children and incorporated items such as ‘Is there evidence that the CM is struggling with sexual problematic sexual thoughts’ and ‘Has the CM expressed any sexualised attitudes towards children’. It was therefore termed ‘Sexual Preoccupation and Emotional Identification with Children’ since it appears to reflect a problematic preoccupation with thoughts of a sexual nature, inclusive of sexualised thoughts related to children and an emotional identification with children. Whilst factor 2 includes items that relate to children, it also includes items that are not child-specific. Reliability analyses were carried out on Factor 2 comprising 4 items (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5). Cronbach’s alpha showed Factor 2 to reach modest reliability  $\alpha = .72$ .

Factor 3 was termed Anger and Hostility and incorporated items 'Has the CM expressed hostile or negative views towards women' and 'Has the CM expressed any hostile feelings or angry outbursts'. It was therefore termed 'Anger and Hostility' since it appears to reflect issues with anger and hostility, both towards women or more toward others generally. Reliability analyses were carried out on Factor 3 comprising 2 items (Q4, Q11). Cronbach's alpha showed Factor 3 to reach poor reliability  $\alpha = .57$ .

Factor 4 was termed Poor Problem Solving and Low Pro-social Engagement and incorporated such reversed scored items as 'Does the CM demonstrate appropriate problem-solving abilities' and 'Does the CM engage in appropriate activities and hobbies'. It was therefore termed 'Poor Problem Solving and Low Pro-social Engagement' since it appears to reflect an absence of positive skills and behaviours that promote desistance inclusive of relapse prevention strategies. Reliability analyses were carried out on Factor 4 comprising 3 items (Q12, Q13, Q15). Cronbach's alpha showed Factor 4 to reach excellent reliability  $\alpha = .90$  Item detail and factor loadings are presented in table 13.

Table 13 Pattern Matrix for Factor Analysis of DRR items

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
1. Is there evidence that the CM is suffering with problematic sexual thoughts	-0.02	0.73	-0.03	-0.05
2. Has the CM spoken to an excessive and/or inappropriate degree about sexual matters in general	0.02	0.40	-0.19	0.07
3. Has the CM expressed any sexualised attitudes towards children	-0.01	0.86	0.08	0.09
4. Has the CM expressed hostile or negative views towards women	0.03	0.01	-0.56	0.04
5. Is there evidence that the CM is displaying a high emotional identification with children	0.07	0.51	0.09	-0.17
6. Is there evidence that the CM is experiencing feelings of emotional loneliness	0.58	0.10	-0.10	0.06
7. Is there evidence that the CM is experiencing feelings of inadequacy in relationships	0.72	0.09	0.03	-0.02
8. Does the CM have stable emotional relationships with any other people outside the Circle	0.05	-0.03	-0.01	0.20
9. Is there evidence that the CM is experiencing feelings of powerlessness or hopelessness	0.66	-0.08	-0.10	-0.03
10. Has the CM demonstrated reckless behaviour	0.03	0.14	-0.33	0.24
11. Has the CM expressed any hostile feelings or angry outbursts	0.05	-0.02	-0.69	-0.07
12. Does the CM demonstrate appropriate problem-solving abilities	-0.07	-0.01	0.20	0.58
13. Does the CM maintain realistic relapse prevention strategies	0.08	-0.04	0.19	0.47
14. Is there evidence that the CM is experiencing any feelings of low self-esteem	0.75	-0.06	0.13	-0.05
15. Does the CM engage in appropriate activities and hobbies	-0.04	0.04	-0.15	0.53

## 6.6: Factors and Circles Outcomes

Paired t-tests were conducted to explore the differences in DRR scores between successful and unsuccessful outcomes of each of the three identified factors at 3 months, 6 months and 9 months on a Circle. The results indicated there were no significant changes in mean DRR scores for any of the three identified factors at any time point.

## 6.7: Discussion

The following discussion presents the three factors identified in the exploratory factor analysis. This chapter aimed to uncover the components that make up the DRR to identify what the DRR measures and how effective it is as a dynamic risk tool.

### 6.7a: Exploratory Factor Analysis

Poor Emotional Wellbeing, Sexual Preoccupation and Emotional Identification with Children, and Poor Problem Solving and Low Pro-social Engagement emerged as the three significant dimensions underlying the DRR. The additional factor termed Anger and Hostility was removed from further analysis due to poor reliability. The three significant factors demonstrate what is being evaluated when Core Member dynamic risk is being assessed. Each factor shall be considered in turn with reference to the wider recidivism and desistance literature. Firstly, the results will be considered in relation to Bates and Wager (2012) who carried out a principal components analysis on the 39 initial completions of the DRR. Bates and Wager (2012) identified five factors in their analysis which they termed 1. hostile coping, 2. inappropriate sexual attitudes, 3. over-confident hostile sexualization, 4. inadequacy and 5. dealing with stress. However, hostile coping was later removed from further analysis due to poor reliability. In the present research Anger and Hostility was removed from further analysis for the same reason. In the present analysis Anger and Hostility comprised of only two items which are likely to have contributed toward the poor reliability. Therefore, it is recommended that additional items relating to this factor be included in future revisions of the DRR as Hostility towards women has previously been identified as a dynamic risk factor for sexual recidivism (Mann et al., 2010). In terms of the significant factors, there are apparent similarities in the factors that emerged in the present study in comparison with that of Bates and Wager (2012). Poor Emotional Wellbeing may be aligned with inadequacy, whilst Sexual Preoccupation and Emotional Identification with Children may encompass inappropriate sexual attitudes and over-confident hostile sexualization. Whilst dealing with stress fits within

the area of Poor Problem Solving and Low Pro-social Engagement. Differences in sample size and procedure have resulted in fewer significant factors in the present study, although the factors do appear to support the initial findings of Bates and Wager (2012).

#### 6.7b: Poor Emotional Wellbeing

It is not surprising that Core Members generally experience poor emotional wellbeing. Schmitt et al. (2014) carried out a meta-analysis into the effect of stigma upon emotional wellbeing. The findings evidenced the strong negative impact of stigma upon the perceiver's emotional wellbeing including items such as depression, anxiety and self-esteem. Although Schmitt et al. (2014) did not include individuals convicted of sexual offences in their analysis, it is argued that they would experience negative effects to a similar, if not greater extent due to being amongst the most stigmatised individuals in society. Additionally, such stigma in the community may contribute towards initiating a self-fulfilling prophecy in the individual whereby the individual begins to believe in the risk they have come to be associated with and so acts out in congruence with such behaviours (Schultz, 2014).

Clarke et al. (2015) conducted a review of the Circles literature and identified positive improvements in Core Members through Circle participation including reduced isolation and improvements in Core Members' emotional wellbeing. Taking this into account, scores relating to the domain of Poor Emotional Wellbeing would be expected to improve over time. This is an area which would benefit from future research. Whilst funding for Circle initiatives are sought on the basis that Circles reduce recidivism directly, it is likely that through supporting Core Members' practical needs and emotional wellbeing, Core Member desistance will develop organically (Höing et al., 2013).

#### 6.7c: Sexual Preoccupation and Emotional Identification with Children

Sexual preoccupation is defined here as a tendency to think about sex to an excessive degree that is damaging to psychological functioning (Mann et al., 2010) including that of inappropriate sexual attitudes, such as those directed at children. Sexual preoccupation and inappropriate sexual attitudes have been associated with increased recidivism risk (Hanson & Harris, 2000; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Mann et al., 2010). Hanson and Morton-Bourgon (2005) conducted a meta-analysis on 82 recidivism studies. The researchers identified several factors associated with sexual recidivism. One such factor was intimacy deficits which held a small but significant association with sexual recidivism. Whilst identified



sub-components of intimacy deficits included conflict in intimate relationships and emotional identification with children (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). Emotional identification with children and sexual preoccupation is further supported as dynamic risk factors by Mann et al. (2010).

Within Circles, a balanced execution of the support and accountability functions are vital (Höing et al., 2013). However, many Circles face difficulties when encouraging their Core Members to discuss topics relating to risk. McCartan (2016) reported upon the difficulties volunteers faced when attempting to encourage Core Members to engage in discussions which focussed around accountability. Whilst the Core Members were happy to be supported in many areas of their life, they were less forthcoming when faced with topics relating to their risk and potential for reoffending. Core Members that choose to open up about any sexual preoccupations they may have may present a red flag indicator. However, many Core Members may likely choose not to disclose any difficulties they may be experiencing about their sexual preoccupations or inappropriate sexual attitudes.

One potential way this issue could be addressed is through a strengths-based approach in Circle discussions surrounding risk. de Vries Robbé et al. (2015) postulated that for each risk factor such as sexual preoccupation and emotional congruence with children, there exists a corresponding healthy pole. If Circle discussions were to focus upon the risk factors corresponding healthy pole or alternate protective factor, Core Members may be more likely to view discussions in terms of support rather than accountability. This alternative approach may promote Core Member engagement, as Circles that remain focused on accountability may inhibit the Core Member from exploring positive new identities away from the 'offender' stereotype (Fox, 2016).

#### 6.7d: Poor Problem Solving and Low Pro-social Engagement

Mann et al. (2010) identified Poor Problem solving as a dynamic risk factor for sexual recidivism. Similar to a focus upon protective factors discussed above, use of the healthy corresponding pole of poor problem solving (de Vries Robbé et al., 2015), may improve Core Member engagement in Circle discussions. By focussing discussions around Core Member strengths rather than their weaknesses, the Circle will naturally lean towards a therapeutic approach. Whilst a lack of pro-social engagement may not in itself present as a risk factor, a lack of social involvement may be indicative of social isolation. This is problematic because

social isolation is among one of the most widely accepted risk factors for recidivism (Malinen et al., 2014). Hanson and Morton-Bourgon (2005) identified social skills deficits and loneliness as sub-components of intimacy deficits in their meta-analysis of recidivism studies. Whilst the authors reported that these sub-components held smaller effect sizes than that of conflict in intimate relationships and emotional identification with children, they did hold a relationship with sexual recidivism. Participation in Circles provides isolated Core Members with an opportunity to engage socially. However, it is the decision of the Core Member as to how much they engage with the process. Some positive outcomes of Circle involvement include a sense of social inclusion provided to Core Members which has been linked to improved self-esteem, support in transitions and skills such as problem-solving behaviour, coping with emotions, self-care and social skills (Höing et al., 2016). However, such outcomes would not be possible without the presence of a supportive volunteer network. As discussed above, discussions that focus upon accountability such as discussion surrounding the Core Members' risk are likely to reduce Core Member engagement in the Circle (McCartan, 2016). Instead, Circle discussions should focus upon Core Member strengths in a supportive capacity as this is more likely to promote Core Member desistance (Fox, 2016). The importance of a positive group climate is acknowledged in the Circles intervention model (Höing et al., 2013).

The DRR is presently of limited use in the detection of potential risk. The factor analysis meant it is possible to identify what changed over time for Core Members.

Whilst the DRR may not provide promise for use as a scale to measure Core Member dynamic risk in the community, it may be useful to capture changes in Core Members attitudes and thought processes. If the DRR is to be used as a risk assessment tool, the DRR requires further development, particularly for the detection of potential future risk. The three identified factors argued to comprise the DRR are each supported in the recidivism and desistance literature. The DRR further holds the potential for a fourth dynamic risk factor relating to anger and hostility. Subsequent versions of the DRR should include additional items relating to this factor to strengthen the reliability of the factor. This addition would likely improve DRR which may mean future variations may be suitable for use as a dynamic risk assessment scale.

## 6.8: Limitations

The factor analysis presented in this chapter utilised the 'baseline' DRR scores provided. Being that these scores were not true baseline scores, the recorded mean scores identified within each factor may differ to those that would appear had a baseline been gathered before the Circle had begun. The reasoning provided for gathering DRR scores three months into a Circle is that Circles require the time to get to know their Core Member. However, if the initial recommendation to include Core Members in the completion of DRR is taken, it would not be necessary to wait three months to take a baseline recording of DRR data.

Planned follow-up analyses included tests on the identified factors and subsequent Circle outcomes. However, when conducted the analyses yielded no significant results and were therefore removed from the chapter. More data on Circle failures is needed to analyse the DRR to measure the ability of the DRR to predict dynamic risk.

## 6.9: Implications

There is potential to build on the initial DRR scale, although any future developments of the DRR should undergo thorough testing to ensure its reliability and validity before being used to monitor Core Member risk in the community.

## 6.10: Conclusion

The DRR was designed to help plan the support needs of Core Members and was not designed as a risk assessment tool. This chapter demonstrated that whilst the DRR holds potential for use as a risk assessment tool, it is not suitable for use as such in the present form. In terms of planning for treatment need. The DRR can be used to identify aspects of Core Members thoughts and behaviours which increase or reduce over time, however as a whole such components do not combine to predict risk, and it is therefore of limited use.

## Chapter 7 Investigation into Core Member Dynamic Risk & Emotional Wellbeing

### 7.1: Abstract

*This chapter investigates changes in Core Members' dynamic risk and emotional wellbeing over time. This Chapter presents changes in dynamic risk for (n=59) Core Members, as measured by the DRR, over time. Results indicated that DRR scores were significantly reduced after three months on a Circle. However, when data were split between successes and failures, DRR scores showed a significant reduction in DRR scores for successful Circles after six months. This chapter also presents changes in Core Members' wellbeing as measured by the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), over time. The WEMWBS is a validated scale for measuring wellbeing in the general population. Results demonstrated that Core Members' wellbeing was significantly increased after three months on a Circle. When data were split between successes and failures, Core Members with successful outcomes significantly increased their wellbeing after three months on a Circle.*

### 7.2: Introduction

Circles of Support and Accountability are built upon the two core principles of *no more victims* and *no one is disposable* (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007). An evaluation of Core Member dynamic risk and wellbeing, therefore, became a point of investigation. Dynamic Risk addresses the first of the core principles whilst wellbeing addresses the second. To date, there has been little evidence upon the ability of Circles to reduce Core Member risk in the UK (Bates et al., 2012). Although there have been more positive results in America (Duwe, 2018). Dynamic risk was measured to evaluate the effectiveness of Circles in reducing Core Member recidivism. Whilst much research has explored Core Member risk, in recent years there has been an interest in other positive effects of Circles, upon Core Member wellbeing (Clarke et al., 2015). In the present research, mental wellbeing was measured to evaluate the ability of Circles to improve Core Member wellbeing. This study aimed to build upon the literature by measuring dynamic risk, mental wellbeing and interactions of Core Members accessing Circles in the UK. The study utilised psychometric scales to allow measurement of dynamic risk and wellbeing on a large scale, over an extended period.

## 7.2a: Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

Individuals convicted of a sexual offence are surrounded by stigma. Upon release from prison, individuals convicted of sexual offences are subject to sexual offence registry laws. This means that an individual is tainted by the 'sex offender' label permanently. The label serves as a life sentence, regardless of whether the individual reoffends or not. If the same individual had instead committed another serious offence such as murder, they would not be subject to such labels of permanence. Sexual offences hold something of a taboo within society that other serious offences do not (Mingus & Burchfield, 2012).

Many individuals with sexual offence convictions live in isolation. Breakdowns in relationships and rifts between friendships can happen to anyone. Although for people who have committed sexual offences, it is common for mass disownment to take place. It is often difficult for friends and family to accept such offences were perpetrated by their loved one. On other occasions, friends and family may wish to avoid the stigma of being associated with such an individual for fear they will be vilified (Baily & Sample, 2017). Research has reported how some individuals deny their offences to friends and family for fear of losing contact (Blagden, Winder, Thorne & Gregson, 2011). Furthermore, individuals with sexual offence convictions encounter prejudice daily when faced with media portrayals that sensationalise sexual crime to increase sales, with sexual crimes being nine times over-represented when compared to national crime statistics (Harper & Hogue, 2015). Media portrayals lead PCSO to become isolated from their community which further increases risk (Malinen et al., 2014). Such labelling can make it difficult for some individuals to move on, inhibiting their ability to create a new identity for themselves in which they are no longer identified as a 'sex offender'.

Regardless of their histories, such individuals are people who have plenty to contribute to society if given the opportunity. However, whilst surrounded by stigma, an individual is not allowed to reach their pro-social potential. It is expected that participation in a Circle has the potential to improve Core Members' emotional wellbeing by providing a supportive environment in which Core Members are treated respectfully, as equals, and are not subject to stigma or prejudice. The Circle allows the Core Member the time and space to feel comfortable opening up and discussing their offence and their feelings about their perceived on-going risk without fear of persecution. Whilst Core Members may be subject to ongoing prejudice in the community, Circles provide Core Members with a safe space in which they

are no longer isolated or stigmatised for their offence histories and instead may begin to reintegrate with the community. Azoulay et al. (2019) argued that Circles are valuable in changing negative attitudes toward PCSO through education of the effectiveness of the approach. The strengths-based approach allows Core Members to focus upon their future whilst they build a new positive identity. It is expected that in doing so, Core Members will make improvements in their mental wellbeing.

Mental wellbeing refers to aspects of our emotions which serve to promote positive mental health (Tennant et al., 2007). The definition of mental wellbeing used here covers both the hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives. The hedonic perspective refers to the subjective experience of happiness and life satisfaction. The eudaimonic perspective refers to psychological functioning, good relationships with others and self-realisation. The eudaimonic perspective covers a wide range of cognitive aspects of mental health (Tennant et al., 2007). The eudaimonic perspective includes aspects related to emotional and physical wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2001), therefore the terms emotional and mental wellbeing will be used interchangeably. The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS; Tennant et al, 2007) was developed by an expert panel with knowledge in a range of areas including psychiatry, psychology, mental health and social science.

#### 7.2b Rationale

Chapter 6 attempted to validate the DRR to identify the components of the DRR. This chapter evaluates the effectiveness of the DRR to successfully measure changes in Core Members' dynamic risk. Furthermore, this chapter measures changes to Core Members wellbeing overtime and reports upon interactions between Core Members DRR and wellbeing scores. The Circles research reports on the effectiveness of Circles to promote Core Member wellbeing (Bates et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2015; Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). By measuring changes in Core Member wellbeing over time, the research aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of Circles to promote positive changes to Core Members throughout their participation in Circles. Höing et al. (2013) suggested that improvements to Core Member wellbeing may promote desistance. Although the relationship between wellbeing and desistance has yet to be confirmed. The present research aimed to investigate any potential links between improvements to Core Members' wellbeing and reduced risk of recidivism.

### 7.2c: Aims and Research Questions

This study aimed to address the following research questions:

- Does Circles promote desistance?
- How effective is Circles at reducing recidivism?
- How effective is Circles in promoting Core Member reintegration?

Chapter 6 presented an exploratory factor analysis of the DRR. This chapter moves to identify change in Core Members' dynamic risk and wellbeing including interactions between Core Member dynamic risk and wellbeing over time.

### 7.3: Risk and Wellbeing: Change over time

#### Method

Having confirmed the reliability and validity of three factors within the DRR, the research moved toward tracking Core Members' dynamic risk over time. Core Members' wellbeing was also tracked for changes over time. Interactions between Core Members' dynamic risk and wellbeing were investigated and assessed for positive and adverse outcomes.

#### 7.3a: Participants and Data Collection

Data were collected by Circles UK and shared in anonymised batches as part of the national evaluation. This sample consisted of (n=59) males with prior convictions of sexual offences, including contact and non-contact offences against women and children. Core Members were aged between 22 and 78 (mean=46.7; sd=13.5).

### 7.4: Analysis & Results

A follow-up analysis was conducted on the factors identified in chapter 6. Additional data received from Circles UK monthly, was compiled to form a data set which comprised n=59 Core Members. This sample consisted of males with prior convictions of sexual offences, including contact and non-contact offences against women and children. The follow-up analysis measured changes in Core Members' DRR scores over time, in addition to comparison with a male community population sample. Repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted on n=59 Core Members. Data were also split by outcome and analysis were re-run. Next, Core Members' wellbeing data were introduced and repeated measures ANOVA were conducted on WEMWBS data to track changes to Core Members' wellbeing over time. Finally, Pearson's correlation was conducted on Core Members' DRR and WEMWBS data to investigate interactions between Core Member dynamic risk and wellbeing.

#### 7.4a: Dynamic Risk

A repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted on n=59 Core Members' DRR scores to compare scores at 3 months, 6 months and 9 months on Circle. Table 14 shows the means and standard deviations for the three-time points.

Table 14 Changes in Mean DRR Scores for (n=59) Core Members

<b>Time Point</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
3 Months	59	29.19	11.66
6 Months	59	26.46	12.71
9 Months	59	23.81	13.74

The descriptive statistics demonstrate reductions in Core Member dynamic risk over time with an increase in the variance of scores over time. Mauchly's test of sphericity indicated that the assumption of sphericity was violated  $\chi^2(2)=11.77, p<.01$ .

Repeated measures ANOVA using greenhouse geisser correction indicated there was a significant difference in DRR scores over time ( $F(1.68, 95.82) = 8.395, p<.01$ ).

Figure 9 below shows changes in DRR scores over time. The results indicated a statistically significant reduction in DRR scores over time.





Figure 9 Changes in DRR Scores over time for (n=59) Core Members

Paired t-tests were conducted to explore the differences in DRR scores between the three time-points (3 months, 6 months and 9 months into Circles). The results indicated there were significant reductions in mean DRR scores of between three months (Mean=30, SD=11.7) and six months (Mean=27.7, SD=12.3),  $t(74)=2.09$ ,  $n=75$ ,  $p=.04$ . There were significant mean reductions in DRR scores between six months (Mean=26.1, SD=12.8) and nine months (Mean=23.5, SD=13.7),  $t(59)=2.27$ ,  $n=60$ ,  $p=.02$ . Thus, there were also significant reductions in mean DRR scores between three months (Mean=30, SD=11.7) and nine months (Mean=23.5, SD=13.7),  $t(59)=3.45$ ,  $n=60$ ,  $p=.01$ . Results indicated that Core Members' dynamic risk, as measured by the DRR, reduced after three months of involvement with Circles and further reduced after nine months of involvement with Circles.

*Changes in DRR scores over time: successful outcomes*

Data were split by (i) successful and (ii) unsuccessful outcomes, the analysis was conducted again to investigate any potential differences in the split data groups. A repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to compare DRR scores at three months, six months and nine months on Circles with a successful outcome. The means and standard deviations of DRR scores are presented in table 15 below.

Table 15 Changes in Mean DRR Scores for (n=42) Successful Outcomes

<b>Timepoint</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
3 Month	42	29.45	11.20
6 Months	42	27.07	11.73
9 Months	42	23.88	11.94

The descriptive statistics demonstrate reductions in Core Member dynamic risk over time with an increase in the variance of scores over time.

Mauchly's test of sphericity indicated that the assumption of sphericity was violated  $\chi^2(2)=8.454$ ,  $p=.01$ . Repeated measures ANOVA using greenhouse geisser correction indicated there was a significant difference in DRR scores over time ( $F(1.680, 68.878) = 5.68$ ,  $p=.01$ ). Paired t-tests were conducted to explore the differences in DRR scores between the three time-points (3 months, 6 months and 9 months into Circles) of successful outcomes. The results indicated there were no significant differences in DRR scores between three months

(Mean=29.4, SD=11.8) and six months (Mean=27.0, SD=11.7, n=42). There were significant reductions in DRR scores between six months (Mean=27.0, SD=23.8) and nine months (Mean=23.8, SD=11.9, n=42),  $t(41)=2.05$ ,  $p=.04$ . There were significant reductions in DRR scores between three months (Mean=30.0, SD=11.8) and nine months (Mean=24.4, SD=12.4, n=43),  $t(42)=2.91$ ,  $p=.01$ . These results indicate that Core Members' dynamic risk, as measured by the DRR, is reduced after nine months of involvement in Circles.

Figure 10 demonstrates the mean change in DRR scores between three and nine months on a Circle in successful Circles with a successful outcome.



Figure 10 Mean Change in DRR Scores for (n=42 Successful Outcomes)

*Changes in DRR scores over time: unsuccessful outcomes*

There were few unsuccessful outcomes in the dataset and, as such, it was not possible to conduct analyses that could isolate a red flag incident. However, an analysis of potential differences between two-time points (3 months and 6 months) for Circles where there was an unsuccessful outcome was conducted using a paired-samples t-test. The means and standard deviations of DRR scores for Core Members whose Circles had unsuccessful outcomes are presented in table 16 below.

Table 16 Changes in Mean DRR Scores for Circles with Unsuccessful Outcomes (Matched Pairs Sample)

<b>Timepoint</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
3 Month	5	32.20	10.25
6 Months	5	29.60	10.64

The paired-samples t-test indicated there were no significant differences between DRR scores between three months (Mean=32.2, SD=10.2) and six months (Mean=29.6, SD=10.6) on a Circle for unsuccessful outcomes. These results highlight the potentially ‘flat’ nature of dynamic risk scores for Core Members on unsuccessful Circles, with dynamic risk not showing a reduction over time.

7.4b: Wellbeing

Core Member wellbeing was recorded using the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS, Tennant, Fishwick, Platt, Joseph & Stewart-Brown, 2006; Tennant et al, 2007, see Appendix 5). The WEMWBS (Tennant et al, 2006/2007) is an ordinal, self-report measure consisting of 14 positively phrased Likert items scored from 1 to 5 which cover both hedonic and eudaimonic facets such as: ‘I’ve been feeling optimistic about the future’ and ‘I’ve been dealing with problems well’. Item scores are summed to provide a score ranging between 14 and 70, with higher scores indicating better mental wellbeing. The WEMWBS measures two distinct perspectives of mental wellbeing: “the subjective experience of happiness and life satisfaction, and the psychological functioning and self-realization” (Tennant et al., 2007, p. 2). The WEMWBS has demonstrated good reliability with Cronbach’s alpha of 0.91 in a population sample, good test – re-test reliability at 0.83 and good construct

validity, GFI=0.91 and AGFI=0.87 (Tennant et al, 2007). WEMWBS data were collected by Circles coordinators with the input of Core Members.

A one samples t-test was conducted to measure differences between Core Members' wellbeing against a sample of males in the community (Taggart, Stewart-Brown & Parkinson, 2015) at a range of time points over the course of Circles. Table 17 shows the means and standard deviations of Core Members' wellbeing over time.

Table 17 Core Members mean WEMWBS scores from pre to post Circles compared to a male community sample (n=783, mean=51.3)

<b>WEMWBS Timepoint</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Pre-Circle	119	39.76	1.10
3 Months	78	45.44	1.15
6 Months	62	46.76	1.14
9 Months	42	48.00	1.51
12 Months	28	46.75	2.17
Post-Circle	22	52.55	1.90

The descriptive statistics demonstrate an increase in Core Members' wellbeing over time with minimal variation in scores. A series of one samples t-tests indicated Core Members had significantly lower wellbeing scores than a male population sample at pre-Circle,  $t(118) = -10.41, p < .01$ ; at 3 months  $t(77) = -5.07, p < .01$ ; at 6 months  $t(61) = -3.95, p < .01$ ; at 9 months  $t(41) = -2.18, p = .03$  and at 12 months  $t(27) = -2.09, p = .04$ . There was no significant difference identified between Core Members and a male population sample post-Circle  $t(21) = .65, p = .51$ . Core Members demonstrated a significantly lower level of wellbeing at Pre-Circle through to 12 months on a Circle. Whilst post-Circle scores identified no significant difference in Core Members wellbeing' against that of a population sample, indicating that upon Circle completion Core Members wellbeing' aligned with that of a male community sample. Figure 11 shows changes in Core Member wellbeing' over time against a male community population sample.

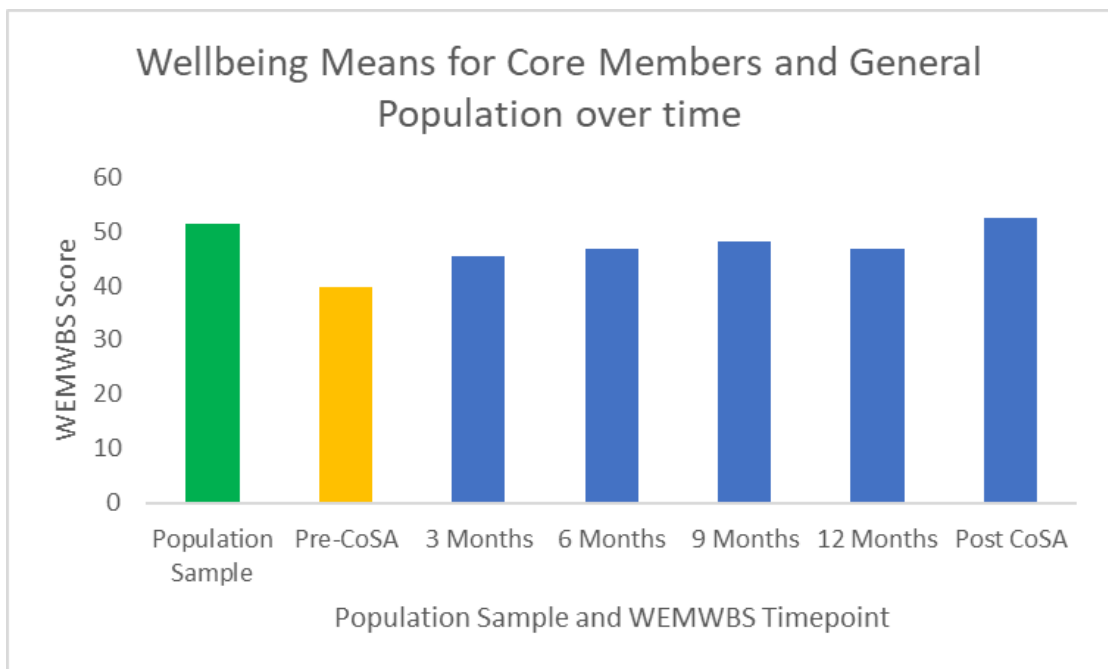


Figure 11 Changes in Core Member Wellbeing over time and a Population Sample

Data were split by success and failures using the decision matrix outlined in chapter 4. One-samples t-tests were repeated to investigate differences between successful and unsuccessful outcomes for Core Member Wellbeing over time compared to a male community sample. Table 18 shows the means and standard deviations of Core Members' wellbeing over time for those with successful outcomes.

Table 18 WEMWBS means and standard deviations for Core Member wellbeing (successful outcomes) over time

<b>WEMWBS Timepoint</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Pre-Circle	59	40.14	12.98
3 Months	43	45.44	10.57
6 Months	38	48.08	9.39
9 Months	27	48.59	9.97
12 Months	21	47.71	12.61
Post-Circle	19	53.92	8.89

The descriptive statistics demonstrate an increase in Core Members' wellbeing over time with a wider variation in scores over time, compared with that of the combined (successful and unsuccessful) scores. A series of one samples t-tests indicated Core Members had significantly lower wellbeing scores than a male population sample at pre-Circle  $t(58) = -6.60, p = .01$ ; at 3 months  $t(42) = -3.63, p = .01$  and 6 months  $t(37) = -2.11, p = .04$ . Core Members' wellbeing did not significantly differ from a male community population sample at 9 months  $t(26) = -1.41, p = .17$ ; 12 months  $t(20) = -1.30, p = .20$  or post-Circle  $t(18) = -.93, p = .36$ . Results indicated that Core Members that ultimately resulted in successful outcomes had their wellbeing increase to the equivalent of a male community sample after 9 months of involvement in Circles.

Figure 12 illustrates changes in Core Members' wellbeing over time against a male community population sample for Circles with successful outcomes. There was insufficient data to repeat the series of one-samples t-tests on Core Members' with unsuccessful outcomes.



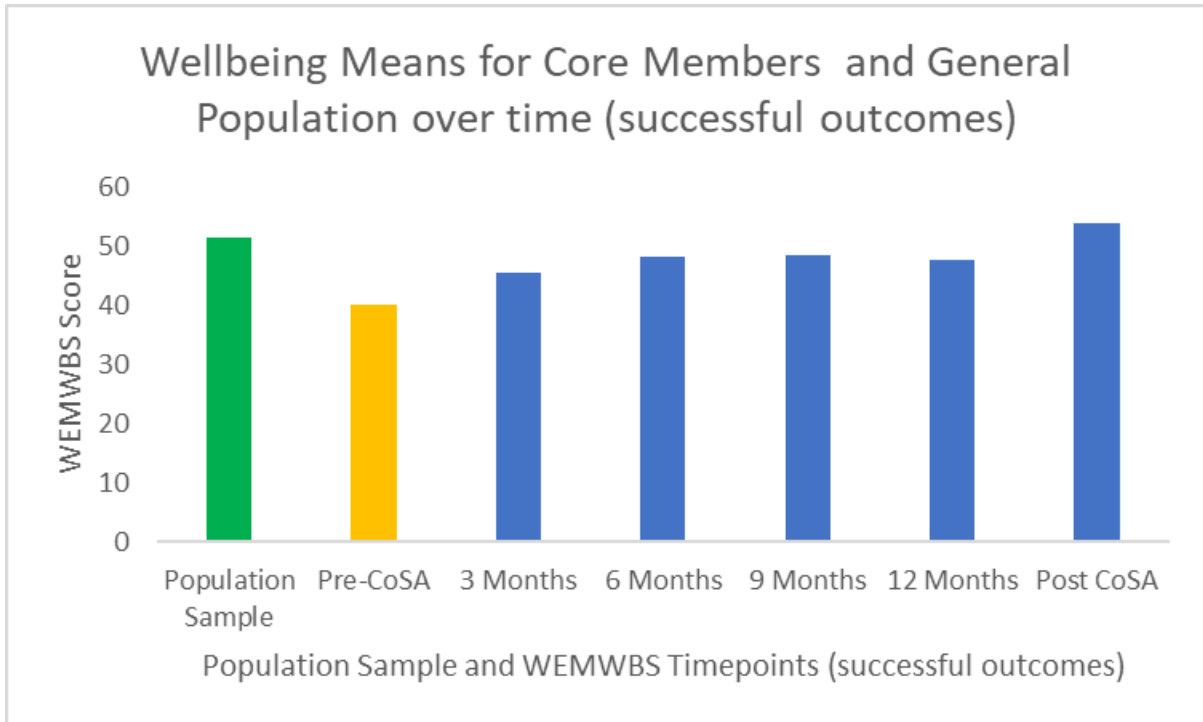


Figure 12 Mean wellbeing scores for Core Members and the male general population sample.

A repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted on n=44 Core Members' WEMWBS scores to compare scores at pre-Circle, 3 months and 6 months on a Circle. Table 19 shows the means and standard deviations for the three time points.

Table 19 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Core Member Wellbeing at Pre-Circle, 3 Months and 6 Months

	<b>Pre-Circle</b>	<b>3 Months</b>	<b>6 Months</b>
<b>Mean</b>	40.55	46.36	49.18
<b>SD</b>	11.93	8.43	7.75

The descriptive statistics demonstrate improvements in Core Members' wellbeing over time with a reduction in the variance of scores over time. Mauchly's test of sphericity indicated that the assumption of sphericity was violated  $\chi^2(2)=7.57, p=.02$

A repeated-measures ANOVA indicated a significantly significant difference between time points ( $F(1.71, 73.81) = 15.82, p<.01$ ).

Post hoc tests using the Bonferroni correction revealed Core Members had significant improvements in their wellbeing after 3 months of involvement in Circles ( $p<.01$ ). Core Members' wellbeing continued to improve after 6 months of involvement in Circles ( $p<.01$ ). Therefore, the results demonstrated that Circles had a significant positive impact on Core Member wellbeing, which improves with time.

Paired t-tests were conducted to explore the differences in WEMWBS scores between the three time-points (Pre-Circle, 3 months and 6 months into Circles). The results indicated there were significant increases in WEMWBS scores between Pre-Circle (Mean=40.4, SD=11.9) and three months (Mean=45.6, SD=10.1, n=73),  $t(72)= -3.67, p=.01$ . There were significant increases in WEMWBS scores between three months (Mean=45.8, SD=8.7) and six months (Mean=48.5, SD=8.0, n=47),  $t(46)= -2.35, p=.02$ . There were significant increases in WEMWBS scores between Pre-Circle (Mean=39.0, SD=11.9) and six months (Mean=47.1, SD=9.0, n=55),  $t(54)= -5.43, p=.01$ . Figure 13 denotes changes in Core Member wellbeing over time.

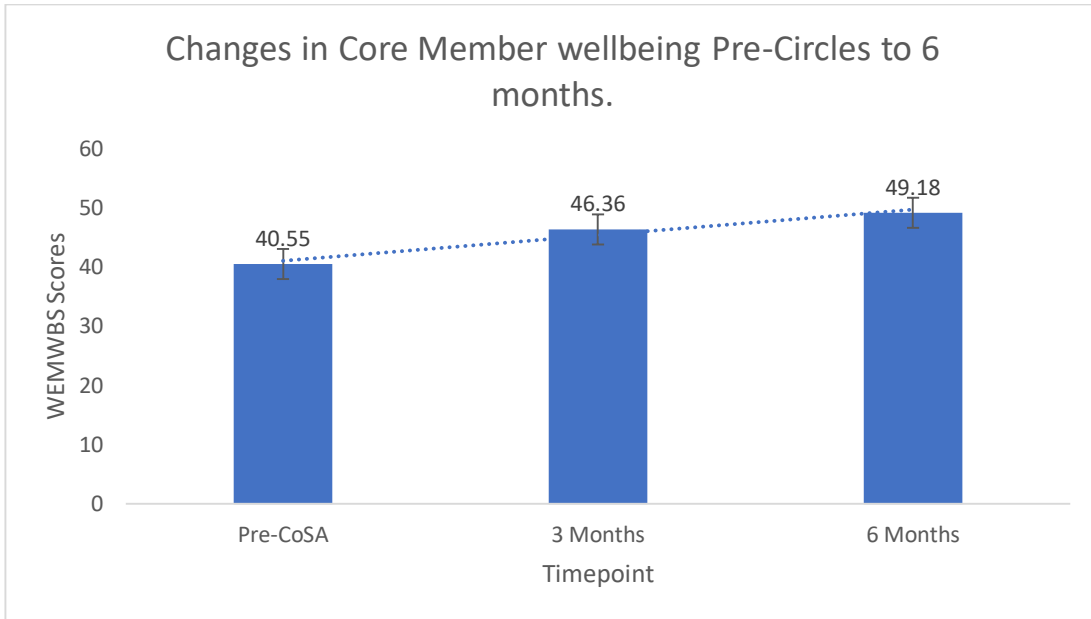


Figure 13 Changes in Core Member Wellbeing from Pre-Circle to 6 Months

*Changes in WEMWBS scores over time: successful outcomes*

Data were split by (i) successful and (ii) unsuccessful outcomes, the analysis was conducted again to investigate any potential differences in the split data groups. A repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to compare WEMWBS scores at pre-Circle, three months and six months on Circles with a successful outcome. The means and standard deviations of DRR scores are presented in table 20 below.

Table 20 Changes in Mean WEMWBS Scores for (n=27) Successful Outcomes

<b>Timepoint</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Pre-Circle	27	42.30	12.11
3 Months	27	46.11	9.33
6 Months	27	51.11	7.58

The descriptive statistics demonstrate increases in Core Member wellbeing over time with a reduction in the variance of scores over time.

Mauchly's test of sphericity indicated that the assumption of sphericity was not violated  $\chi^2(2)=3.53, p=.17$

Repeated measures ANOVA using indicated there was a significant difference in WEMWBS scores over time ( $F(2, 52) = 12.81, p=.01$ ). Paired t-tests were conducted to explore the differences in WEMWBS scores between the three time-points (Pre-Circle, 3 months and 6 months into Circles) of successful outcomes. The results indicated there were significant increases in WEMWBS scores between pre-Circle (Mean=41.5, SD=12.3) and three months (Mean=45.8, SD=10.6, n=41),  $t(40) = -2.2, p=.03$ . There were significant increases in WEMWBS scores between three months (Mean=45.7, SD=9.3) and six months (Mean=50.5, SD=7.9, n=28),  $t(27) = -3.14, p=.01$ . There were significant increases in WEMWBS scores between pre-Circle (Mean=39.8, SD=13.16) and six months (Mean=48.7, SD=9.3, n=34),  $t(33) = -5.14, p=.01$ . These results indicate that Core Members' wellbeing, as measured by the WEMWBS, was increased after three months of involvement in Circles and demonstrated continued improvement at 6 months. Limited data was accrued for later time points as many Circles were still running at the time of analysis. Fewer Circles had completed at the time of analysis so further analyses at later time points were not completed.

*Changes in WEMWBS scores over time: unsuccessful outcomes*

There were few unsuccessful outcomes in the dataset and, as such, it was not possible to conduct repeated-measures analyses to investigate changes in Core Member wellbeing for unsuccessful outcomes. However, an analysis of potential differences between two time points (pre-Circle and 3 months) for Circles where there was an unsuccessful outcome was conducted using a paired-samples t-test. The means and standard deviations of DRR scores for Core Members whose Circle had unsuccessful outcomes are presented in table 21 below.

Table 21 Changes in Mean WEMWBS Scores for (n=8) Unsuccessful Outcomes

<b>Timepoint</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Pre-Circle	8	41.75	2.42
3 Months	8	45.63	8.51

The paired-samples t-test indicated there were no significant differences between WEMWBS scores between pre-Circle (Mean=41.7, SD=2.4) and three months (Mean=45.6, SD=8.5) on a Circle for unsuccessful outcomes. The results indicate that the wellbeing of Core Members with unsuccessful outcomes do not significantly change after three months of involvement with Circles.

7.4c: Dynamic Risk and Wellbeing Interactions

A Pearson's correlation was conducted to test for a relationship between Core Member dynamic risk and wellbeing. Table 22 shows mean and standard deviations for dynamic risk and wellbeing at 3, 6 and 9 months.

Table 22 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of total DRR and WEMWBS Scores at 3, 6 and 9 Months

<b>Test / Timepoint</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
DRR 3 Months	101	29.86	11.52
DRR 6 Months	77	27.68	12.20
DRR 9 Months	60	24.30	13.91
WEMWBS 3 Months	78	45.44	10.20
WEMWBS 6 Months	61	46.69	9.10
WEMWBS 9 Months	42	48.00	9.79

Pearson's correlation indicated a statistically significant negative relationship with a moderate correlation between DRR and WEMWBS scores at 3 months ( $r = -.56$ ,  $n = 71$ ,  $p < .01$ ),

six months ( $r = -.46$ ,  $n=56$ ,  $p=.01$ ) and 9 months ( $r=-.49$ ,  $n=35$ ,  $p=.01$ ). As Core Member dynamic risk reduced, Core Member wellbeing increased. Figure 14 illustrates the Correlation between DRR & WEMWBS Scores at 3, 6 and 9 months combined for all outcomes.

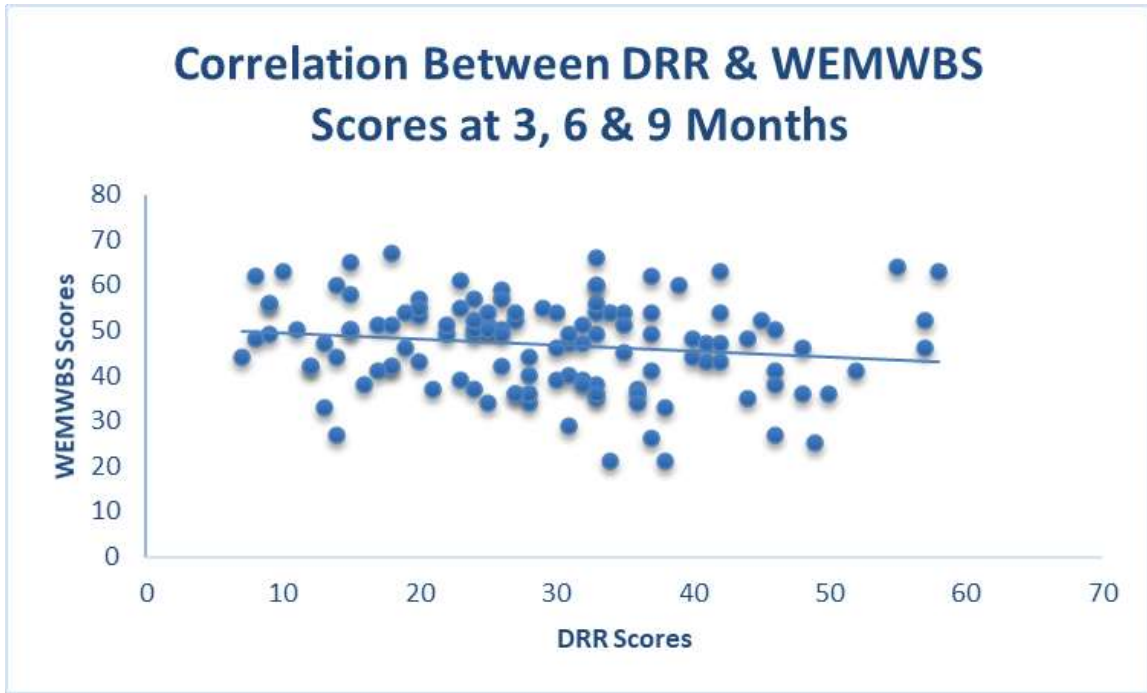


Figure 14 Correlation of Dynamic Risk and Wellbeing at 3, 6 and 9 Months (all outcomes)

#### 7.4d: Risk and Wellbeing Interactions split by outcome

Data were split by outcome to investigate any differences between successful and unsuccessful outcomes. Pearson's correlations were re-run on the split data to test for relationships between Core Member dynamic risk and wellbeing at three and six months.

##### *Successes*

Mean scores and standard deviations were gathered for DRR and WEMWBS scores at three, six and nine months on a Circle for successful outcomes. Table 23 details accrued data.

Table 23 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of DRR and WEMWBS Scores at 3, 6 and 9 Months for successful Circles

<b>Test / Timepoint</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
DRR 3 Months	61	30.36	11.83
DRR 6 Months	49	27.76	11.87
DRR 9 Months	43	24.47	12.40
WEMWBS 3 Months	43	45.44	10.57
WEMWBS 6 Months	38	48.08	9.39
WEMWBS 9 Months	27	48.59	9.97

Pearson's correlation indicated a statistically significant negative relationship with a moderate to strong correlation between DRR and WEMWBS scores at three months ( $r = -.59$ ,  $n=40$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and six months ( $r = -.61$ ,  $n=35$ ,  $p < .01$ ). A moderate negative relationship was also identified between DRR and WEMWBS scores at nine months ( $r = -.40$ ,  $n=24$ ,  $p = .04$ ). Results indicated that as Core Member dynamic risk reduced, Core Member wellbeing increased. Figure 15 illustrates the Correlation of Dynamic Risk and Wellbeing at 3, 6 and 9 Months combined for successful outcomes.



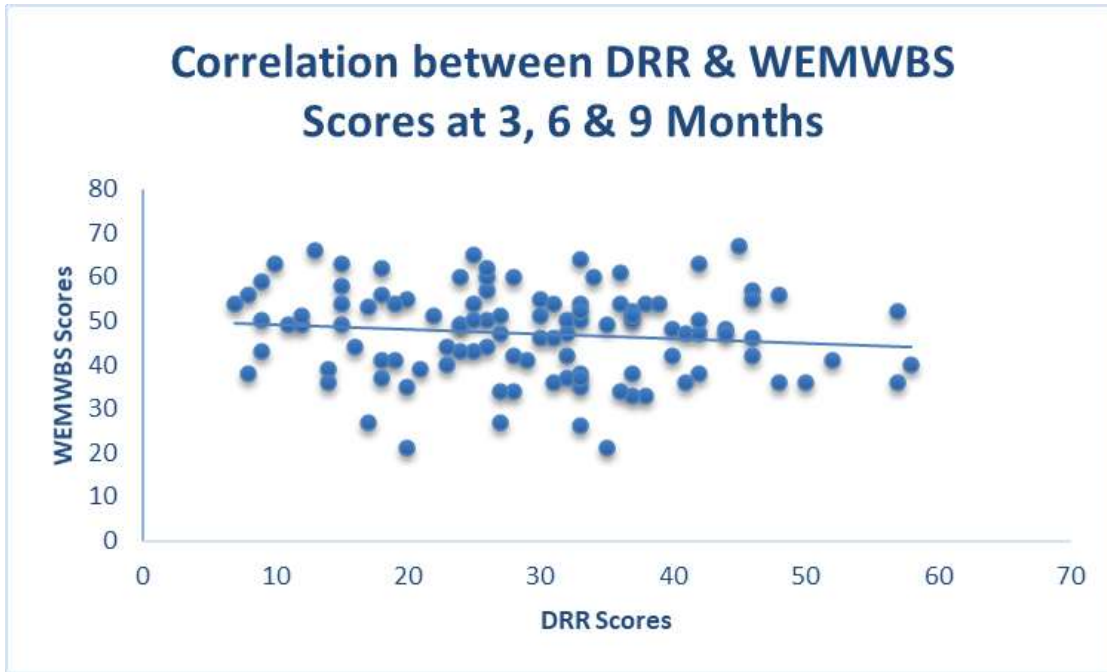


Figure 15 Correlation of Dynamic Risk and Wellbeing at 3, 6 and 9 Months (successful outcomes)

## Failures

Mean scores and standard deviations were gathered for DRR and WEMWBS scores at three, six and nine months on a Circle for unsuccessful outcomes. Table 24 details accrued data.

Table 24 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of DRR and WEMWBS Scores at 3 and 6 Months for unsuccessful Circles

Test / Timepoint	<i>n</i>	M	SD
DRR 3 Months	9	30.78	13.49
DRR 6 Months	5	29.60	10.64
WEMWBS 3 Months	8	45.63	8.51
WEMWBS 6 Months	4	40.25	10.72

Pearson's correlation indicated no significant relationships between DRR and WEMWBS scores at 3 months ( $r = -.60$ ,  $n=7$ ,  $p=.15$ ) or six months ( $r = -.65$ ,  $n=3$ ,  $.54$ ).

## 7.5: Discussion

This discussion presents dynamic risk and wellbeing change over time. This chapter aimed to identify whether Circles promote desistance in Core Members, uncover how effective Circles are at reducing recidivism, and how effective Circles are at promoting Core Member reintegration.

### 7.5a: Risk and Wellbeing: Change Over Time

The DRR is a relatively new scale that was developed to measure dynamic risk in Core Members. The results indicated that overall, Core Members' dynamic risk was reduced after six months on a Circle and reduced further after nine months. Framing the results within the context of the Factor Analysis presented in Chapter 6, an overall reduction in DRR scores over time indicated that Core Members experienced reductions in their poor emotional wellbeing. This translates as an improvement in their emotional wellbeing. A reduction in DRR scores also indicates that Core Members reduced their sexual preoccupation and emotional identification with children. Finally, through a reduction in DRR scores, Core Members' poor-problem solving and low pro-social engagement was reversed, translating to improvements in these areas. Whilst these changes did not convert to a reduction in dynamic risk, they were nevertheless positive changes in Core Members' lives. These positive changes are likely to encourage Core Members desistance efforts through a reduction in the risk factors discussed above and promotion of the corresponding protective factors (de Vries Robbé et al., 2015).

Improvements to Core Member wellbeing has been associated with reductions in Core Member isolation (Clarke et al., 2015). A reduction in isolation is a positive indicator of Core Member desistance as isolation is a recognised risk factor for recidivism (Malinen et al., 2014). Furthermore, Höing et al. (2013) postulated that improvements to Core Members wellbeing have a positive influence upon Core Member desistance.

However, when DRR data were split by outcome using the decision matrix (chapter 4) no significant difference in DRR scores was identified at six months for successful outcomes. When data were split by outcome, Core Members dynamic risk was seen to significantly reduce at nine months on a Circle in successful outcomes as opposed to six months in the combined sample containing all successes and failures. Moreover, Core Members' dynamic risk for those with unsuccessful outcomes did not demonstrate any significant change over time. Because one of the DRR factors captures wellbeing, namely poor wellbeing, demonstrated as higher DRR scores, conversely, a reduction in DRR scores may demonstrate an improvement in Core Member wellbeing. However, further analyses upon the individual components of the DRR would need to be conducted to confirm this.

The change in DRR scores demonstrated at 6 months overall and nine months for successful outcomes was unexpected and may indicate that the DRR is not suitable for identifying a reduction in risk. If the DRR was able to identify a reduction in dynamic risk, it would be expected that successful outcomes, that do not contain any instances of rearrest or recall would demonstrate a risk reduction at the same timepoint as the overall scores, at a minimum. As the overall scores included instances of failure, which contained instances of rearrest and recall it was surprising that a significant reduction in DRR scores was demonstrated earlier in this category at 6 months, than in the successful outcomes which demonstrated a significant reduction at 9 months.

Alternatively, it may indicate that the decision matrix does not accurately account for success and failure. However, within the decision matrix, reoffences are categorised as failures and therefore should arguably be identified as an increased risk by the DRR. Another explanation is that the earlier reduction in dynamic risk identified in the overall group may be explained by the inclusion of Circles deemed to have failed. This may be due to all Core Members,

regardless of their subsequent outcome, experiencing initial benefits of Circle involvement. However, this does not explain why those that result in successful outcomes do not also demonstrate an earlier reduction in risk. As Core Members with unsuccessful outcomes did not demonstrate a significant change in their DRR scores over time, the DRR does not appear to be a suitable scale for identifying potential risk and requires further development and testing before it could be successfully implemented in assessing Core Members' dynamic risk. However, successful outcomes demonstrated a significant reduction in DRR scores at 9 months which may indicate the potential for the DRR to identify successful outcomes. However, as unsuccessful outcomes tend to end earlier in the process, there is limited use for such a scale as it presently stands.

The WEMWBS is a well-validated scale, used to measure mental wellbeing in the community. An initial analysis of Core Members' wellbeing against that of a community sample indicated that Core Member wellbeing was significantly lower from Pre-Circle to 12 months. Post-Circle, Core Member wellbeing increased to a level that did not significantly differ from that of a male general population, demonstrating that Circles promoted Core Member reintegration through improvements to Core Member wellbeing.

However, when data were split and analyses were re-run on successful outcomes, Core Members' wellbeing was seen to improve to a level equivalent of the population sample at 9 months. The difference in results was likely caused by the initial inclusion of unsuccessful outcomes. As unsuccessful Circles tend to end earlier than successful Circles, the removal of unsuccessful cases made it possible to identify the improvements in the wellbeing of those who would subsequently go on to have successful Circles. This difference in results may still indicate that Circles promote Core Member reintegration. However, it does suggest that this may take a little longer than first anticipated.

The results indicated that overall, Core members' wellbeing increased after three months of involvement with Circles and further increased after six months of involvement. When data were split by outcome using the decision matrix, the significant increase in Core Member mental wellbeing was maintained at 3 months for those with a successful outcome. It is important to note that whilst Core Member wellbeing improved over time it did not differ significantly from a community sample until 9 months on a Circle for successful outcomes. However, the significant change indicated that Core Members were likely to experience the

benefit from their improved wellbeing, despite this being lower than the community average. Meanwhile, Core Members with an unsuccessful outcome demonstrated no significant change over time. The WEMWBS demonstrated an increase in Core Member wellbeing both overall and for successful outcomes.

These results were expected as it was hypothesised that inclusion in Circles would improve Core Members' wellbeing. This result aligns with prior Circles literature that indicates that involvement with Circles improves Core Members' wellbeing (Bates et al, 2012; Clarke et al, 2015; Höing, vogelvang & Bogaerts 2015). It was not possible to measure Core Members' wellbeing against that of the community sample over time, due to the limited number of Core Members with unsuccessful outcomes available in the sample. Core Members with unsuccessful outcomes did not demonstrate a significant change in their wellbeing over time. This suggested that whilst Core Member wellbeing is not significantly improved for unsuccessful Circles, it is also not significantly reduced. As Core Members were found to have a lower level of wellbeing to the general population up to 12 months and unsuccessful outcomes tend to end earlier, this result was expected. This study offered a unique consideration of Core Members wellbeing and potential dynamic risk in Circles deemed to have been unsuccessful.

Correlations were conducted to investigate the relationship between Core Members' dynamic risk and mental wellbeing at three, six and nine months using total DRR scores. Results indicated that there was an overall significant moderate correlation at three months, six months and nine months. When data were split by outcome using the decision matrix, data demonstrated a moderate to strong correlation for successful outcomes at three and six months and a moderate correlation at nine months. The change demonstrated between overall and successful outcomes may be explained by one of the component factors that make up the DRR (see chapter 6). The factor analysis presented in chapter 6 noted wellbeing as a component factor of the DRR. Therefore, as DRR scores reduced, the wellbeing item of the DRR increased. Arguably, the WEMWBS may have correlated with the wellbeing factor of the DRR. Hence why a stronger correlation was identified at 3 and 6 months for successful outcomes, in line with the increases in WEMWBS scores at these times. Meanwhile, data on unsuccessful outcomes demonstrated no significant relationship at three or six months. There was insufficient data to conduct a correlation at nine months. As discussed in chapter 6, the

current format of the DRR is ineffective in measuring changes in Core Member dynamic risk. Therefore, these correlations offer limited information and should be considered with caution.

#### 7.6: Limitations

The study is not without limitations, it is of note that the DRR is routinely completed by Circle volunteers with the support of Circle coordinators. Scores are therefore subjective to volunteer and coordinator perceptions and may not reflect the personal experiences of Core Members. A key recommendation would be that Core Members are involved in the recording of DRR data so their own views on their dynamic risk are included in accounts gathered. Furthermore, the DRR is routinely administered at three monthly intervals with the initial collection being completed three months into a Circle. It would be advisable that the DRR is completed upon commencement of a Circle to enable a true baseline measure to be taken.

Follow-up analyses were conducted on total DRR scores to measure changes in DRR scores over time. Whilst it has been argued that the DRR is not suitable for use in the present form, these follow-up analyses indicated that when combined, the factors underlying the DRR reduce over time for successful outcomes. However, regardless of a demonstrated reduction in DRR scores, the DRR was not able to successfully identify increases in dynamic risk for those with unsuccessful outcomes and therefore remains a poor measure of dynamic risk.

#### 7.7: Implications

The DRR is not presently suitable for use as a risk assessment scale as it failed to demonstrate any differences or present any red-flag indicators for unsuccessful outcomes. Therefore, it should not be used to monitor Core Members' risk in the community as it would be inaccurate to do so.

#### 7.8: Conclusion

The chapter demonstrated how Circles help to promote Core Member reintegration through improvements to Core Member wellbeing. In terms of desistance promotion and reductions in recidivism risk, the present studies were unable to identify whether Circles were successful in addressing Core Member risk due to the present ineffectiveness of the DRR as a tool through which to measure Core Member dynamic risk.

## CHAPTER 8 End of Circle Reports

### 8.1: Abstract

*End of Circle Reports (EOCR) are routinely completed when Circles end, regardless of the Circle outcome. This chapter presents a qualitative exploration of success and failure in Circles through a thematic analysis of (n=84) EOCR. Data were split into (n=65) successes and (n=19) failures using the decision matrix detailed in chapter 4, before analysis. Successes and failures were subjected to thematic analysis separately. Three overarching themes emerged from the analysis of successful and failed Circles. The themes were termed Trust, External Influences and Isolation. Whilst the same themes emerged from each data-set. Themes differed significantly between successes and failures. Each theme is discussed with regards to prior literature. Implications and recommendations for best practice are also provided.*

### 8.2: Introduction

The previous two chapters investigated the characteristics of Circles and changes in Core Members' dynamic risk and emotional wellbeing over time. This chapter moves away from quantitative data to explore broader examples of what success and failure look like in practice. Evaluation research is used to assess the quality and impact of a social intervention; it is important to ensure that an intervention is being carried out to the best possible standards, highlighting areas of improvement and assessing if the intervention makes a difference (or not) and to whom. Evaluation research is also used to demonstrate the success of a social intervention (Moore et al., 2015). Good evaluations should encompass all stakeholders to gain a complete picture of the intervention. An intervention may appear to be successful on the surface yet hold hidden flaws. A service provider may perceive an intervention to be successful, whilst a service user may experience a poor intervention which they perceive to be unsuccessful. If an evaluation only takes account of one party's views, the subsequent findings would not provide a true picture (Dwerryhouse, 2018).

Whilst chapter 5 indicated that discussion of risk and Core Members' substance abuse predicted Circle failure, the present chapter identifies how such failures emerge through an exploration of Circle relationships. The Core Members behaviour, progress and outcomes are recorded in an End of Circle Report (EOCR). On completion of each Circle, an EOCR is routinely

completed by the Circles Coordinator with the input of Circle volunteers. The EOCR tracks the achievements and challenges from the beginning through to Circles completion. The EOCR contains considerable qualitative data relating to Core Members' progress and relationships within the Circle. EOCR capture key information relating to EOCR length, volunteer numbers and any volunteer drop-outs that may occur, Core Member achievements and difficulties, in addition to Circle endings.

#### 8.2a: Rationale

Whilst Circle Coordinators routinely gather qualitative data on Core Members' progress, to date no research has utilised EOCR data in the study of success and failure in Circles. This study was designed to use this data to explore success and failure and examine Core Member reintegration.

#### 8.2b: Aims and Research Questions

This study was designed to address the following research questions:

- What contributes to success in Circles?
- Why do some Circles fail, and others succeed?
- How effective is Circles in promoting Core Members' reintegration?

#### 8.3: Method

Whilst quantitative data on dynamic risk and wellbeing were used to evaluate success and failure in Circles in Chapter 7, this study provided an opportunity to explore success and failure in Circles through a qualitative thematic analysis of EOCR data. EOCR data is routinely gathered at the end of a Circle, regardless of outcome. This provided an opportunity to explore similarities and differences between successful and failed Circles. Additionally, this is the first study to explore success and failure using EOCR data and as such, offered a unique contribution to the Circles literature. Through an exploration of the qualitative themes underlying success and failure in Circles, this study offered qualitative explanations for changes to, and variations in, Core Member dynamic risk and mental wellbeing.

#### 8.3a: Participants

Participants were (n=84) Core Members who took part in a Circle between January 2016 and December 2019. The inclusion criteria specified that participants must be Core Members, funded by Big Lottery Circles in England. No minimum term was set for Circle participation,



meaning that once a Core Member had met with their volunteers, they were suitable for inclusion. Core Members were male (n=83) and transgender female (n=1). Circles ranged from less than a month (0) to 21 months (mean=10.66; sd=5.62).

Participants' index offences were Breach of SOPO, non-contact and contact offences with some individuals holding multiple index offences across categories. Core Members' MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) level were recorded within their End of Circle Report. MAPPA is the process by which prison, probation and police work together to manage individuals convicted of violent and sexual offences, living in the community. MAPPA rate individuals as Level 1 (ordinary agency management), level 2 (active multi-agency management) or level 3 (active enhanced multi-agency management). Core Members' MAPPA level was logged at the beginning and end of Circles. MAPPA levels are presented in table 25.

Table 25 Core Members MAPPA level at beginning and end of Circle

<b>MAPPA Level</b>	<b>Beginning of Circle</b>	<b>End of Circle</b>
1	70	77
2	12	4
3	0	0
Missing data	2	3

### 8.3b: Data Collection

End of Circle reports (EOCR; Circles UK; see appendix 7) are completed by Circle coordinators for every Circle within two months of a Circle ending. Circle Coordinators send completed EOCR to Circles UK who store EOCRs for all providers. For this research, EOCRs were retrieved directly from Circles UK on an intermittent basis. The EOCR consists of three key parts relating to the Core Members' history, progress during the Circle and the outcome of the Circle. Part one of the EOCR is used to record information relating to Core Member risk, offence history and treatment. Part two is used to list the key aims of the Circle and subsequently report on the progress of such aims over the term of the Circle. Part three details the reasons why the Circle ended along with comments on the Core Members' feelings towards the Circle ending. There is an additional section of the EOCR devoted to volunteer information which is used to capture details of volunteer withdrawal and the addition of any replacement volunteers.

### 8.3c: Procedure

Data were split into successes and failures using the decision matrix detailed in chapter 4. A thematic analysis was completed on group 1 (successes). A separate thematic analysis was completed on group 2 (failures). The results of each are presented herein.

### 8.3d: Analysis

As part of an ongoing evaluation, Circles UK sent completed EOCR to the researcher at NTU. Eighty-four EOCR were available at the time of write up. EOCR comprised of five projects located in the UK. The project areas comprised: Lincolnshire, Lancashire, Nottingham and Derbyshire, London and Merseyside. All EOCR with successful endings were compiled into one data set. All EOCR with unsuccessful were compiled into another data set. Both data sets were separately subjected to inductive, latent thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2008). An inductive approach was chosen because success and failure within the context of Circles is a new area of research. In conducting the research, the intent was to both identify and understand, factors contributing to success and failure in Circles. Additionally, the research aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of Circles upon Core Member reintegration. For this reason, a latent approach was deemed suitable. The analysis followed the six phases of thematic analysis guidelines set out by Braun and Clarke (2006). Once each data set had been separately analysed for themes, the two data sets were cross-referenced to explore similarities and differences between successful and unsuccessful endings.

### 8.4: Results

Endings consisted of successful completion reported as Core Member reintegration (n=43), Core Member drop-out (n=16), Core Member recall (n=4), Core Member re-arrest (n=10) and volunteer disbandment (n=4). There were (n=7) did not fit within any of the listed categories and was noted as 'other'. Figure 16 below illustrates Circle outcomes with percentages.

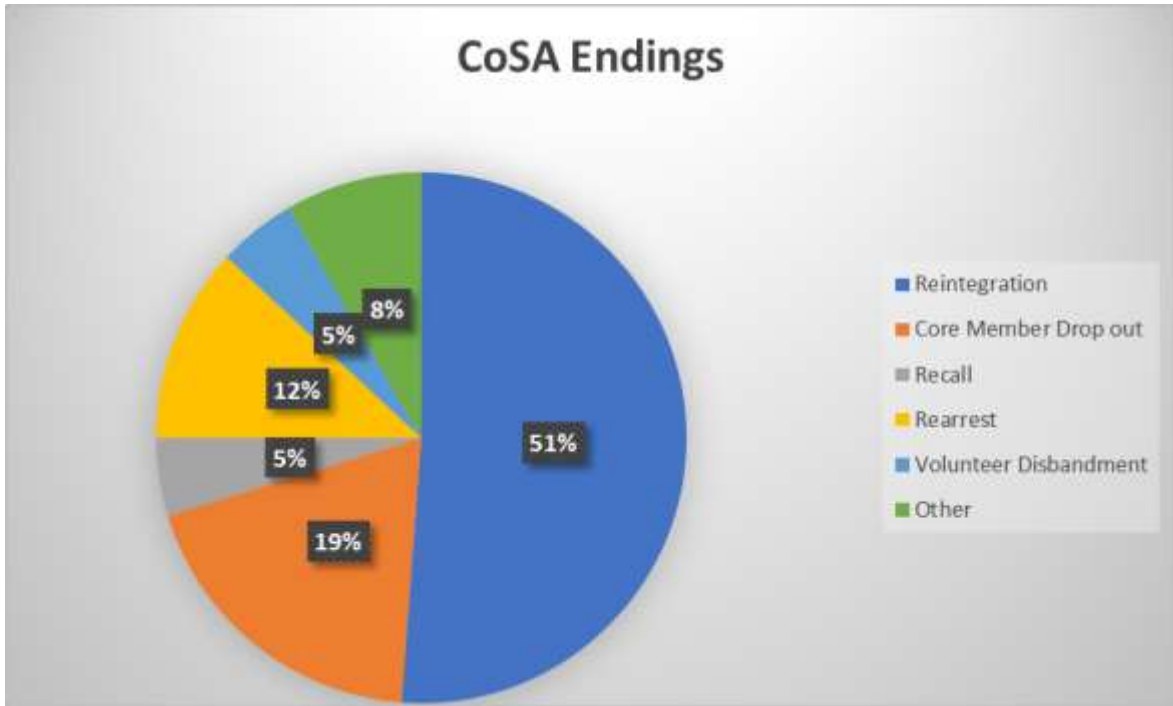


Figure 16 Circle Endings Reported in EO CR

Outcomes listed as 'other' consisted of Core Member poor health which meant the Core Member was unable to attend Circle meetings (n=3). One ending was due to a Core Member not accepting accountability and his resistance to challenge (n=1). Whilst another ended for similar reasons around volunteer frustration at Core Member poor commitment to change in addition to poor volunteer availability (n=1). One Circle was reported to have come to a natural ending at 18 months but the Core Member was not deemed to have fully reintegrated (n=1). In another case, a Circle began whilst the Core Member was residing at an approved premise awaiting confirmation of his release conditions. After beginning his Circle, the Core Member was moved out of the area and began a new Circle whilst his original Circle was closed (n=1). EOCR data were split into (n=65 success) and (n=19 failures) before commencing two separate analyses (see figure 17).

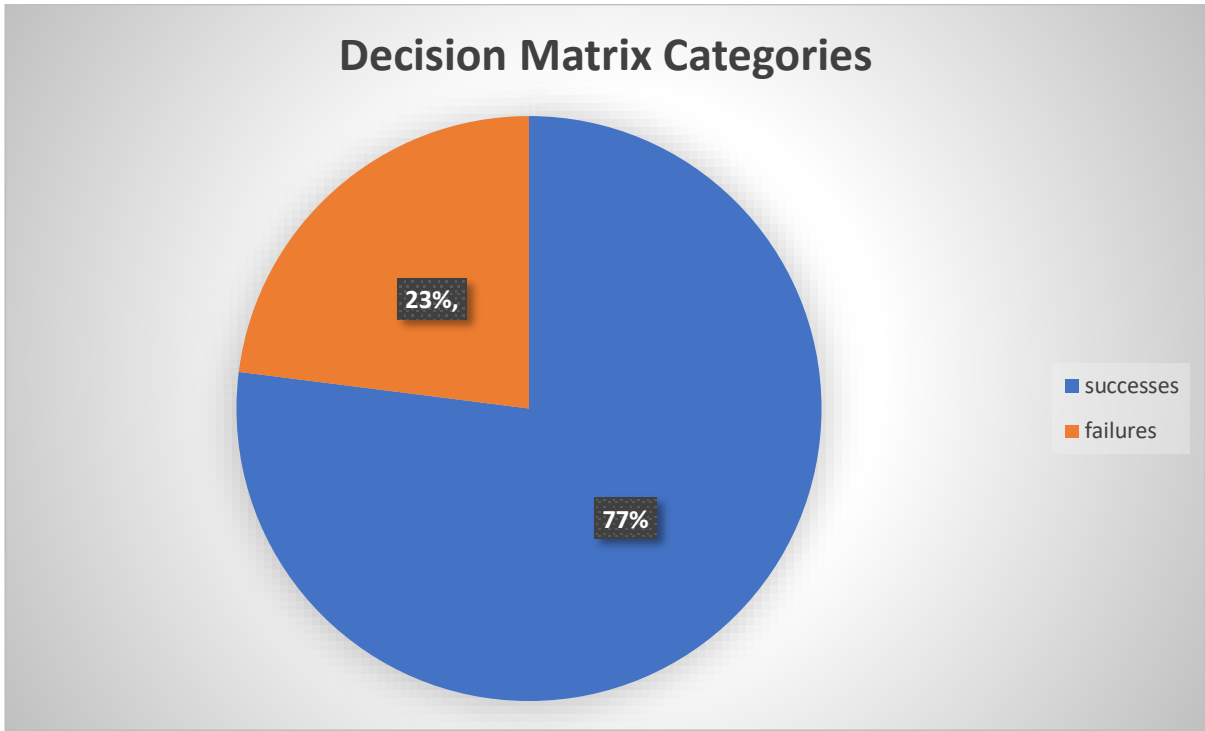


Figure 17 Success and Failure categorised by the decision matrix

Thematic analysis of n=84 EOCR (n=65 successful and n=19 failures) Circles revealed three main themes. The same core themes emerged within each dataset. However, the emergent themes within successes and failures differed in presentation. For example, the core theme of trust presented as trusting relationships in successful Circles, and trust issues within failed Circles. Themes are presented in table 26 and are further discussed with reference to participant extracts below.

Table 26 Themes from thematic analysis

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Success</b>	<b>Failure</b>
Trust	Trusting Relationships	Trust Issues
External Influences	External Support	Negative External Influences & Substance Abuse
Isolation	Reduced Isolation (through active participation)	Isolation

#### 8.4a: Successful Circles

When data on Circle length was split by successes and failures, successful Circles ranged from 2 to 21 months (mean=11.77; sd=5.48). Successful Circles were characterised by positive and supportive relationships in which Core Members felt able and comfortable to discuss their concerns in a safe environment, free from judgement. Difficulties in these Circles were usually overcome through open and honest discussion with all those involved. Volunteer frustrations relating to Core Member motivation were openly discussed and resolutions were reached with the input of all. Successful Circles benefitted from a range of positive outcomes. Core Members gained improvements in their emotional wellbeing, identified and became involved with new social activities and hobbies and increased their social Circle. Core Members valued the support of the volunteers and were appreciative of their time and support. Another salient theme which arose from analysis of the successful Circles was that of volunteer commitment. Although successful overall, volunteer dropouts and inconsistent attendance was common. The key element which appeared to support the success of these Circles was the adaptability of the remaining Circle volunteers and the Core Member to the volunteer dropouts, which often appeared to draw the remaining Circle members closer together.

### *Theme 1: Trusting Relationships*

A key component of successful Circles was the development of trusting relationships between the Core Member and their Circles. Core Members within successful Circles, allowed themselves to trust in their Circle and in doing so trusted in the process. Whilst some Core Members were initially nervous to open up to their Circle, in doing so they realised the benefits of using the Circle as a safe space in which to discuss their concerns in a non-judgemental environment.

*“The CM went from being initially very shy and reserved to quickly gaining in trust and being able to be open and honest with us about his risk management and mental health/self-harm concerns” (Successes; lines 1111 - 1112).*

This extract reported upon how the Core Member was able to utilise his Circles to address concerns related to his outward risk in addition to concerns around his risk to self. This Core Member’s experience positively reflects the two aims of Circles advocated by the two core principles of *no more victims* and *no-one is disposable* (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007). The trusting relationships which developed within successful Circles appeared to be a result of genuine relationships.

*“The CM and Volunteers were able to build a strong, safe and trusting relationship which was a significant contributing factor to the success of the Circle. Whilst there was a very strong relationship as a group (Circle), each volunteer was able to develop their own individual relationship with CM which placed the Circle in a further position of strength when engaging in several challenging and emotive conversations and activities” (Successes; lines 45 - 49).*

This extract reports upon how trusting relationships formed at the level of the Circle as a whole in addition to more intimate relationships between the Core Member and the individual volunteers. This extract reflects a Circle in which relationships between the Core Member and individual volunteers were distinct from the Core Member to group-volunteer relationship. The development of such personal relationships enabled the Core Member to develop trust in volunteers as individuals. Rather than viewing the volunteers as an out-group, the Core Member was able to build meaningful relationships on a one to one basis. The development of trust on an individual basis is perceived to have positively contributed to the

group-work of volunteers when attempting to engage the Core Member in discussions of a challenging nature. Höing, Vogelvang and Bogaerts (2015) stated that success in Circles is based upon trusting and reciprocal relationships and that without a trusting context, Circle's risk premature closure. A sentiment which volunteers reflected in the below extract.

*“The three volunteers also completed the end of Circle questionnaire – In it, they said- ‘Our core member often disclosed risky sexual thinking which we could manage and discuss sensitively within the Circle. If he did not have this safe space to discuss such thoughts, it is much more likely he would have been tempted to re-offend’.”*  
**(Successes; 2326 - 2329).**

Here, volunteers explained how their Core Member felt comfortable opening up about his risky sexual thoughts. Volunteers described the Circle as a safe space in which their Core Member was able to discuss his concerns in a non-judgemental environment. Volunteers further argued that it was the presence of the Circle as a safe space which contributed to their Core Members' desistance. Within this Circle, the Core Member was provided with the opportunity to reflect upon his risk-related concerns without fear of persecution. The sensitivity the volunteers demonstrated when listening to their Core Members' concerns encouraged their Core Members' openness. This enabled the Circle to support the Core Member in working through his concerns whilst providing insight to his thought processes. (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). Furthermore, through the development of trust, the Core Members' openness meant that volunteers were able to monitor his potential risk. This Circle presents another example of the dual process of Circles in supporting the Core Member whilst simultaneously holding them to account (Saunders & Wilson, 2003).

#### *Theme 2: External Support*

Another common feature of successful Circles was the presence of an external support network, beyond that of the Circle. Many successful Circles reported upon the positive contribution provided by Core Members' friends, family and work colleagues. Core Members were also reported to have experienced good working relationships with those in the criminal justice service.

*“CM continues to have the support of his Probation Officer, mother, sisters and work colleagues. He felt through finding work, he could begin to make a new group of*



*friends. He acknowledged the importance of avoiding those who encouraged/supported his previous pro-criminal lifestyle” (Successes; lines 2920 - 2993).*

This extract details the extended support network that this Core Member had in place at the end of his Circle. This extract reports upon how the Core Member perceived value in finding and obtaining work to develop new friendships. Employment offers the opportunity to develop pro-social connections through which Core Members may develop a sense of belonging. Both employment and the presence of a professional support network are recognised protective factors to promote desistance (de vries Robbé et al., 2015). This Core Member acknowledged the importance of avoiding negative associates and in doing so demonstrated a good level of self-awareness of his risk triggers. The development of a supportive external network was something which the Circle equally valued.

*“The CM is living with his parents now and has a good relationship with them. He is in a stable relationship with his boyfriend and he will continue to have contact with the coordinator and the (provider). He also has MOSOVO support and we are hopeful that his new job will lead him to make new friends” (Successes; lines 867 - 867).*

Here, it is similarly noted the external support the Core Member had in place upon finishing the Circle. Again, there is recognition of the professional support provided to the Core Member. Within this extract, the Circle reflected the hopeful sentiment of employment offering the opportunity for the development of new friendships. There is a sense that the existence and further development of an external support network act as a turning point in which Core Member can develop new life plans (Willis & Ward, 2013). Circles are future-focused as Circle support is removed and replaced by wider support networks. The gradual removal of the Circle support network means that Core Members must be encouraged to seek support elsewhere and also become more responsible for their own needs. Core Member behaviour may be influenced by Core Members’ beliefs in their ability to change. Schumann and Dweck (2014) reported how individuals who believed personality was malleable were more accepting of taking responsibility for their actions compared to individuals that believed personality was fixed. Whilst this research was not conducted with a forensic sample, results may be argued to be applicable on a humanistic level. Such self-helping behaviour is demonstrated in the following extract.

*“The CM has his OM and MOSOVO contacts plus he is getting help for his mental health and reevaluating his meds. He has some friends and has had some romantic associations with appropriate adults” (Successes; lines 1210 - 1212).*

Here, the Core Member has acknowledged his need for support with his mental health and actively engaged in addressing his requirements. Core Members in successful Circles demonstrated a good level of self-awareness and worked to address any concerns that may otherwise act as a barrier in their reintegration efforts. Höing, Vogelvang and Bogaerts (2015) identified that successful Circles benefitted from improvements in self-reflection after six months involvement in Circles. The present research indicated that successful Circles lasted an average of 11.77 months. By comparison, less successful Circles lasted for an average of 6.67 months. Meaning unsuccessful Circles ended around the time they would begin to reap the benefits of Circle involvement. Successful Circles shared a positive view of authority figures and developed good working relationships with police and probation, recognising the benefit of working with, rather than against them.

*Theme 3: Reduced Isolation (through active participation)*

Reduced isolation through Core Member support was equally important to successful Circles. Reduced isolation was linked to the development of external support networks and trusting relationships. However, it is presented as a theme in its own right due to the active participation of Core Members attempting to reduce their social isolation. Something which differed considerably to those in unsuccessful Circles. Whilst the presence of Circles reduces risk in the interim, Circles that support Core Members to build their social networks to reduce their social isolation in the long term are further beneficial (Malinen et al., 2014). Furthermore, in some instances, genuine friendships are formed between Core Members and volunteers, such as the one reported below.

*“The Circle supported the CM to attend social/community groups regularly which assisted him in building relationships with new associates linked with his hobbies and interests. Both attending these groups and the Circle itself helped the CM to feel less isolated. In addition, the CM has developed a meaningful friendship with one of the*

*volunteers which will continue after the end of the Circle” (Successes; lines 2873 - 2878).*

This extract reports on the Core Members regular active engagement in social groups. With the support of the Circle, this Core Member was able to engage with community groups over shared interests. Furthermore, the development of a genuine relationship formed within the Circle meant that the Core Member developed a friendship with a volunteer which continued after the completion of the Circle. Whilst successful Circles worked to support Core Members to develop broader social networks, Core Members also did their part to actively reduce their social isolation. The importance of social relations in desistance promotion cannot be overstated (Weaver & McNeill, 2015). The below extract reports on a Core Member who demonstrated a good level of personal insight and identified someone who could help him both during the Circle and once the Circle came to an end.

*“CM has also identified a close person from a Sex Addicts group, who is his go-to guy if having any urges or crisis periods. It appears as though his social network is broadening for the better. CM’s offending was very much linked to isolation and boredom so having these social connections and interactions have alleviated some of the temptation that was there previously” (Successes; lines 1536 - 1540).*

Whilst the Circle offered this Core Member with support relating to his risk concerns, this Core Member took it upon himself to seek further support and assistance outside of the Circle for his risk-related issues. In doing so, the Core Member took responsibility and ownership of his risk concerns and put processes in place to help himself and protect others. Improvements to Core Member reflective abilities have been noted in the literature previously (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). Like other successful Circles, this Core Member was able to reflect on his risk triggers and identify support that would be beneficial in helping him to refrain from future offences. Whilst reduced isolation in successful Circles was often linked to Core Members active seeking of social connections, the mere existence of the Circle also alleviated Core Members’ sense of isolation, even when the Circle was not physically present.

*“Even though I did not need to use the Circle phone that often it definitely made me a feel a lot less lonely knowing it was there” (Successes; lines 1429 - 1430).*

This extract presented a comment from one Core Member who reported that simply knowing that the Circle was only a phone call away, reduced his sense of isolation. The knowledge that support existed helped to alleviate this Core Members' loneliness where he may otherwise have felt socially isolated. Circle support has been evidenced to reduce isolation in Core Members through both expressive and instrumental support (Bohmet, Duwe & Hipple, 2016). A reduction in isolation is a positive benefit both to the Core Members wellbeing in addition to a reduction in recidivism risk (Malinen et al., 2014).

#### 8.4b: Unsuccessful Circles

When data on Circle length was split by successes and failures, failures ranged from 0 to 13 months (mean=6.67; sd=4.29). Unsuccessful Circles provided a stark contrast to successful Circles. Unsuccessful Circles were characterised by low levels of trust amongst members of the Circle in addition to dishonesty on the behalf of Core Members. Core Members' deceit often led the volunteers to trust in the Core Member whilst the Core Member simultaneously engaged in risky behaviour or criminal activity. Core Members' distrust of Circles continually led to Core Members being avoidant of challenging questions and discussions around risk. As a result, Circle relationships were tense and difficult throughout and volunteers often became frustrated at Core Members' lack of motivation and commitment to Circles. Core Members' lack of trust spread beyond the Circle as Core Members often refused to engage in any external social activities or employment opportunities. Core Members often reported that they did not require support from their Circle and refused to engage productively. Many Core Members that did engage with external associates, did so to their own detriment. Core Members in unsuccessful Circles engaged with criminal associates and engaged in substance abuse behaviours. Whilst some Circles ended earlier than planned due to Core Member voluntary withdrawal, many Circles came to an end due to adverse outcomes. Core Members were recalled for breach of their licence conditions and re-arrested for new offences.

#### *Theme 4: Trust Issues*

A recurring theme within unsuccessful Circles was that of a lack of trust. Core Members had great difficulties trusting in their Circles and this presented in several ways. Core Members disliked discussions that revolved around risk and were often evasive in risk-related discussions. The below extract demonstrated the difficulties this Circle faced when attempting to engage a Core Member in discussions, particularly those relating to his risk.

*“In the first and final Supervision and Review meeting, volunteers acknowledged that it had been difficult to discuss with the CM his sexual thoughts, risk factors and offending behaviour as he would often not hear them, or ‘pretend’ he had not heard, and change the subject” (Failures; lines 1506-1508).*

This extract exemplifies the frustrations experienced by the coordinator and volunteers in the attempts made to support the Core Member. Despite the efforts of the Circle, the Core Member refused to engage in the accountability aspect of Circles. The Core Members wish to not divulge his sexual thoughts or discuss aspects relating to his risk, leave the unanswered questions of what it was he may have been willing to discuss. In addition to what led him to participate in Circles. McCartan (2016) reported upon instances whereby Core Members entered into Circles seeking support and disengaged upon the realisation that accountability was equally discussed. This is a potential explanation for this Core Members’ evasive behaviour. Whilst some Core Members overtly refused to engaged in discussions of risk, others chose to engage but demonstrated little self-awareness and a refusal to explore other viewpoints.

*“CM was always quick to distance himself from those who have offended against children and saw his sexual crimes as different as he offended against adult women. He always went on to minimize his offending, insisting he did not harm anyone. Was regularly challenged for this way of thinking” (Failures; lines 1735 - 1738).*

The above extract presents a Core Member who used denial of the seriousness of his offences as a defence mechanism to protect himself from shame and guilt (Blagden et al, 2011). His distancing of himself from those who offended against children acted as a buffer for his self-esteem. By distancing himself from others that he perceived to be ‘worse’ this Core Member built himself a ‘better’ identity in which he ‘did not harm anyone’ (Blagden et al, 2011). However, in doing this he refused to acknowledge the harm he had caused. The Circle affirmed that he was regularly challenged on his thought-process, highlighting that this was an ongoing concern. Whilst his refusal of responsibility may have been the result of an unconscious attempt to protect himself, had he developed trusting relationships within his Circle, he may have been more open to exploring other viewpoints. Instead, the Circle was unable to make any meaningful progress with the Core Member. Tensions between Core

Members and Circles was a common occurrence within unsuccessful Circles. The below extract illustrates the frustrations experienced by volunteers.

*“On one occasion CM failed to show up to the meeting, and did not notify volunteers, who were left waiting for him at the venue. CM was later found to have fabricated a story about being in hospital, which left the volunteers frustrated and questioning his motivation. Another incident occurred at this time whereby CM had disclosed to volunteers that he was going bowling with some neighbours. When subsequently questioned about this by Jigsaw CM stated that he had ‘made it up’ to ‘test the volunteers’. Volunteers were again left frustrated by this behaviour” (Failures; lines 1767-1774).*

The above extract illustrates a Core Member who struggled to develop positive relationships with his volunteers. This Core Member's inherent distrust of his volunteers led him to fabricate stories to ‘test’ his volunteers. There is a sense that this Core Member was not committed to the process and instead saw the Circle as a game. The Core Member's subsequent honesty to his Jigsaw officer suggests he was capable of developing trust in others, yet he did not invest his trust within the Circle. Limited trust in the Circle was a common feature of unsuccessful Circles which often limited and sometimes prevented any real progress being made. This lack of trust negatively impacted upon volunteers’ ability to engage Core Members in the process. Höing et al. (2013) explained how some Circles experience a dysfunctional stage, characterised by low levels of trust. Core Members of unsuccessful Circles were often happy to engage in receiving support from volunteers but were dismissive of risk discussions and, in some cases, risk-related topics were never raised. Unsuccessful Circles had additional concerns to manage in the form of negative external influences surrounding Core Members outside the Circle.

#### *Theme 5: Negative External Influences & Substance Abuse*

Many Core Members from unsuccessful Circles struggled with relationships outside of the Circle in addition to those within. Core Members were often surrounded by negative influences outside the Circle, both in terms of criminal associates and those that engaged in substance misuse behaviours. The below extract reports upon concerns that the Circle held around their Core Members’ associates.

*“One of the turning points for the volunteer’s downward spiral was when he was awarded a P.I.P (personal independence payment) and this increased his monthly income on benefits to approximately £1100 per month. He used this money to buy drugs and regularly had to pawn his PlayStation at the end of the month as he had spent all of his money on drugs or had it taken off him by those pretending to be his friends, but who were (and still are) just using him for what he can give them. Despite the Circles persistence, the CM refused to take on board their advice and guidance”*

**(Failures, lines 907-913)**

The Core Member failed to recognise he was being used by his old associates for that which he could provide. Whilst the Circle maintained efforts to support and advise the Core Member, he refused to accept their support and instead maintained a negative cycle of substance abuse and associating with pro-criminal associates. Whited, Wagar, Mandracchia and Morgan (2017) identified a significant relationship between time spent with pro-criminal associates and criminogenic thinking. Whilst this relationship cannot explain the direction of causation, the mere presence of a link between pro-criminal associates and criminogenic thinking should be an area of concern that differentiates Core Members of unsuccessful Circles from that of successful Circles.

The Circle perceived the Core Members decline in attendance to be the result of his negative associates, potentially inciting that the Core Member was easily led and subject to manipulation. Many individuals with sexual offence convictions lack pro-social support in the form of friendships, with many losing pro-social friends as a result of their offences (Kras, 2018). Whilst Circles provides a supportive and pro-social network to Core Members, it is up to Core Members to make the most of the support offered to them and minimise or ideally remove contact with pro-criminal associates. It appears that many Core Members of unsuccessful Circles struggled to break ties with prior pro-criminal associates and this proved to hamper Core Members’ progress. Mann et al (2010) stated that people with offence convictions tend to choose and re-engage with familiar environments which may have implications for future recidivism (Gendreau, Little & Goggin, 1996). Whilst the Core Member may have well been aware of the negative influence his old associates posed, he was also struggling with isolation. Instead of taking on board the advice of his Circle to engage in pro-

social activities, he instead opted to return to old associates. This was likely influenced by existing substance misuse issues.

Substance misuse is a particularly difficult issue for Circles to address as Core Members must possess readiness to change in order to tackle such concerns (Holt, Helfrich, Hall & Weiner, 2010). Readiness to change not only relies upon an individual's motivation and capabilities but also upon the circumstances in which the change takes place (Holt et al., 2010). The presence of negative associates may have inhibited change in some Core Members, potentially taking away from the positive presence of the Circle. Cox, Blount, Bair and Hosier (2000) explained that an individual's belief in their ability and subsequent happiness following cessation of their addiction, significantly predicted their readiness to change. In the following example, a Core Members low self-esteem may have contributed to a lack of belief in his ability to change. It also demonstrates another example of Core Members' progress being halted as a result of negative associations is presented below.

*“All the good work he did was undone by his escalating drug use. He did continue to attend meetings regularly so there must have been some connection there and we genuinely believe he was full of good intentions, but his low self-esteem meant he felt the only way he could make friends was to give people money and to take drugs with them, and ultimately this was to be the cause of the end of the Circle” (Failures; lines 875 - 880).*

Here, the Core Members' low self-esteem is argued to have influenced his decision to engage with negative associates. Such negative associates likely identified an opportunity to extort the Core Member, which the Core Member mistook for genuine friendship. Interactions with pro-criminal associates has been evidenced to link with criminogenic thinking (Whited et al., 2017). Such interactions by Core Members involved in Circles, demonstrate their difficulties in choosing pro-social connections above pro-criminal associates. Whilst Circles were able to provide pro-social support to the Core Member, he did not make use of the support to establish new pro-social connections outside of the Circle. For Circles to be successful in the long term, Core Members must build a pro-social network beyond that of their Circle.



### *Theme 6: Isolation*

The third key theme that emerged from unsuccessful Circles was that of Core Member isolation. Unsuccessful Circles were often characterised by Core Members who lacked connections outside of their Circles. In these cases, the presence of the Circle alone was not enough to keep Core Members from adverse outcomes. Some Core Members chose to self-isolate, either through avoidance of negative associations or through preference for their own company. The below extract illustrates a Core Member who preferred to spend time alone.

*“Throughout his time with Circles, CM maintained that he preferred his own company and struggled to be in social settings/family gatherings maintaining that he has always felt like an outsider. CM resisted attempts by volunteers to look at strategies designed to increase his social support network and new friendships. A ‘self-confessed isolated person’” (Failures; lines 667 - 671).*

This Core Member presented something of a dichotomy. He chose to participate in Circles yet also referred to himself as ‘self-confessed isolated person’ and chose to self-isolate whilst resisting the reintegration efforts of his Circle. It appeared that this Core Member may have been mistakenly selected for inclusion in a Circle due to his limited cooperation. However, his reasons for choosing to participate are unclear. Some individuals choose to self-isolate as a method to refrain from reoffending (Williams & Schaefer, 2020). Whilst methods such as this are framed within good intentions, the negative implications of social isolation remain (Malinen et al., 2014). Whatever the reasons for Core Member isolation, the resultant effects were predominantly negative. Core Members often appeared to struggle with their isolation, as illustrated below.

*“When CM did attend the meetings he reported that he was feeling more isolated in the community but that this was self-imposed” (Failures, lines 246-247).*

This Core Member was open with his Circle about his isolation yet explained that this was self-imposed. Many Core Members that self-isolated struggled with low self-esteem and confidence. This, added to a lack of external support, often led Core Members to make poor decisions to connect with others.

*“The CM did indicate that he was struggling with the isolation of living alone and as such had sought to make contact [with] others online. He was encouraged to consider attending local clubs for people of a similar age, however; he sought recourse to practised behaviours online, ostensibly looking for females with whom he could have sexual contact” (Failures; lines 480 - 484).*

Isolated Core Members tended to lack the same level of self-awareness of their risk as their successful counterparts. These Core Members did not appear to spend any time reflecting on their behaviours and remained in a negative cycle of poor decision making. Höing, Vogelvang and Bogaerts (2015) reported how Circles helped to improve Core Members self-reflection skills. Whilst this was evident in successful Circles, this was not the case in unsuccessful Circles. It appeared that isolated Core Members did not make gains in their social or reflexivity skills. Whilst a Circle may provide a social support structure to individuals who have none in the community, broader social networks are needed to help promote desistance (Chouhy, Cullen & Lee, 2020).

#### 8.5: Discussion

This chapter aimed to identify what contributes to success in Circles, explore why some Circles fail and others succeed and identify how effective Circles are in promoting Core Member reintegration. This chapter has provided a qualitative insight into the key factors that make up successful and unsuccessful Circles. The results indicated the importance of Core Members developing a supportive external network, working toward improving their mental wellbeing and the development of trusting relationships within Circles. Höing, Vogelvang and Bogaerts (2015) stated that successful Circles were based upon trusting and reciprocal relationships and the present research into successful Circles confirms that stance. Successful Circles shared the key components of trust, supportive relationships both within and outside of the Circle and benefitted from reduced isolation as a result. Bohmet, Duwe and Hipple (2016) explained how Circles help to reduce Core Member isolation through expressive and instrumental support. Reaffirming the importance of good working relationships built on trust.

The most successful Circles were those in which Core Members experienced support from within and outside of Circles. Within Circles, Core Members were offered the opportunity to

openly discuss their issues and risk related concerns in a non-judgemental environment. Circles in which Core Members can build strong relationships provides the right environment in which Core Members feel comfortable opening up about their risk-related thoughts. The development of trust is likely an essential step in enabling Core Members to feel comfortable discussing their risk (Lowe & Willis., 2019). Therefore, effectively combining the two core principles of no more victims and no one is disposable (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007) and the dual processes of support and accountability (Saunders & Wilson, 2003).

The non-judgmental support offered within the Circle improved Core Members' wellbeing through increases to Core Members' confidence and self-esteem. With the support of Circles, Core Members were encouraged and supported to seek new friendships. Core Members' new-found confidence and self-esteem enabled Core Members to engage in lighter social activities and seek employment opportunities. Both areas offered opportunities for Core Members to develop new friendships. Development of a positive external network appears to be essential to the success of Circles, particularly success of the Core Members' reintegration and desistance efforts upon closure of the Circle.

A positive external support network has been identified as a protective factor (de vries Robbé et al., 2015) and may act as a turning point for Core Members to develop a good life plan (Willis & Ward, 2013). Through reducing Core Members' isolation, Core Members are likely to also reduce their recidivism risk (Malinen et al., 2014). This added layer of support provided a distinct difference to that of unsuccessful Circles, who did not benefit from the presence of a positive external network or were accustomed to a negative external network.

Höing et al (2013) identified four stages in group development of Circles which they termed assessment, building, equilibrium and transfer. The assessment stage consists of members of the Circles getting to know one another on a superficial level. This includes explaining their reasons for getting involved in Circles and offence disclosure from the Core Member. The building stage is said to be when trust amongst Circles members begins to develop. Core Member acceptance by volunteers is crucial here to the ongoing openness of Core Members. Whilst trust begins in the building stage it is said to be conditional and does not become embedded until the equilibrium stage. At the equilibrium stage, a balanced exchange of trust, commitment and effort are exchanged. Formal evaluations of Circle processes and progress support group cohesion in the equilibrium stage. The final stage of successful Circles, transfer

is described as an established relationship which sometimes results in genuine friendships forming between the volunteers and Core Member (Höing et al, 2013). Results from the EOCR analysis reflect the importance of trust present throughout all stages of the revised Circles intervention model and suggest that if a Circle reaches the Equilibrium stage it is likely to be successful.

Unsuccessful Circles differed to their successful counterparts as Core Members of unsuccessful Circles did not achieve in the areas of trust, external influences and isolation. Höing et al (2013) identified instances of dysfunctional development in Circles which may help to explain instances of failure in the present research. Dysfunctional stages are characterised as being low in trust, high in exclusionary tendencies and are described as being tense (Höing et al, 2013). Difficulties between Core Members and volunteers within unsuccessful Circles share a strong likeness to Circles described to have undergone a dysfunctional stage. However, in the present research negative external influence and substance abuse was another recurrent theme that contributed toward Circle failure. Furthermore, there appeared to be a relationship between the qualitative themes identified in unsuccessful Circles.

Theme four (trust issues) and five (Negative External Influences & substance Abuse) often acted as precursors to theme six (Core Member isolation). Unsuccessful Circles experienced trust issues that presented as avoidance of risk-related discussions and tensions between Core Members and volunteers. McCartan (2016) reported how some Core Members disengaged when faced with discussions around accountability. Furthermore, Fox (2016) argued that a focus on accountability is detrimental to Circle relationships. Both tensions in Core Member relationships and a tendency toward Core Member disengagement was evidenced in the present research into unsuccessful Circles. Unsuccessful Circles appear to have undergone a dysfunctional stage (Höing et al., 2013) as they were characterised by low levels of trust. Whilst it is possible for dysfunctional stages to be overcome, unsuccessful Circles did not move past this stage and resulted in premature endings (Höing et al., 2013). Another core theme present in unsuccessful Circles was that of negative external influences and substance abuse.

Core Members' low self-esteem and low levels of trust in others often led Core Members to self-isolate or engage with negative associates. Core Member difficulties to trust in their Circle meant Core Members did not trust in suggestions provided by volunteers to socialise with

new people outside of the Circle. As a result, Core Members limited themselves and their access to opportunities to develop their emotional wellbeing. Core Members often presented as eager to make new pro-social connections through finding new activities and hobbies yet ultimately chose to self-isolate or instead remain in contact pro-criminal associates. Many Core Members of unsuccessful Circles were battling with substance misuse issues. Substance misuse issues likely aggravated Core Members' poor emotional wellbeing, resulting in a negative cycle that Core Members struggle to escape. The purpose of Circles is to reintegrate Core Members in a pro-social way. However, Core Members of unsuccessful Circles often chose to re-engage with pro-criminal associates. Mann et al. (2010) noted how people with offence convictions often choose to re-engage with familiar environments. A concerning behaviour due to the potential increase in recidivism risk (Gendreau et al., 1996) and the link between pro-criminal associates and criminogenic thinking (Whited et al., 2017). Therefore, any interaction with antisocial associates will act as a barrier to reintegration.

Kras (2018) noted how many people with sexual offence convictions lack pro-social support. Circles provide a substitute pro-social support network. However, how this is perceived by Core Members may influence how receptive they are to take on board advice. Therefore, Core Members additional needs such as substance abuse issues and low self-esteem must be addressed as a priority, to reduce the amount of time Core Members spend with individuals who harm their reintegration efforts. Furthermore, efforts to re-engage Core Members with pro-social communities would also help to support those experiencing isolation.

Whilst some Core Members chose to engage with pro-criminal associates, others chose to self-isolate to avoid contact with negative associates. It is unfortunate that these same Core Members also refused to develop pro-social community connections, seemingly as a result of low self-confidence and self-esteem. It appears that whilst these Core Members were more aware of the negative external network, due to the limited trust or the difficulties they experienced in forming relationships in the Circle, they were unwilling or potentially fearful of making new pro-social connections in the community. Isolation is recognised leading risk factor for Core Member recidivism (Malinen et al., 2014). Therefore, it should be considered an essential goal of Circles to ensure Core Members are not isolated. There were instances in unsuccessful Circles of Core Members using isolation as a method to reduce their recidivism risk (Williams & Schaefer, 2020). Whilst such methods may be filled with good intentions.

Core Members would benefit from being educated on the risks of isolation, whether isolation is self-imposed or not (Malinen et al., 2014). In all instances, Core Members must build broader pro-social support networks in the community to support their reintegration efforts (Chouhy, Cullen & Lee, 2020).

Taken together, the results demonstrate that Circles can be effective in promoting Core Member reintegration under the right circumstances. Successful Circles benefitted in numerous ways, through the development of trust, Core Members formed relationships with their volunteers and gained in confidence and self-esteem. Improvements in wellbeing aided Core Members in identifying employment opportunities and establishing pro-social relationships. Such positive outcomes also helped to reduce Core Members isolation. A smaller number of Core Members experienced difficulties in their attempt to develop trust and form relationships. These Core Members did not reduce their isolation and in some instances, resorted to substance abuse and socialised with pro-criminal associates.

#### 8.6: Limitations

This study is not without limitations. This research utilised pre-existing data, taken from a range of project regions and the data quality was variable. This is of note because some EOCR offered detailed accounts of Circle and Core Member progress, whilst others provided minimal information which was of little use to the analyses. Despite the variable quality in data, none of the originally selected EOCR were discarded from the analysis. There were two reasons for this. One was a conscious decision to not discard data with limited information in case those with limited data were predominantly failures. Another was due to time constraints which may have meant less data was used in the analyses. EOCR are routinely completed once a Circle has ended. With successful Circles lasting an average of nearly 12 months, it was necessary to utilise all available data to develop a substantial data set within the available timeframe. Another limitation can be observed in the variance between the number of successes and the number of failures captured in this study. Due to time constraints and limited availability of data on unsuccessful Circles, it would have been beneficial to have had more data on unsuccessful Circles. Particularly when considered concerning the prior point around data quality.

The decision to categorise data by successes and failures was something that may also be considered a limitation of the present study. The categorisation method was used to explore the relative successes and failures in Circles. Whilst the categorisation method was described and explained in chapter 4, it may be considered subjective and therefore, interpretation of the analyses should be considered in line with the decision matrix presented in chapter 4.

Another limitation of the present research is that Core Members were not directly involved. EOCR data is collected by Circle Coordinators with the input of volunteers. However unbiased a coordinator may intend to be in their completion of an EOCR, it should be noted that the EOCR offers one perspective only, which may differ to that of the Core Member. This may be especially important in the case of Circles deemed to have failed. Difficult relationships between Core Members and their volunteers and coordinator may put a strain on the those offering support, to the extent that the negative aspects of the Circle may be over-reported. However, similarly, successful Circles may also be subject to over-reporting of the Core Members successes, perceived by the Circle as a job well done.

Whilst the present study aimed to explore success and failure in Circles, due to the qualitative methods used, the results of this study cannot be generalised to all Circles. However, what it does offer, is an insight into some of the areas that may influence success and failure. The identification of such areas provides areas for further investigation, particularly those areas which align with prior research findings such as the importance of trusting relationships (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts., 2015), identifying further support for Core Members with substance abuse issues (Clarke et al., 2017) and the importance to reducing Core Member isolation (Malinen et al., 2014).

#### 8.7: Implications

The present study provided opportunities to learn from both success and failure in Circles. In terms of successes, it was apparent that Circles should focus on developing strong working relationships between Core Members and volunteers to enable the development of trust. Trust forms the basis of successful Circles as it provides the right environment from which Core Members can begin to consider their next reintegrative steps, such as developing pro-social connections outside of the Circle and explore employment opportunities. Successful Circles also demonstrated the importance of encouraging Core Members to develop external

support systems. Whilst many Core Members of successful Circles already had these support systems in place, others chose to actively work toward developing new connections. Volunteer support was key here in bolstering Core Members confidence and self-esteem to a level they felt comfortable in pursuing new pro-social connections. The development of external support was key in reducing Core Member isolation and provided a continued support system outside the Circle, ready for when the Circle completed. Whilst successful Circles demonstrated examples of what Circles can aim to emulate, failed Circles provided lessons in terms of areas to be aware of to avoid negative outcomes.

Many Core Members in unsuccessful Circles struggled with substance misuse issues. Whilst volunteer training differs between project areas, it would be a beneficial addition for volunteers to receive standardised training specifically relating to supporting individuals with substance misuse issues or training on substance abuse awareness. Furthermore, Circles could further support such Core Members by acting as a conduit between Core Members and specialist support services. This would help to alleviate the pressure on individuals providing support in Circles, in addition to providing the much-needed specialist support to Core Members in need.

Unsuccessful Circles were characterised by low levels of trust and many Core Members struggled with their self-esteem. Whilst it may be ambitious to assume all Circles have the potential to succeed, lessons can be taken from those that do to emulate the circumstances of Core Members in successful Circles. This begins with a supportive, non-judgemental environment.

With a proportion of failures resulting in adverse endings. Certain behaviours can be used as a red-flag indicator and usefully used to increase surveillance from professionals. Such behaviours may include Core Member self-induced isolation, ongoing contact with pro-criminal associates, substance misuse behaviours, poor decision making and poor cooperation with the Circle.

## 8.8: Conclusion

This study identified how trust, external influences and isolation contribute toward success and failure in Circles. The study further demonstrated the ability of Circles to promote Core Member reintegration by emulating the characteristics of successful Circles whilst being



aware of the factors which may influence failure in Circles. However, the relative success or failure of Circles and the subsequent chance to reintegrate differs between Core Members their capability to trust in the process and their volunteers. Furthermore, the external environment and personal circumstances of individual Core Members should not be understated. This study has suggested that Core Members should be educated about the importance of reducing their isolation and increasing their pro-social connections to support their reintegration efforts. A key finding of this study was that, whilst Circles can support Core Member reintegration, success is not determined by the efforts of the Circle alone.

## Chapter 9 Case Studies

### 9.1: Abstract

*Case studies provide the opportunity for a detailed exploration of personal experiences. This chapter presents the results of (n=3) qualitative case studies of successful and completed Circles. Case studies comprised of interviews with Core Members, volunteers and coordinators, to provide an illustration of Circles in practice from multiple perspectives of those involved within the inner Circle. The case studies present the experiences of three different Core Members who each maintained good working relationships with their volunteers, built trusting relationships and were able to work through any difficulties to continue to receive support.*

### 9.2: Introduction

Having presented a broad representation of Circles through the earlier chapters, this chapter aimed to narrow the focus down to specific Circles. The use of Case Studies provided an opportunity to explore the experiences of individuals involved in a Circle and the relationships between them. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001) argued that case study research provides numerous strengths such as the opportunity to explore the unexpected and understand the process of relationships. The authors further noted some limitations to case study research. Limitations included the risk of excessive data for analysis and the inability to generalise to a population. In the present research excessive data was not an issue as there were limited participants who volunteered. It is however noted that the results of the present case studies will not necessarily apply to other Circles. Rather, the case studies presented here were provided to offer examples of how successful Circles may look in practice, including any distinct differences that emerge between them.

Yin (1981) stated the importance of deciding the case study design before the recruitment of participants. The present study aimed to gain insight from all individuals involved within the inner Circle: Core Member, Coordinator and volunteer. This study adopted a multi-perspective approach which aimed to provide examples of successes and failures in Circles. It was hoped that these Case Studies could present an example of both successes and failures in Circles. However, due to limited participation from those in failed Circles, this chapter presents only on successful Circles.

Case studies have been used in Circle research before to explore Circles practice (Bates et al., 2012). The present study differed through the focus being on identifying specific traits and behaviours that contributed toward Circles having successful outcomes. An aim of the present research being to identify factors that contribute to success in Circles and identify how successful Circles are at promoting Core Member reintegration. It should be noted that whilst another initial aim of the present research was to identify why some Circles fail and others succeed, it was not possible to answer this question due to the limited participation of individuals involved with Circle failures.

#### 9.2a: Rationale

Case study research offered the opportunity to explore Circles in-depth. Whilst case study research cannot be used to provide a representative example of Circles, it does allow for a detailed exploration into Circle characteristics, working relationships and Circle processes. The present multi-perspective design allowed for the input of Core Members, coordinators and volunteers involved in Circles to provide their views and experiences of a specific Circle. A multi-perspective approach was chosen as it enables similarities and differences between Core Member, coordinator and volunteer perspectives to be captured. Therefore, offering the opportunity to triangulate experiences to form full case studies.

#### 9.2b: Aims and Research Questions

The study aimed to address the following research questions:

- What contributes to success in Circles?
- Why do some Circles fail, and others succeed?
- How effective is Circles in promoting Core Member reintegration?

#### 9.3: Method

This study comprised interviews with Core Members, coordinators and volunteers used in conjunction with dynamic risk, wellbeing and EOCR data in the formation of case studies. Case studies provide an opportunity to explore Circles at an individual level to explore the uniqueness of Core Members, volunteers and their relationships. The intention of conducting case studies was to identify different types of Circle endings and explore the differences between them. However, based on the available data collected, three successful Circles were selected for in-depth analysis and presented. Furthermore, this study built

upon the typology development by illustrating how successful Circle typologies may look in practice.

### 9.3a: Participants

Individuals with convictions of sexual offences are deemed to be a vulnerable population due to the stigma associated with their offence histories (Schmitt et al., 2014). Due to the sensitive nature of the research, and the aim to include Core Member participants, it was decided to approach potential participants via their relevant Circle coordinators. Circle coordinators were provided with information sheets detailing the content and purpose of the case studies (appendix 2). Coordinators were asked to share the information with the Circles they coordinated as they neared completion or after they had completed. Interested individuals were provided with contact details of the researcher to respond to, if they decided to participate or if they had any further questions about the research.

This approach was used to provide potential Core Members and volunteers the time to consider whether they would like to participate in the research without feeling pressurised into doing so. Those that did choose to participate were asked to complete a document of informed consent (appendix 3). All potential participants were made aware that participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any point during data collection and up to one month afterwards. Data were collected from eight potential case studies (see table 27).

Table 27 Case Studies with Participants and Ending Type

Case Study Number	Ending Type	Participant Category			
		Core Member	Coordinator	Volunteer 1	Volunteer 2
1	Success		✓	✓	✓
2	Success	✓	✓	✓	
3	Success		✓	✓	
4	Success		✓		
5	Success	✓	✓	✓	
6	Success			✓	
7	Failure		✓		
8	Failure		✓	✓	

This chapter presents the analysis of three selected case studies (studies 1, 2 and 5, see table 27). Within the three selected case studies, participants comprised (n=2) Core Members, (n=3) coordinators and (n=4) volunteers working within three different Circles projects in the UK. Coordinators were male (n=1) and female (n=2). Volunteers were female (n=4). Access to participants was sought via Circles UK as part of the national evaluation.

### 9.3b: Data Collection

Circle coordinators were provided with information about the purpose of the research and asked to share the details with any Circles they were presently working with and those that had recently completed. Coordinators were advised that the research aimed to explore successful and less successful Circles to gain a range of perspectives from all those involved. Coordinators were provided with information sheets suitable for volunteers and Core Members in addition to information sheets for themselves (see appendix 2). Potential participants were provided with the researcher's contact details and asked to make contact should they be interested in participating or should they have any further questions. This approach was taken to ensure potential participants did not feel pressured into taking part. This was especially important for Core Members with prior convictions who are considered to be a vulnerable population.

Interested individuals that made contact were again provided with the same information sheet along with a consent form. They were reminded that participation was voluntary and of their right to withdraw at any time. If at that point they agreed to take part, arrangements were made for a suitable time for a telephone interview. Participants were asked to complete and return their consent forms before the interview took place. Interviews were conducted via the telephone and recorded on an encrypted Dictaphone. Interviews lasted between forty minutes to one hour. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and audio recordings were deleted on completion of transcription. Pseudonyms were used for all participants in addition to any persons that participants mentioned within the interviews. Location names were also removed during transcription. Interviews were completed with participants from eight Circles, each of which had the potential to form case studies. Table 27 shows all interviews completed for the potential case studies. As detailed in table 27, there were difficulties in participant recruitment meaning only two Circles benefitted from input from the three different categories of participant. Rather than attempt to form case studies on a limited amount of data, the decision was taken to progress with thematic analysis for case studies with three Circles. The Circles selected were case studies 1, 2 and 5. Each of these case studies benefitted from completed interviews with three people. Studies 2 and 5 included a Core Member, Coordinator and volunteer and so formed a full case study as intended. Additionally, study 1 contained data from a coordinator and two volunteers. Table 28 details demographic data and offence histories of Core Members reported in the case studies.

Table 28 Selected Case Studies with Core Member Demographic data and offence histories

Case Study	1	2	5
Gender	Male	Female (Trans)	Male
Core Member Age	28	57	48
Sexuality	Gay	Unspecified	Heterosexual
Ethnicity & Nationality	White British	White Other	White British
MAPPA Level Start of Circle	1	2	1
MAPPA Level End of Circle	1	2	1
Index Offence	Breach of SOPO.	Indecent assault of a child. Engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a child.	Inciting a child to engage in sexual activity.
Previous Offence/s	Internet offence. Possession of child sexual abuse images.	Rape, burglary, actual bodily harm, indecent exposure.	Distribution of indecent images, failure to comply.

#### 9.4: Analysis

Data were analysed using thematic analysis. A thematic approach was deemed appropriate due to interview design. Interviews were designed to be relatively short, providing a snapshot of multiple perspectives which would later be brought together to form full case studies. Gathering multiple perspectives to form the case study analyses enabled the perspectives of different individuals and different roles to be considered in relation to one another. This was deemed of particular importance to allow Core Members the opportunity to discuss their own experience of being involved with a Circle, whilst also accounting for the perspectives of those that offered support.

The use of thematic analysis was deemed suitable because it did not require the length and breadth of discussion that other methods would require. Data were analysed using inductive, latent thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2008). An inductive approach was taken, as the topic of failure within Circles was an unexplored area of research. To recap, chapter 4 proposed definitions of success and failure within the context of Circles and chapter 5 explored important factors that lead to success or failure. Success and failure within Circles remain a relatively new concept which warrants further exploration. Therefore, the decision was taken not to attempt to fit emergent themes within the newly proposed framework. In conducting

the research, the intent was to both identify and understand, factors contributing to success and failure in Circles. For this reason, a latent approach was deemed fit for purpose. The analysis followed the six phases of thematic analysis guidelines set out by Braun and Clarke (2008). A multi-perspective approach was also deemed suitable because the research sought information from a range of perspectives. All three selected Circles were categorised as reintegrated within their respective EOCR. All three were also categorised as success using the decision matrix outlined in chapter 4.

## 9.5: Results

From the data gathered, three case studies were selected for in-depth analysis. Study one offered an example of a Circle which lasted the course and completed successfully. Study two also lasted the course and was unique because the Core Member in this Circle was transgender. Study five was a shorter Circle that ended earlier than the usual minimum of twelve months. Each Case study is presented individually.

### 9.5a: Case Study one: Martin

Martin was a gay, white British male, aged 28. His Circle lasted 17 months and he attended 52 Circle meetings in this time. Martin joined his Circle several months after leaving custody. His index offence was a breach of SOPO and he held prior convictions of possession and creation of indecent images of children. Martin did not participate in this case study. Participants in this case study consisted of the coordinator and two volunteers. Three main themes emerged from the analysis of Martins case study. The themes were Managing Challenges, Identity Conflict and Commitment to Change.

#### *Theme 1: Managing Challenges*

Several goals were set at the beginning of the Circle including the aim of Martin obtaining employment and identify potential hobbies and interests. However, during the first six months, Martin was reluctant to engage with any of the suggestions provided by the volunteers.

#### **John, Coordinator (lines 2-6)**

*“Yeah uh it went for about eighteen months it was a really long one and uh quite well certainly for the first six months the Core Member was really uh kind of reluctant to take on any advice or suggestions from uh the volunteers. I think uh the reason for this*



*was he had crushingly low self-esteem and he could just never see a way around his problems so in life he would rather not, not try and fail because then he would feel better about himself if he didn't try..."*

It was apparent that Martin suffered from low self-esteem and subsequent fear of failure. John believed Martins' anxieties were further moderated by issues of self-acceptance. It would seem that because Martin was unable to accept himself, he could not understand or believe how anyone else would accept him. Rather than put himself out there and try to find work or integrate with new people, he chose to avoid such interactions, knowing that he could not be rejected if he did not try. Whilst Martins' volunteers consistently worked to support him, they found it difficult. Martins' low mood was detrimental to members of his Circle who felt that no amount of effort on their behalf was good enough as Martin would place barriers at every opportunity provided to him.

**Amy, Volunteer (lines 39-43)**

*"Uh quite draining, this one was quite draining um he felt like the whole world was against him, MOSOVO was out to get him and it was all because he was gay and a Christian um so every week it was, he was very oh you know, I've got no life I've got no this it was constantly picking him up so yeah it was quite draining he would find a brick wall for absolutely everything we would suggest".*

Amy concurred with Johns appraisal of Martin and perceived that Martin experienced low self-esteem and needed constant bolstering. It may be that due to Martins' feelings of low self-worth, he placed barriers around himself as a form of protection. Pinel, Long, Murdoch and Helm (2017) demonstrated existential isolation as being a distinct sub-set of generalised isolation. Existential isolation refers to the isolation that occurs when one feels their life experiences are distinctly different from others and therefore cannot relate to others, or feel that others cannot relate to them (Pinel et al., 2017). Martins focus upon his sexuality and religion may indicate he was experiencing existential isolation. Alternatively, Martin may have focussed upon the difficulties in his life as a way to gain sympathy from the Circle. Volunteers were empathetic and understanding towards Martin when he struggled with his needs. The importance of a positive group climate is advocated in the Circles intervention model (Höing et al., 2013). At the same time, the Circle remained resilient in managing Martins low moods

and supported each other through difficult times. Research into volunteer experiences of Circle training has reported that volunteers are aware of the need to remain resilient (McCartan, 2016). When asked about any significant challenges faced during the Circle, Martins low mood was a key topic.

**Amy, Volunteer (lines 123-130)**

*“Just the neediness of him was very draining, that was all that was a challenge. You know he was quite, he was down all the time and very very down and was constantly picking him up but other than that no. I half expect that anyway, from a Circle to be honest. Because society does obviously doesn’t accept them as uh and so we expect them to be feeling down because they do hit a lot of brick walls including housing, that kind of stuff so we do understand that we’re going to have to be picking them up but he was very down on his religion and stuff and I think, like I say trying to deter us away from why we were there because the challenge was to get him back to the focus of why we was there but other than that no, no”.*

Whilst Amy recognised the genuine difficulties Martin faced in society, it appears she also experienced frustration in the way Martin used his issues to avoid making progress during the Circle. Whilst Martins’ low mood was an ongoing challenge, the compassion and resilience of volunteers helped them to maintain their commitment to the Circle in the most difficult times. Höing et al. (2014) drew on the stress shields model of resilience (Paton et al, 2008) to explain how volunteers remain resilient during Circle difficulties. The model notes the importance of a supportive professional environment, something which the volunteers in this Circle were afforded through their coordinator John. As the Circle coordinator, John was not immune to the difficulties the Circle faced. As he often stepped in to act as a fourth volunteer he faced many of the same challenges as the regular volunteers.

**John, Coordinator (lines 129-138)**

*‘ah the biggest challenge for me and I think for the volunteers was just staying the course when the Core Member comes week after week after week and no progress seems to have been made and he’s giving you the same old schpeel about no-one will give me a chance and I don’t want to work, what’s the point, I wish I were dead, blah blah it’s like, it gets weary, it wears you down you know and the temptation to*

*say oh for god's sake man strap on a pair and just you know sort yourself out, and it's really hard but you can't do that so you have to then just be very consistent and very patient and very kind of proactive in getting him to see that you are there for long haul, you're not going to get bored with it, you're not going to get fed up. I think maintaining that enthusiasm for the Circle after months and months and months of him being quite down on himself and down on his future that, that was the hard bit'.*

The above extract from John, reflects Amys' opinion of Martin and the way that he repeatedly discussed the same topics and did not appear to make any progress. Whilst supporting Martin in the Circle, John discussed how he and the volunteers had to manage both their frustrations in addition to that of Martin's. John was reflective of the importance of consistency and patience in managing Martins' low moods. Consistency in support and availability has been identified as an important volunteer trait by Core Members (Gilliam et al, 2020). The Circle remained committed to the process and their Core Member no matter how difficult it became or how long it took. John utilised his experience of previous Circles to maintain patience and understanding, acting as a role model for his volunteers and offering encouragement when times were difficult. When asked about how he dealt with the difficulties presented by Martin, John reported how he focussed his efforts upon encouraging his volunteers.

**John, Coordinator (lines 140-146)**

*"Uh I managed it by constantly telling the volunteers how good they were and how great they were and telling them this is quite normal and this is why Circles last a year because Core Members need time and it might take months and months and months before it sinks in and uh and that you're not doing anything wrong and just keep going it just like I say I have quite a lot of contact with the volunteers and I think positive feedback is really important just that so they know they're doing a good job and they don't get disheartened with it so there was a lot of that from me to them".*

John recognised the difficulties the volunteers faced and was aware of the negative impact the Circle could have upon his volunteer's wellbeing and commitment. It seems John found strength himself through helping his volunteers to manage. In reaffirming the good work being done by the volunteers he may also have reminded himself of the efforts being made by the Circle as a whole. It would appear that Johns' resilience helped to sustain the Circle

and maintain his volunteer's commitment to the process. The support and encouragement provided to the volunteers by John will have also helped to bolster volunteer's resilience in managing Martin (Paton et al, 2008).

### *Theme 2: Identity Conflict*

Much of Martins' angst stemmed from difficulties with his self-acceptance. Martin identified as a Christian but was also gay and as a result, he experienced conflict in being unable to reconcile these two aspects of himself. In the first few months, Circle discussions focussed around Martins' religion and sexuality as he tried to reconcile what he saw to be two incompatible parts of himself.

#### **John, Coordinator (lines 7-12)**

*"...the big part of this Circle which makes it so interesting from my point of view was the fact he was raised as a really kind of right-wing Christian but he was gay so he had this, this conflict between his sexuality and his religion and he was in a relationship but he didn't want to be in a relationship but he did but he didn't want to have sex in the relationship but then you know, human, human nature, so of course, so he didn't really know what to do about that and we kind of struggled with it..."*

John discussed how Martin struggled with his identity, self-acceptance and uncertainty over who he was. Identity conflict is common amongst those who identify as both religious and gay (Barnes & Meyer, 2012; Hamblin & Gross, 2013). Whilst Circles work to support Core Members in several areas, this was a unique scenario in which the Circle felt less-equipped to advise. The Circle held goals around Martins future employment and reintegration whilst Martin instead often drew the Circle into discussions surrounding his identity conflict. Martins' preoccupation with his identity crisis prevented the Circle from making any meaningful progress. The introduction of a new volunteer at a later date may have helped Martin to reconcile the two aspects of his identity. As a former vicar, Sandra offered different interpretations of the bible which helped to challenge the conflict Martin experienced. Here Amy talks about how Sandra helped Martin to reconsider his incongruent beliefs about his religion and sexuality.

**Amy, Volunteer (lines 67-73)**

*“Um really well like I say the first um three left due to finishing University, they left and then John found an amazing volunteer who was actually an ex-minister so we could challenge the religion issue and she was able to answer his questions very very quickly because obviously her background when we was left like oh maybe the bible means this and she was able to give a real interpretation of it so the new volunteer came on oh she was amazing, she challenged him miraculously she was really really good she had every answer for him so that I think that’s what helped turn around the whole religion talk”.*

Amy felt that Sandra’s background and experience helped Martin to reconcile the two aspects of his identity. Amy felt Sandra was a beneficial addition to the Circle as she was able to use her expertise in the area to challenge Martin’s beliefs. However, Sandra did not share the view that Martin reconciled concerns surrounding his religion and sexuality. Instead, she felt that Martin’s consistent discussion surrounding his religion and sexuality was used as a diversion to avoid discussions around his risk and other difficult topics. The avoidance of difficult topics of conversation is common amongst Core Members (McCartan, 2016) and it has been argued that discussions that focus upon risk are not beneficial to Core Member reintegration (Fox, 2016)

**Sandra, Volunteer (lines 83-86)**

*“...I think actually he was using the theological discussions as a smokescreen um and my coming in actually stopped him doing that and so we were then able to get on to the more real issues that were around”.*

Whilst Amy viewed the addition of Sandra to the Circle to have a positive influence on Martin’s engagement by challenging his views on religion and sexuality. Sandra differed as she perceived that Martin used such topics of discussion as an avoidance tactic. Whilst this may be true, it is less important than his reason for doing so. If Martin were using theological discussion as a way of avoiding difficult topics it could have been a way for him to affirm his own identity as a gay Christian man whilst simultaneously avoiding uncomfortable topics of conversation associated with his historical offences. The way Martin attempted to cling to discussions around his identity could be a positive indication of Martin attempting to

reconcile two aspects of himself which he deemed to be more important to his identity than that of his offence history. Whilst the Circle recognised the importance of Martin acknowledging his potential risk, Martin may have focussed upon the more positive aspects of his identity as a way of self-preservation. In doing so, Martin may have been subconsciously bolstered his self-esteem. Kewley, Larkin, Harkins and Beech (2017) explored the identity transitions in individuals with prior convictions of sexual offences as they moved away from identifying as an offender and instead took on more positive religious identities. Amy discussed how she believed Martin was self-aware about his risks and was reflective on his offence history.

**Amy, Volunteer (lines 112-117)**

*“Um, yeah we did talk a lot about accountability with him because he, he felt quite hard done to um he, he he would talk often about regretting what he’d done and it was going to follow him for the rest of his life and stuff like that so we was able to talk about his risks and he did open up to me um one day about his sexuality and how he thinks he’s found a way to manage his risks himself with the men that he chooses to date. So yeah, he was accountable for what he did and he knew he had risks”.*

Amy’s view of Martin is in stark contrast to that of Sandra. The difference in views may stem from the individual relationships each volunteer held with Martin. However, it is of note that Martina and Sandra held shared knowledge around their religious interests, yet Sandra was less believing of Martins reported concerns around this religion and identity. Amy reported how Martin opened up to her about his sexuality and his risks. It would seem that Martin believed the two to be connected in some way. If so, by understanding his sexuality, Martin may have been simultaneously addressing his risks. Circles have been evidenced to influence Core Members’ self-reflection as part of a transition toward desistance (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). Martin’s open discussion about his risks and self-management may evidence the development of his reflective skills. Shortly after Sandra joined the Circle, Martin moved away from theological discussions. However, Sandra noted how in her absence Martin would return to the topic.

**Sandra, Volunteer (lines 55-59)**

*“Uh, uh it was actually quite fascinating because his desire, his desire to get into um uh a theological discussion disappeared (laughing) not long after I’d joined him. Um quite clearly um because he you know I would suggest things to him and um you know I’d suggest different interpretations of biblical passages, I would refer him to others um and he didn’t he, he actually wasn’t terribly interested in engaging in that...”*

**Sandra, Volunteer (lines 65-67)**

*“...on the odd occasions I haven’t been there it’s been quite interesting that he’s often come back (laughs) to um to theological discussion but he never comes back he never comes up with it never raises it now when I’m there”.*

Whilst Sandra believed this to be due to Martins preference to be the most knowledgeable on a topic of conversation, there may have been another reason for Martins behaviour. Whilst the other members of the Circle offered Martin with consistent support for his struggles with his identity, Sandra offered a unique and experienced account of Christianity. Martin was experiencing difficulties in self-acceptance due to what he deemed to be two incongruent aspects of himself. Individuals raised in conservative religious homes are more likely to develop internalised homophobia (Barnes & Meyer, 2012) and are more prone to identity conflict (Hamblin & Gross, 2013). Whilst the volunteers provided him with empathetic support, Sandra provided a unique take on Christianity and acceptance of Martins sexuality. Having spent many years growing up in a religious home, that held different beliefs over what is acceptable, the sudden and complete acceptance of these two important aspects of Martins life, from someone of such standing in the church is likely to have had a significant impact on Martin. Although Martin chose to avoid such topics of conversation in Sandra’s presence, he did return to such topics in her absence. Martin may have needed time to come to terms with the idea that he could be both Christian and gay, without the continual reinforcement of approval. Furthermore, Martins Jehovah witness background differed to that of Sandra’s liberal Christian background. Whilst it is likely that Martin took on board Sandra’s thoughts and interpretations of biblical passages, their differing beliefs may have been something he found difficult to come to terms with as religion has been found to negatively impact gay identity (Stern & Wright, 2018). As a result, he may have felt more comfortable and

potentially less intimidated, discussing his thoughts and feelings on the topic with other volunteers who were less experienced in the area.

*Theme 3: Commitment to Change*

Although the Sandra felt that Martin used religion and sexuality to avoid addressing the purpose of the Circle and the whole Circle found Martins' low mood to be difficult to manage, Martins consistent attendance was deemed testament to his commitment to change.

**John, Coordinator (lines 148-153)**

*"...Martin was a you know he's a nice guy he sort of he has issues but at least he would talk to us about them and even if he didn't appear to make any progress he'd still come to every meeting, he'd still talk to us even if you came and went over the same thing time and time and time again I always thought well at least he's here, he's talking and it's giving us another chance to kind of turn his view around and get him to see where he needs to be..."*

As a voluntary service, Core Members enter into a Circle voluntarily and are free to leave at any time. John perceived the fact that Martin consistently attended meetings as a positive indication of his commitment to the Circle. Even though on the outside, he didn't appear to be making any progress, John recognised that Martins attendance indicated his willingness to listen and his efforts to progress. Lowe and Willis (2019) reported the benefits of volunteer consistency and support toward Core Members. It appeared this Circles support was worthwhile. After many months of consistent support and encouragement, the Circle advised Martin that the Circle would eventually wind down. This came as a turning point as according to John, Martin began to realise that if changes were to be made, it would be up to him to implement them.

**John, Coordinator (lines 35-38)**

*"...ultimately I think we had to tell him you know it's up to you I can remember one central view but basically just said you either listen to our advice or you don't we can't make you do anything, it, it's up to you, you have to do this yourself, we will support you through it but you have to do this"*.



After months of support and encouragement, Martin was reminded that the Circle would ultimately come to an end. John explained that this triggered a change in attitude in Martin. It was at this time, that the Circle came to find their efforts had been worthwhile as Martin came to realise that any decision to implement such changes remained solely with him. The consistent positive reinforcement likely built up Martins self-esteem and confidence which allowed him to realise he could achieve if he put his mind to it. Research into the effects of Circles upon Core Member wellbeing has demonstrated improvements inclusive of self-esteem and confidence (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). John explained that, towards the end of the Circle, Martin was able to prove to himself and the Circle that he was capable of moving on positively.

**John, Coordinator (lines 18-29)**

*“...ever since then he’s kind of changed his whole attitude because he knows the Circle is ending I don’t know whether he’s, he’s just grown-up or he’s just thinking you know I need to do this myself so he finally started looking for work uh he moved back in with his mum and dad, he bought a car and the day after the Circle ended he actually started full-time work at a warehouse uh which is really good I mean six months before that he was saying well the only place I ever want to work is a music shop and it has to specifically that or else he was very kind of dismissive about kind of warehouse work and that’s where he works now so ultimately I think it was very successful he wasn’t easy but, but we really enjoyed working with him”.*

John was unable to pinpoint the exact cause of Martins change in attitude. Despite the difficulties in managing Martins moods, John stated how they ‘*really enjoyed working with him*’. Evidently, the gains of supporting Martin, outweighed the drains upon the Circle members (Höing et al., 2014). The change in Martins’ attitude and behaviour appears to have been born from an accumulation of factors. The consistency of support and encouragement, the acceptance of Martin, inclusive of his sexuality and religion and the supportive development of Martins’ independence. Martins change in attitude and behaviour came following a discussion in which he was advised by his Circle that any changes in his life were his alone to make. Having been brought up with a religion that was not accepting of his sexuality, Martin lacked the power to control certain aspects of his life. Upon joining the Circle, he was encouraged to make positive changes through his efforts and by his own

choices. It has been argued that desistance is an active choice made by an individual (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). The positive reinforcement and acceptance of the Circle appears to have contributed to this. John expressed his belief that the success of this Circle was down to the care and commitment of his volunteers.

**John, Coordinator (lines 221-226)**

*“...I think it was just a really nice example of a, of a successful Circle and that is, that is all down to the quality of the volunteers at the end of the day uh Core Member you know is as the Core Member does, you get what you get but unless you have committed volunteers who really care then the whole thing is just pointless and we had that with this Circle I think you could really tell I think quality of volunteers equals quality of Circle, to me”.*

Here, John affirms his belief that the success of Circles is reliant upon the commitment and genuine care of the volunteers. There is a sense that whilst Core Members may be selected based on their apparent suitability for a Circle, it cannot always be ascertained that they are the most suited. Whereas, the suitability of selected volunteers is essential if a Circle is to have a chance at success. Certainly, with this Circle, Martin initially did not appear to be motivated to succeed, yet the consistency, commitment and reliance of the volunteers yielded positive results that led to a successful conclusion.

John and Amy agreed that from the beginning of this Circle, Martin struggled to manage the two aspects of his gay and religious identity. However, Sandra, differed as she perceived that Martin used his identity as an excuse to avoid addressing his goals. Both the coordinator and volunteers struggled to support him through his low moods and low self-esteem yet persisted throughout the duration of the Circle. Amy believed the Circle was further bolstered by the addition of a Sandra as a new volunteer part way through the Circle. Amy believed Sandra was able to offer a fresh perspective, having worked in a religious environment. Despite disagreements around the reasons for Martins consistent attempts to focus discussions around his religion and sexuality, over time, the consistency and support, combined with the positive affirmations of the Circle worked together to encourage Martin to achieve his goals. It is an unfortunate limitation of this case study, that Martin was not involved to share his own views. It should be noted that Martin was invited to participate but chose not to.

### 9.5b: Case Study Two: Elaine

Elaine was a white transgender female, aged 57. Her nationality and sexuality were unspecified. Her Circle lasted 18 months and she attended 38 Circle meetings in this time. Elaine joined her Circle shortly after leaving custody. Her index offences included multiple counts of indecent assault on a child and engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a child. The participants in this case study comprised Elaine, her coordinator and one of her volunteers. Three main themes emerged from the analysis of Elaine's case study. The themes were Managing Challenging behaviour, Establishing Boundaries and Core Member Empowerment.

#### *Theme 1: Managing Challenging Behaviour*

Upon commencing the Circle, Elaine spoke openly about her personal life. The Circle became concerned about her chaotic behaviour and attempted to encourage her to slow down. The Circle held concerns about Elaine's turbulent lifestyle choices and felt she continually placed herself in potentially risky situations. However, from Elaine's perspective, she was simply making up for lost time.

#### **Elaine, Core Member (lines 50-53)**

*"I've got all this freedom and I just sort of wanted to pack as much in as, as possible so actually, in the beginning, it was more sort of calm me down then say look you know you just sort of slow down and take it take take take time in what you're actually doing and that's what I didn't like when people tell me to slow down".*

After a long period in prison, Elaine wanted to make the most of her freedom. There was a sense that she had much lost time to make up for and did not want to slow down. Elaine was overwhelmed with her new-found freedom and didn't like being advised to take her time, instead she got involved with numerous activities and overworked herself. Employment is noted as a protective factor that supports desistance (de Vries Robbé et al., 2015). However, in this case, the Circle was concerned for Elaine and thought she was taking too much on which might negatively impact her wellbeing. At the same time, upon release from prison, Elaine was able to establish herself as a woman. In forming her new identity, she began to explore what that meant to her through promiscuous activities.

**Hannah, Coordinator (lines 47-49)**

*“...putting herself in quite risky positions given her given her convictions uh and then also um engaging in quite uh sexually um risky behaviour so going to sex clubs and um you know she was talking about having sex with random people...”*

Hannah viewed Elaine's behaviour differently. Whilst Elaine explained her busy lifestyle as a way of making up for lost time, Hannah was concerned that Elaine's behaviour meant she was putting herself at risk. Hannah was particularly concerned with Elaine's behaviour concerning her past offences. Elaine had a tendency towards promiscuous activities but also demonstrated some extremely extraverted behaviours and she overtly drew attention to her offence history. The Circle felt Elaine's behaviour was the result of attention-seeking. On release from prison, Elaine was able to fully adopt her new identity and openly live as a woman. Something which she was previously unable to do. The combination of freedom from prison and new identity formation may have led Elaine to attention-seeking behaviour as she asserted herself as a woman in society and wished to be recognised as such. In addition to this, there were concerns that Elaine's behaviour was detrimental to her reintegration as she chose to entertain the Circle rather than address issues.

**Alison, Volunteer (lines 29-31)**

*“...she is very um entertaining she loves being the centre of attention and so she says things to shock and amuse um and horrify us rather than be open with us she chose to entertain us a lot of the time”*

Alison reported how she felt Elaine was more interested in entertaining her Circle than openly discussing her life. Elaine was described as having an extraverted personality before her involvement with the Circle. Alison felt Elaine behaved in this way for attention and in doing so avoided open and honest discussion with the Circle. This formed an additional challenge to the Circle which required an adaptable approach to overcome. Over time, the Circle came to realise that the truthfulness of Elaine's discussions was not as important as the reason for her raising such topics.

**Hannah, Coordinator (lines 299-301)**

*“...she was so dramatic at various points that they were kind of like can anyone’s life be this dramatic can all of this be true or is she just trying to shock us...”*

**Hannah, Coordinator (lines 313-315)**

*“I don’t think at any point they one hundred per cent trusted her but I think they kind of um they’ve amended their view of what they can expect from her and in doing that it allowed them to trust the process a bit more”.*

Here, Hannah reflects Alison’s sentiment that Elaine presented herself in a dramatic light and enjoyed trying to shock her Circle by sharing information or telling them stories about her activities. Hannah described how the volunteers felt Elaine placed herself upon a stage from which to entertain. The volunteers often discussed the truthfulness of Elaine's claims in debrief after meetings. Whilst the Circle did not buy-in to all Elaine told them, they came to realise that whilst they did not trust in all she told them, the facts were not as important as her behaviour and the underlying reasons for her dramatic presentation. The Circle was not dissuaded from Elaine’s behaviour and instead used her behaviour as an opportunity to address their concerns openly. This adaptive approach proved to be beneficial. The Circle took an empathetic approach to try and understand the underlying cause leading Elaine to behave in this way. In doing so, Elaine came to recognise that the Circle was there for her despite her difficulties. The Circle demonstrated resilience and commitment to Elaine throughout.

*Theme 2: Establishing Boundaries*

The Circle spent a considerable amount of time establishing boundaries with Elaine in terms of topics of discussion and information sharing. Elaine often attempted to dominate meetings with discussions of legal matters which could not be resolved in the Circle, using such discussions as an avoidance tactic to misdirect the Circle from more important issues. Additionally, she attempted to use the inner and outer layers of her Circle for different purposes, assuming information would be shared on her behalf between the agencies. Her approach to splitting the two layers of the Circle was perceived by the Circle, to be an attempt to push boundaries. However, again Elaine’s view of her behaviour differed to those supporting her.

**Elaine, Core Member (lines 149-156)**

*“...it was getting to kind of the legalities and innocence and guilt and um the rules and the regulations and my kind of anger um my anger came out a little bit of spending too much time with spending so much time for something I never did and that kind of I think that kind of went a little bit um I kind of well the six week I’d discussed it with the group and got told, it got explained a lot better (inaudible) um I kind of had to live with it because there’s not a lot that can be done to fix the problem so I kind of went back to the group and they accepted there were no legalities and no um so really certain subjects we couldn’t talk about...”*

Elaine tried to use the Circle to vent her frustrations about being imprisoned for offences which she denied guilt. Elaine may have been seeking approval from the Circle for her self-proclaimed innocence. Using denial as a form of self-preservation (Blagden et al, 2011). However, the Circle recognised that whilst discussions were centred around legalities, they were unable to make progress with Elaine in the present. The Circle raised this issue with Elaine openly, acknowledging her concerns whilst explaining that such topics of discussion were not conducive to Elaine’s future. Whilst she was not entirely happy to step away from the topic, Elaine took on board the advice and agreed to focus on other areas of her life in which she could make positive progress. Elaine explained how she often directed topics of conversation away from that which she did not wish to discuss.

**Elaine, Core Member (lines 101-106)**

*“...they kind of worked out pretty quick that I could actually talk (inaudible) about, and misdirect when I don’t want to talk about a certain subject and didn’t want to say I didn’t want to say I don’t want to talk about it I would just misdirect them, and then we’d go off on a tangent and I was quite good at taking a tangent and they got quite, they got quite good at stopping them...”*

Here, Elaine explains how she would misdirect the Circle to avoid certain topics. The avoidance of certain topics could be viewed as a self-preservation tactic, similar to how Elaine denied her offences. Avoidance of difficult topics is a common occurrence in Circles as Core Members prefer to engage in discussions that encompass support rather than accountability

(McCartan, 2016; Fox, 2016). Another difficulty the Circle faced surrounded how Elaine used her inner and outer Circle for different purposes.

#### **Hannah, Coordinator (lines 256-261)**

*“...she would come and tell everything to the Circle and not tell anything to her probation officer and probation were getting quite frustrated with this because there was really important stuff that she had never mentioned to probation even though she was seeing them weekly so all the stuff about sexual promiscuity and stuff she’d never mentioned it so I was sharing all this stuff and they honestly thought I was talking about the wrong person because they were like I have not heard anything about this...”*

Hannah explained how Elaine tended to use the Circle and her probation officer for different purposes. Hannah viewed Elaine’s approach as an attempt to push boundaries to see if the information is shared. However, from Elaine's perspective, she took a logical approach to make the most of the support offered to her. The importance of information sharing between the inner and outer Circles is critical here. Information sharing is a key component of the three key principles (Saunders & Wilson, 2003). Good communication and boundary-setting are important facets of effective Circles (Lowe & Willis, 2018). The Circle addressed this issue with Elaine directly which allowed Elaine the time to reflect upon her behaviour.

#### **Elaine, Core Member (lines 169-175)**

*“...I was kind of bit naïve in thinking that the group wouldn’t talk to my probation officer but I wasn’t doing this kind of um on purpose it just worked out naturally that I would discuss things I knew only my probation officer could fix or sort of resolve and then when I got to the group there was social issues that I needed to deal with so I was dealing with the social issues with the group but then when my probation officer got to hearing the group telling her things that I wasn’t telling her things got a bit um things got a bit weird”.*

Elaine reflected on her naivety and affirms that she thought she was making the most of the time she had with both probation and her Circle. A clear difference of opinion is evident in the way which Hannah and Elaine viewed Elaine’s behaviour. Whilst this clash of views could have proved to divide the Circle, the Circle took an open and honest approach with Elaine to

try and move past the difficulties. Such an approach appeared to be successful as the Circle empowered Elaine to make autonomous decisions about her future in the Circle.

### *Theme 3: Core Member Empowerment*

Elaine was encouraged to explore what it was she hoped to achieve through participation in the Circle. In an attempt to regain some form of control the Circle decided to take a short break to allow Elaine to re-evaluate her place in the Circle. The break was beneficial in Elaine identifying the benefit in her participation in Circles and marked a turning point in which she began to take on board advice from the Circle in reducing her chaotic behaviour outside the Circle.

### **Hannah, Coordinator (lines 117-125)**

*“...I think we took six or seven weeks off of the Circle to give the volunteers a break too because they were quite frustrated I think they needed some downtime but also for the Core Member to reflect on what she wanted from the Circle if she was missing anything from the Circle um and also to come back to put the ball in her court that if she was willing to kind of if she wanted to carry on what she wanted to do based on the feedback she was given so is there anything that she can do differently to keep things going and we thought that she would just walk away but she came back and said I’ve really thought about this and I really feel like I wanna do things differently uh and she has been since it’s been less kind of overtaking the meetings with big dramas...”*

Hannah explained how the decision was made to take a break from the Circle to allow everyone some space and allow Elaine the time to decide what she wanted to do going forward. The break empowered Elaine by allowing her to decide if she wanted to remain in the Circle and how she wanted to move forward. Hannah stated how the Circle was surprised that Elaine chose to remain in the Circle and noticed the positive change in her attitude and behaviour since the break. The change in behaviour may have come about as a result of the feedback Elaine received from the Circle and the realisation that the Circle accepted her as she was. Elaine may have realised that she had nothing to prove to the Circle and so no reason to try to shock and dazzle.



### **Elaine, Core Member (lines 122-127)**

*“...we had a six week, a six-week break uhh that six week took an awful long time to go um and it was like it was good because in that six weeks I had to rely on me and not have that (inaudible) so I had to rely and remember on what I’d learnt from them and it kind of like that six weeks was the time I thought well crumbs I actually have learnt quite a bit and changed quite a lot from the time of getting out of prison to that six-week gap”.*

Elaine described how her break from the Circle allowed her to test out the skills she had developed whilst being involved with Circle. The break provided her with a preview of what her life would be like when the Circle came to an end. During this break, Elaine reflected upon how much she had already changed since leaving prison and how far she had come with the help from the Circle. The break allowed Elaine the chance to evaluate herself as a person and how far she had come since leaving prison. With the support of her Circle, Elaine came to terms with who she was and was supported to settle into the community. Elaine developed trust in the Circle and their intention to help and began to make positive changes to her lifestyle as a result. Bohmet, Duwe and Hipple (2016) reported how many Core Members take time to develop trust in Circles but eventually come to appreciate the support they receive. The Circle managed to work through their differences and difficulties and by providing Elaine with the autonomy to decide her future in the Circle, the Circle continued and became stronger as a result.

#### 9.5c: Case Study Three: Ryan

Ryan was a heterosexual, white British male, aged 48. His Circle lasted 3 months and he attended 12 meetings in this time. Ryan joined his Circle shortly after release from prison. His index offences were grooming and incitement of sexual activity with a child. Participants in this case study comprised Ryan, his coordinator and one of his volunteers. Two main themes emerged from the analysis of Ryans’ case study. The themes were Finding Faith and giving back and Self-Awareness of Risk.

##### *Theme 1: Finding Faith and Giving back*

Ryan spoke about how he came to find his faith whilst in prison. He continued to seek involvement in church groups upon release found support through them upon his open disclosure of his offence history. Ryan made positive attempts to reintegrate and progress

with his life and whilst Ryan was very self-aware of his risk factors, he also made a distinction between his past and his future. He reflected upon the harm he had done and identified a way in which he could 'give back' following the harm he had caused. He recognised that giving back could not undo the harm but felt he could go some way in doing good. He also linked giving back with his Christian faith.

**Ryan, Core Member (lines 89-91)**

*"...I came to faith in, in custody and I've, I've started eh getting involved in a few church groups so I'm making me own social connections now erm whereas they were there for me when I had nothing..."*

Ryan explained how he became interested in religion whilst in prison and got involved with church groups upon release. He notes how he has been making his social connections but how Circles helped him initially when he didn't have any connections in place. Ryan's description of Circles describes how his Circle filled the gap between leaving prison with no support network and finding his social support through his church groups. Without the Circle, Ryan may have felt more isolated from the community as he tried to reintegrate. Stansfield, O'Connor, Duncan and Hall (2019) recommended that people with sexual offence convictions and limited support networks could gain much from religious communities that actively seek the best in all people. Laura described how Ryan has developed friendships from his involvement in the church.

**Laura, Coordinator (lines 244-248)**

*"...he's made up like a Circle of friends from the church and he's disclosed his offences to, there was like erm some kind of meeting where he disclosed his offences and he said other people came up and, and hugged him and said you know thanks for being so honest with us you know we'll just be here to help and support you so yeah I think he has got what he wanted out of it".*

Ryan, like many people with a history of sexual offences, suffered from low self-esteem (Marshall, Marshall, Serran & O'Brien, 2009). He held concerns over how people would view him due to his offence history. Making connections within the church and being able to openly

disclose his offences without being judged has been beneficial to Ryans' mental wellbeing. This is something which was further continued with his Circle. Being supported by volunteers that accepted Ryans' historical offences but did not judge his future potential, encouraged Ryan that there would be others out there who would also support and accept him. Ryan framed his involvement with his church group in such a way that it appears to have formed an important part of his identity. Whilst Laura acknowledged that Ryan had gained from involvement with the church. The positive change in identity also appeared to impact on Ryan wanting to give back to his community as a way of making up for his prior offences.

### **Ryan, Core Member (lines 150-156)**

*"...I'd signed up to become a blood donor and I'd seen a thing called a living kidney donation and I watched all the testimonies and of recipients and erm donors and it just seemed like a no brainer for me because (.) I, I totally accepted where I went wrong and I hated myself for it in a way and this, this just seems a way that I can give something, give a little bit back to humanity er it wasn't me punishing myself some people have suggested it was me punishing myself but I just thought from me own Christian point of view as well, it was what a beautiful gift to be able to give someone..."*

Ryan refuted the idea that by becoming a living kidney donor he is punishing himself for his past behaviour. He explained how he hated himself for his actions and saw this as a way to give back to humanity. The way in which he refers to giving back to humanity appears to suggest he felt he had lost a part of his humanity through his offences and by giving back he can regain his humanity through helping another person. Ryan also referred to his new-found Christianity, again reaffirming the importance of this new aspect of his identity.

### *Theme 2: Self-Awareness of Risk*

Ryan spent much time reflecting upon his risk factors. He was aware that his risk was linked to alcohol and drug use combined with social media usage and isolation. He often reflected upon the detrimental effect his actions had upon his victims and was cautious not to allow his risk factors to surface.

**Laura, Coordinator (lines 158-165)**

*“...he said you know I do realise that I am attracted to teenage girls although I’m kind of struggling with that I know that I have got that attraction and I’m kind of trying to keep everyone safe um and he would talk about things like how he would manage that or you know if situations came up for him how he would cope with that or what strategies he had in place he used to talk about it quite openly and quite honestly and he said at that very first meeting he said you know I want you’s to, if I say that I’m going to be doing something and I’m not doing it I want you to hold me to account and to say you know last week you said this or you did this and so he was very straight from the off”.*

Laura described how Ryan was open and honest about his perceived risk from the beginning and wanted the Circle to actively hold him to account for his behaviour. Ryan did not try to minimise his risk in any way and instead spoke openly about his attraction towards teenage girls and the strategies he would employ if ever he found himself in a risky situation. Farmer, McAlinden and Maruna (2016) postulated that individuals who reported that situational factors led to their offending were better equipped to develop a new pro-social identity that was helpful in their desistance. Furthermore, Ryans’ openness and honesty signalled a willingness to change and acknowledgement that he required support to address his risk concerns.

**Holly, Volunteer (lines 116-119)**

*“Yeah but we would talk about his risk and things and he was really open about the fact that there was like a he always thought it was a combination of factors that contributed to his risk, so he was wary of like making sure that those like they didn’t all add up, that would they could lead to him like reoffending”.*

Here, Holly mirrors Laura’s belief that Ryan was aware of his risk triggers. The congruence of opinion demonstrates a good level of trust that was present in this Circle. Holly described how Ryan spoke openly with the Circle about what he perceived to be his risk factors. Ryan was very cautious to ensure he did not place himself in a position which could lead to reoffence. Open and honest discussions within Circles are encouraged and it appears that Ryan made

good use of using his Circle in this way. Ryan reflected upon his past and held onto a lot of guilt for his past offences. The combination of acknowledging externalised factors and internalised guilt for the offence has been noted in prior qualitative research (Kras & Blasco, 2016).

**Ryan, Core Member (lines 179-185)**

*“I don’t wanna go back in jail I don’t wanna destroy anybody else’s life and if I do feel myself slipping I know I won’t do drugs again and I, I seen that as the gateway you know because no-one can tell me why I did what I did, you know I had a fantastic childhood all stuff like that, I’ve got nothing to blame, it’s all down to me. There’s something within me, I don’t know what it is erm, but I’ll do anything to stop that coming out again and if I do feel like I’m slipping again I will get in touch with Laura with a view to maybe starting a Circle up again just, just to you know knock some things about again then”.*

In speaking about his offence history, Ryan took full responsibility for his actions. He spoke of having something within him. How he differentiated between internal and external factors demonstrates how Ryan has an internal locus of control concerning his previous offending behaviour. An internal locus of control indicates that Ryan believes that his behaviour is within his control. An internal locus of control has been identified as a desistance factor (de Vries Robbé et al., 2015). Ryan is adamant that he does not want to re-offend again in the future and made plans to actively seek out help should he feel like he’s ‘slipping’. Paternoster and Bushway (2009) argued that the feared-self is often a strong motivator in the process of desistance. The combination of regret for his past behaviour and determination to build a new life are positive indicators of Ryans’ desistance.

9.6: Discussion

This study aimed to identify what contributes to success in Circles, explore why some Circles fail and others succeed and identify how effective Circles are in promoting Core Member reintegration. This study presented the results of three Circle case studies that all completed successfully.

Martin, Elaine and Ryan each faced their own unique difficulties yet all three remained within their Circles and openly discussed any issues that arose. Whilst each Core Member experienced their own unique struggles, they were all similar in the way that they each received consistent support and commitment from their respective volunteers. It was the consistency of support and commitment from the Circle that contributed toward the success of each of these Circles. Fox (2015) stated that the most successful Circles were those in which volunteers were deeply invested in the Circle and attended to the basic human needs of the Core Member. Such therapeutic relationships have been evidenced to promote desistance from offending behaviour (Chamberlain, Gricius, Wallace, Borjas & Vincent, 2017).

Chamberlain et al (2017) affirmed the importance of rapport building in research on parole officer relationships with parolees. The research indicated that the quality of the relationship was associated with a parolee's odds of recidivism. Parolees that perceive supportive rapport with their parole officers based upon trust, helpfulness, and professionalism have a reduced risk of recidivism. The opposite is true for those who perceive non-supportive rapport, characterised by a lack of interest and helpfulness from the parole officer. Whilst volunteers in Circles are sought from the general population and are not involved with Core Members in a professional capacity, supportive rapport may be argued to be equally important in Circle relationships. Each of the Core Members presented in the case studies benefitted from supportive rapport from their respective volunteers. Chamberlain et al (2017) further asserted that a de-emphasis upon the supervision aspect of the parole officers' role would be beneficial to supportive rapport, by allowing parole officers to spend more time working with parolees to address behaviour change. This assertion mirrors the argument for a reduction in the accountability aspect of CoSA (Fox, 2016).

In each of these case studies, volunteers developed genuine trusting relationships with their volunteers and coordinators. These quality relationships encouraged Martin and Ryan to gain confidence to increase their social network outside of their Circles. Whilst Elaine took on board advice to reduce her turbulent lifestyle for her own benefit. In both Martin and Elaine's case studies, there were distinct differences of opinion in how the Core Member presented. In Martins case, there were differences of opinion between Circle volunteers, whilst in Elaine's case, there were differences of opinion between Elaine and the Circle. However, both Circles worked through their differences to develop trust and became stronger as a result.

Ryan's Circle was relatively short by comparison. Yet he came to his Circle later and quickly developed trusting relationships both within his Circle, and outside of his Circle with his church group. The positive influence provided by Circles further encouraged self-reflection and awareness in all three Core Members. The case studies demonstrated how Circles can be effective in promoting Core Member reintegration as each Core Member made positive progress in their social and professional lives. Furthermore, the positive effects illustrated in these case studies mirror those of the positive themes that emerged in the EOCC study in Chapter 8.

Due to the limited data gathered on Circle failures, it was not possible to explore factors that contribute toward Circle failure through the present case studies. It would be beneficial to further explore failure in Circles through an in-depth qualitative exploration. Particularly if the results of failure captured in Chapter 8 are taken into account.

#### 9.7: Limitations

The original intention was not to use case studies in this research. Because EOCC utilised information about the Core Member written from the perspective of Circle coordinators, the initial intention was to complete in-depth interviews with Core Members themselves. The rationale behind this being that Core Members' interviews would provide Core Members with the space to discuss their experiences of Circles. Research into failure in Circles was an unexplored area and in-depth interviews with a range of Core Members with differing levels of success in Circles was argued to fill a gap in the literature. Further interviews were planned with Circle coordinators to explore their personal experiences of Circles in terms of varying levels of success and failure. However, when Circles UK were initially approached about the research, they refused to support this study design.

As gatekeepers to the participants and partial funders of the present research which was completed adjacent to a national evaluation, Circles UK had their expectations and requirements for all research carried out. This meant that all research studies had to be supported and approved by Circles UK. Additionally, Circles UK specified that they required case studies to be carried out as part of the evaluation, a decision that was made before the commencement of this PhD. As the evaluation covered six project regions in the UK, there were a limited number of potential participants. This would mean that any qualitative

research carried out with this cohort would be duplicated if both in-depth interviews and case studies were carried out, potentially affecting the validity of such research. On this basis, it was agreed that to gain further qualitative data, inclusive of Core Member participants, that case studies be carried out. Interviews for case studies were carried out individually. Focus group interviews were considered as an alternative data collection approach to individual interviews. However due to the sensitive nature of Circles, and because some case studies focussed on failure, it was decided that individual interviews would be most likely to elicit more open and honest responses from all participants. It is an unfortunate limitation of the present research that one Core Member chose not to participate. Therefore, case study one should be interpreted with this in mind, as Martin did not provide his views on his experience in a Circle.

#### 9.8 Implications

This study holds implications for the selection and recruitment of suitable volunteers. Volunteer resilience and commitment toward the Core Member and one another is essential to Circle success. Therefore, the training and development of volunteers is of particular importance, especially in the case of Core Members who present with challenging behaviour, as they adjust to Circle relationships. The case studies demonstrated how differences of opinion can and do occur, both between the Core Member and volunteers and between different volunteer members of a Circle. Therefore, volunteers must be able to maintain a united front when dealing with challenging situations despite any differences of opinion that they may have. It is also important that volunteers maintain a positive relationship with the Core Member based on openness and honesty.

#### 9.9 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that whilst Core Members are unique individuals, they each share a commonality in the slow development of trust, which proved to be essential in the development of Circle relationships. The case studies demonstrated variety in Core Member and volunteer personalities and offered an insight into how successful Circles progress in practice and overcome challenging situations and disagreements. Furthermore, these case studies demonstrated how Core Members value transparency and benefit from autonomy in making decisions about their lives.



## Chapter 10 Discussion

This thesis has presented the results of a national evaluation of Circles of Support and Accountability. The research explored success and failure in Circles, in relation to Core Member dynamic risk and emotional wellbeing, Core Member and volunteer relationships, Circle processes and Circle outcomes. Specifically, this research aimed to:

1. Offer a framework as a means to conceptualise success and failure in Circles
2. Understand what contributes to different Circle outcomes
3. Learn from Circle failure
4. Contribute toward a large national UK evaluation of Circles

In addressing these aims, the research also sought to explore the potential implications of Circle failure and provide recommendations to increase the number of successful outcomes in Circles. To address these aims the research was guided by the research questions:

- How is success and failure defined in Circles?
- What contributes to success in Circles?
- Why do some Circles fail, and others succeed?
- Does Circles promote desistance?
- How effective is Circles at reducing recidivism?
- How effective is Circles in promoting Core Member reintegration?
- How effective is the DRR as a risk assessment tool?
- Can the DRR effectively predict Core Member risk?

These research questions were used to provide a focus and structure to the research. However, as an exploratory endeavour, it was not intended to provide definitive answers to these questions. Rather, the research sought to contribute to a national evaluation of Circles in the UK and explore the experiences of those involved in Circles. This chapter brings together the results of the present research, starting with a recap of how each of the four aims have been addressed. The chapter further discusses how success and failure in Circles

can be better understood through the theoretical frameworks of the social exchange theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) and the theory of relational desistance (Weaver & McNeill, 2015). Finally, the researcher's reflections on the research process are discussed and the limitations of the research and recommendations for future research are presented.

One of the research questions guiding the research was: *How is success and failure defined in Circles?* The initial answer to this question was that it was not defined. Previous research into Circles predominantly reported on positive aspects of the approach such as improvements to Core Members wellbeing (Bates et al, 2012; Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015), improvements to Core Members' personal circumstances (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015) and reductions in Core Members' recidivism (Duwe, 2018). Whilst negative facets of Circles were briefly acknowledged (Bates et al, 2013; Elliott, 2014; Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015), limited evaluation of their occurrences took place. Academics had called for further investigation into Circles that ended earlier than planned and failed start-ups (Clarke et al, 2015; Duwe, 2018; Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). The lack of knowledge surrounding failure in Circles prompted the present research. Through identifying factors that contribute to failure, it is possible to develop better strategies to support Core Members in Circles. Ramsay, Carter and Walton (2020) explained how treatment programmes have evolved over time through research that identified effective strategies to improve outcomes. Similarly, research into failure in Circles would enable lessons to be learned. As a key component of the present research and without a starting point from which to understand failure in the context of Circles, a conceptualisation of how success and failure are defined in Circles was developed.

Whilst the initial answer to this research question was that success and failure are not defined in Circles. Chapter 4 proposed a way in which to conceptualise success and failure, therefore offering definitions that could be used in future research (See Dwerryhouse et al., 2020). The proposed conceptualisation of success and failure formed the basis upon which the four empirical studies were grounded. In addressing each aim, the proposed conceptualisation of success and failure were utilised.

10.1: Aim 1: Offer a framework as a means to conceptualise success and failure in Circles

Through a review of the literature combined with the two core principles upon which Circles were based, chapter 4 offered a means to conceptualise success and failure in Circles. It was argued that without agreed-upon definitions of what constitutes a success or failure, the relative success of Circles cannot be measured consistently. This conceptualisation was used throughout the thesis to categorise success and failure when completing both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Using the conceptualisation: chapters 5, 6 and 7 investigated success and failure using quantitative methods, whilst chapters 8 and 9 explored success and failure using qualitative methods.

Chapter 5 investigated success and failure through the identification of factors that were predictive of each outcome. Results indicated that Circles may have the ability to promote Core Members' desistance, if the correct volunteer approach, focused upon empathetic non-judgemental support is taken. Results demonstrated that Circles in which there was no discussion of risk were significantly predictive of success. This has been demonstrated in the Circles literature previously as Fox (2016) identified how accountability focussed Circles negatively impacted upon Core Member-volunteer relationships. Furthermore, a relationship between risk-related discussions and poor volunteer investment in the Circle has been identified (Fox, 2016; Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). Furthermore, in chapter 5 discussion of risk was also predictive of dropouts by Core Members and/or volunteers. This finding may hold somewhat controversial implications for the non-discussion of risk within Circles, to promote Circle success. The results of chapter 5 aligned with those of Chapter 8.

Chapter 8 indicated that successful Circles benefitted from support from both within and outside of the Circle. Core Members in successful Circles were provided with non-judgemental support and encouraged to discuss their concerns openly. These Core Members felt comfortable discussing their risk-related thoughts. Because trust was developed before risk-related discussions took place, Core Members felt comfortable opening up (Lowe & Willis, 2019). Successful Circles were further bolstered by an external support network. External support has been identified as a protective factor (de vries Robbé et al., 2015). Taken together, it can be observed that successful Circles were based on trusting reciprocal relationships (Höing, Vogelvang & Bogaerts, 2015). Both the prior and present results suggest

that a future-focused approach would yield more positive results (Ward, Vess, Collie & Gannon, 2006).

Due to the recurring commonality of results, an alternative recommendation to Circle practices would be that volunteers firstly focus upon developing a trusting relationship with Core Members, before any discussion of risk-related topics take place. There is evidence to suggest that this approach may be successful in practice. Some Circles in New Zealand have successfully demonstrated this behaviour, by building a trusting relationship before initiating discussions on risk and accountability (Lowe & Willis., 2019). Core Members' risk was further investigated in chapter 7: dynamic risk and emotional wellbeing.

Chapter 6 presented a factor analysis of the DRR. Although the DRR is presently ineffective as a dynamic risk assessment scale, the factor analysis of the DRR demonstrated the components that the DRR consists. Identification of the DRR components meant it was possible to identify the specific items which were being measured, that collectively, changed over time. To recap, these items were termed: Poor Emotional Wellbeing, Sexual Preoccupation and Emotional Identification with Children and Poor Problem Solving and Low Pro-social Engagement. It should be noted, however, that none of the factors demonstrated statistically significant change over time when viewed in isolation. Significant change was only demonstrated by total DRR scores.

Poor Problem Solving and Low Pro-social Engagement was present within the EOCR study as both items related to failures whilst their mirror opposites good problem solving and pro-social engagement were reflected in successful Circles. This factor had the highest Cronbach's alpha reaching an excellent level of reliability at  $\alpha=.90$ . Therefore, this study demonstrated that Core Members' problem solving and pro-social engagement broadly increased over time for all Core Members and was particularly improved for Core Members from successful Circles, when measured by total DRR scores. Furthermore, the results indicate that whilst the DRR is ineffective as a risk assessment scale in its present form, Poor Problem Solving and Low Pro-Social engagement are useful factors that should remain within the DRR, whether that be as a singular item or divided into two new items.

Chapter 7 investigated success and failure through the measurement of Core Member dynamic risk and emotional wellbeing. Due to the limitations of the DRR, it has not been

possible to definitively answer all research questions associated with chapters 7; namely whether Circles promotes desistance and reduced recidivism. This thesis demonstrated how Core Members' dynamic risk, as measured by the DRR, significantly reduced over time.

The DRR shows potential for development that would allow for the detection of dynamic risk. However, chapter 7 demonstrated that in its present form this is not yet possible. This was demonstrated through the discrepancy of results between combined success and failure outcomes, compared with failure outcomes that consisted of reoffence and recall. Chapter 7 also provided research into Core Members' emotional wellbeing and offered an opportunity to gain a sense of the contribution of Circles upon Core Members' lives. Results of the WEMWBS indicated that Core Members benefitted from Circles through improvements to their wellbeing over time, despite subsequent Circles outcomes. This indicated that improvements to Core Members' wellbeing does not ensure Core Members' risk is reduced as demonstrated by some Core Members' recidivist outcomes.

Results did indicate a strong negative correlation between WEMWBS and DRR scores, illustrating that as wellbeing increased, DRR scores reduced. Whilst the DRR has been argued to be ineffective as a dynamic risk assessment scale, the correlation between WEMWBS and DRR may allude to the potential for the DRR to measure dynamic risk. The WEMWBS, as a well-validated scale, can be trusted as a more reliable indicator of Core Members' wellbeing in the community. From this, it can be determined that Circles improve Core Members' wellbeing to the equivalent of a general male population after 9 months, with early significant improvements to Core Members' wellbeing demonstrated at 3 months comparative to pre-Circle. Therefore, Core Members who remain with their Circle for a longer-term, received the greatest benefits to their wellbeing. The EOCC study and case studies also addressed this aim and the associated research question on reintegration, albeit at a narrower level.

Chapter 8 explored success and failure through a qualitative analysis of the emergent themes associated with each outcome. The EOCC study demonstrated how Core Members differ in the level of support received, both internally from their Circles and externally from their respective social network. This study illustrated Core Members with a positive external support network fared better than those with no external support. These results demonstrated that Core Members' personal circumstances outside of the Circle, likely play a large role in the relative success of the Circle. Therefore, exemplifying that Circles can only do

so much. It is suggested that Core Members with limited external support may require a deeper level of supportive intervention to that of Core Members that have a positive external support network. Volunteer consistency and commitment is key to all Circles but this is especially true for Circles with no external support system. Therefore, it is suggested that Coordinators allocate their most experienced and committed volunteers to Core Members lacking in external support. The EOCR study illustrated both successful and failed Circles. The case study research also set out to recruit participants from both successful and failed Circles, yet only achieved in recruiting a rounded sample of participants from successful Circles. Therefore, this study offered an example of successful Circles in the community.

Chapter 9 explored success in Circles through case studies which demonstrated the similarities and differences Circles face when receiving support. Case Study research is narrow in focus and due to the limited uptake from participants involved in failed Circles, it was not possible to explore this area. However, the case studies did provide an in-depth opportunity to explore the relationships and behaviours within successful Circles at a detailed level. The Case Study research on Circles provided this in the form of three case studies with successfully completed Circles. This research demonstrated the uniqueness of Circles and the experiences of Core Members, volunteers and coordinators. Whilst this research offered the narrowest view, the depth of this study illustrated the importance of togetherness, relationships and the development of trust (Gilliam et al., 2020). Whilst successful Circles were not immune to difficulties and disagreements within the Circles, the research demonstrated how successful Circles came together to overcome difficulties and supported one another throughout (Höing et al., 2013). It was difficult to recruit participants from Circles deemed to have failed. This is one area which may benefit from further exploration to identify if members of Circles that fail, behave in different ways to that of members of Circles that succeed. To recap, this aim was addressed through the creation of a decision matrix which was used to conceptualise success and failure in Circles. All studies presented in this thesis utilised the decision matrix to categorise success and failure before analysis.

10:2: Aim 2: Understand what contributes to different Circle outcomes

At the broadest level, the research explored success in failure in Circles. The case study research provided an opportunity to explore success in Circles at a singular level. The case studies illustrated the uniqueness of both Core Members and the volunteers that support

them. The emergent themes differed between case studies, arguably, because participants tended to focus upon the most salient aspects of their respective Circles. However, despite the surface-level differences between Circles, a common undercurrent emerged that demonstrated shared traits of successful Circles. Successful Circles exhibited commitment, support, trust and honesty (Bohmet et al., 2016). Commitment to Circles was a two-way process. Core Members remained committed to their Circles throughout difficulties, discrepancies and disagreements. In some instances, difficulties led to a break from the Circle, yet after time spent reflecting, the Core Member came back to the Circle, ready and willing to move forward and the Core Member was welcomed back with support, hereby overcoming a dysfunctional stage (Höing et al., 2013). Volunteers also demonstrated commitment to the Core Member and the Circle by staying the course, regardless of how difficult the process became (Höing et al., 2014).

Volunteers continually offered their support to Core Members, relying upon one another and their coordinator to maintain morale during discouraging times. Volunteers demonstrated resilience in the face of difficult circumstances and remained faithful to the Circle throughout. Volunteers continually put the wellbeing of their Core Member first and were able to remain optimistic that their support would be worthwhile. It was this high level of commitment and refusal to give up that likely contributed toward the development of trust within each Circle (Gilliam et al., 2020; Höing et al., 2014).

The development of trust was not a rapid process for all Core Members. Some Core Members took time to develop trust in their Circle, often demonstrating challenging behaviour or testing boundaries. This is where consistency in volunteer support became vital. Volunteers in successful Circles were consistently supportive, resilient and available to Core Members despite challenges (Gilliam et al., 2020; Höing et al., 2014). The development of trust is likely to be what contributed toward Core Members' openness and honesty within the Circle. Whilst Ryan demonstrated openness and honesty from the beginning, Martin and Elaine took time to develop trust and honesty within their respective Circles. These differences again demonstrate the uniqueness of each Circle. Ryan came to his Circle at a later stage, having already obtained external support from his local church group. Whereas for Martin and Elaine, Circles helped them to develop trust and their Circles acted as their primary support network. The development of trust and the subsequent honesty that followed, provided Core

Members with the opportunity to openly discuss their concerns comfortably within their Circles. This enabled volunteers to explore their concerns around Core Member risk whilst also offering an insight into Core Members' personal lives and any difficulties they faced in their day to day life. The importance of trust was also reflected in the EOCR study whereby successful Circles benefitted from genuine trusting relationships.

The results suggest that Circles that took the time to develop genuine relationships appeared to have gained the most from participation. These Circles valued their Core Members as individuals with the potential to achieve. Volunteers outwardly prioritised Core Members' wellbeing whilst simultaneously taking account of any potential risk indicators. In doing so, Core Members felt warmth from their volunteers and were able to develop trust. However, successful Circles also experienced a wider support network beyond their Circle. Whilst, a humanistic approach was important within the Circles, the additional external support is likely to have contributed to Core Members' success. The combination of internal and external support is likely to have encouraged Core Members' engagement with the community. As Core Members from successful Circles reduced their isolation through active participation in their communities, inclusive of employment, social groups and hobbies. Unfortunately, not all Circles were successful and the EOCR study demonstrated how some Circles lacked the level of support that successful Circles benefitted from.

To recap, failure in Circles was categorised as volunteer disbandment, Core Member exclusion and reoffence using the decision matrix proposed in chapter 4. The EOCR study demonstrated how Core Members in failed Circles struggled to develop trust and meaningful relationships with their volunteers and wider Circle (Höing et al., 2013). Development of trust appeared to be the centre-point at which successful and unsuccessful Circles diverged. Without the development of trust, some Core Members refused to take on board the advice of their volunteers. These Core Members refused to engage with pro-social networks outside of their Circle and often instead engaged with pro-criminal associates outside of their Circle (Mann et al., 2010). In some cases, Core Members chose to not engage with criminal associates and instead chose to self-isolate. Many Core Members' sense of isolation increased in these Circles. Core Members refusal to engage led to difficult relationships within their Circle which resulted in volunteer disbandment, Core Member exclusion or reoffence. Whilst reoffence is the choice of the Core Member, instances of disbandment and exclusion are the choice of the



Circle. Core Members' isolation likely played a part in their recidivism, whilst the strain experienced by volunteers led to instances of disbandment and exclusion. Höing et al. (2014) postulated that volunteers working with difficult Core Members are at higher risk of stress and burnout. Instances of disbandment may have occurred due to low levels of volunteer resilience whilst exclusion differed in the way that Core Members were blamed for their lack of effort and engagement.

Chapter 5 demonstrated that substance abuse was predictive of failure in Circles, whilst no discussion of risk was predictive of success. Furthermore, Core Member substance abuse and discussion of risk were predictive of dropouts by Core Members and/or volunteers. As the data were merged it is was not possible to investigate whether these variables influenced either Core Members or volunteers to a greater extent. This remains a limitation of the research. However, the results of this study illustrate how Core Members' personal circumstances can influence Circle outcomes. These findings align with those reported in Chapter 8 in two ways. Firstly, substance abuse is an issue for a significant number of Core Members. Secondly, Core Members' external relationships and circumstances influence Circle outcomes. These results may be used as a recommendation that Circles should provide referral information to certain Core Members, in need of specialist support to deal with their substance misuse issues. In summary, the research identified that the main contributors toward different Circle outcomes was the presence or absence of support, both within and outside of the Circle, combined with variations in Core Members personal circumstances, particularly relating to the presence of substance abuse concerns for those with poorer outcomes.

### 10.3: Aim 3: Learn from Failure

This thesis identified that failed Circles often lack the components of successful Circles. This provides an opportunity to learn from Circle failures. The research revealed three key areas that influence Circle outcomes: The Core Member, the volunteers and relationships between Circle members.

It has been argued that Core Members should be selected based on their suitability and readiness for a Circle (Höing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, 2017; Lowe & Willis, 2018). However, selecting Core Members based on their perceived chance of success is akin to cherry-picking. Arguably, Core Members chosen based on their likeliness to succeed are less likely to need

Circle support. Core Members have been reported to join Circles in search of the support offered, yet often disengage when faced with discussions around risk (McCartan, 2016). It is suggested that volunteers could take a phased approach to avoid Core Member disengagement. The present research has illustrated how Core Member-volunteer relationships are built upon trust (Gilliam et al., 2020). If the initial focus of Circles is to build rapport and develop a supportive relationship with the Core Member, it is theorised that this would allow the Core Member time and space to develop trust. Once the Core Member develops a trusting relationship with the Circle, the Core Member may be more willing to discuss any risk-related thoughts. At this point, the accountability aspect of Circles could come into play. This approach has been successfully adopted in some Circles in New Zealand (Lowe & Willis., 2019). Through supporting Core Members, volunteers often unwittingly take on a persona of naive, amateur counsellors. Just as a real counsellor-patient relationship relies on the development of trust through a period of rapport-building (Sharpley, Fairnie, Tabary-Collins, Bates & Leeso, 2000) so too should Core Member-volunteer relationships.

It has also been argued that volunteers should be selected based on their suitability, resilience and readiness to support a Core Member in Circles (Lowe & Willis, 2018). As volunteers are the foundation of Circles it is agreed that volunteer readiness is essential. The GLM proposes that people with offence convictions do not have the means to obtain their primary goods in pro-social ways (Purvis et al., 2011; Ward & Stewart, 2003). As such, the burden often falls to volunteers to lead the way in demonstrating pro-social ways in which Core Members may obtain their primary goods.

Volunteering in Circles can be a stressful endeavour. Research into volunteer experiences of Circles has reported that volunteers differ in their views on the training they receive in preparation for supporting Core Members in Circles, with some perceiving training to be adequate and others perceiving training to be inadequate (Lowe & Wills, 2018). It is for this reason that volunteer resilience and support from the Circles coordinator is essential (Lowe & Willis, 2018). Volunteers have also reported experiencing guilt and stress in the small number of instances in which their Core Member is recalled or reoffends (Lowe & Willis, 2019). Volunteers may benefit from reminders that whilst their role is to support and hold Core Members accountable for their actions, volunteers cannot be held accountable for Core Members behaviour. The research has demonstrated that volunteers who can withstand

difficulties and pressures within Circles and stick by their Core Member are rewarded with achievements in Core Members' progress (Höing et al., 2014). However, as previously noted, Circle outcomes are further moderated by their external support network, which appeared to be of equal importance to the support provided within Circles. Whilst the present research did not seek to explore volunteer attributes, it did emerge as a salient topic, particularly concerning volunteer approaches, with non-judgemental support being most beneficial to positive Core Member outcomes. An exploration into volunteer attributes and approaches to Circles may prove useful in future research. Particularly in terms of success/failure and experienced/inexperienced volunteers.

This thesis did not set out to explore volunteer behaviours or traits specifically, yet many of the results discussed in this chapter reflected the importance of volunteer commitment, resilience and altruism in promoting success in Circles. Furthermore, the development of trust emerged as a key component of successful Circles whilst a lack of trust was associated with poor relationships between Core Members and Circle members.

#### 10.4: Aim 4: Contribute toward a large national UK evaluation of Circles

The research and results described herein contributed to a national evaluation of big lottery funded Circles in the UK. The evaluation project comprised 183 completed Circles across six project areas in the UK. The evaluation report was completed and submitted to Circles UK in April 2020 (see appendix 8). Dissemination of the results from this evaluation are due to be presented in November 2020 alongside the official launch of the evaluation report. As part of the present research and evaluation, the conceptualisation of success and failure was developed (Dwerryhouse et al., 2020) in addition to a chapter regarding the use of evaluation research in Circles (Dwerryhouse, 2018). Furthermore, much of the research conducted as part of this PhD contributed toward the evaluation inclusive of research into Core Member dynamic risk and emotional wellbeing. Success and failure in Circles was also explored within this PhD and contributed towards the evaluation.

#### 10.5: Social Exchange, Circle Reciprocity and Relational Desistance

Through the present investigation and exploration of success and failure of Circles, the core theme of the thesis has been the importance of human connection. Chapter 5 demonstrated the importance of developing trust in Circles. Chapter 7 demonstrated how Core Members wellbeing improved following involvement with Circles. Chapter 8 demonstrated further

demonstrated the importance of trusting relationships and the importance of developing an external support network to support the Core Members ongoing community integration and support their desistance efforts. Chapter 9 demonstrated how consistency of non-judgemental support, openness and honesty helped to develop trusting relationships. Furthermore, the encouragement of Core Member autonomy further developed reciprocal relationships in which Core Members worked toward achieving their goals.

Relations between Core Members and Circle volunteers, relations between Core Members and professional services, relations between Core Members and their wider support network. Having provided a recap on the key results of the present research, the next part of this chapter considers how success and failure in Circles can be better understood through two theoretical frameworks, the social exchange theory (SET; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) and the theory of relational desistance (Weaver & McNeil, 2015). Before these two frameworks are discussed it is important to first take account of what is meant by desistance. Desistance refers to the cessation of a previously repeated behaviour (McNeill & Maruna, 2007). Core Members as a cohort are selected based on their risk level, with those of the highest risk prioritised for inclusion, with many Core Members holding multiple convictions. This is not unusual as LeBel, Burnet, Maruna and Bushway (2008) state that 'recidivism after a prison sentence is the norm rather than the exception' (LeBel et al., 2008, p3). Desistance has been described as both an event and a process (LeBel, Immarigeon & Maruna, 2004). The event occurring at the moment one chooses to cease the behaviour and the process of cessation continuing indefinitely in the case of successful tertiary desistance. Numerous theories of desistance exist such as those that consider the influence of age, agency, social and environmental influences (See Weaver, 2019 for a detailed review). It is the social aspect of desistance which is presented in the next part of this chapter, to help explain success and failure in Circles.

The social exchange theory postulates three reciprocity rules: Outcomes may come as the result of one's solo effort (independence), as a result of the effort of others (dependence), or as the result of a combination between the two (interdependence or social exchange; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Applied to Circles, a successful outcome could be argued to be reliant upon mutual social exchange. Viewed from the perspective of the Core Member, a solo effort would mean the Core Member does not engage with their Circle, does not take

advice and does not accept support nor would they be held accountable for their behaviour. Alternatively, a Core Member who solely depends on others, may become reliant upon their volunteers for many aspects of their life and not take responsibility for their self as a result. Each of these behaviours would likely result in ineffective Circles. Therefore, success in a Circle may be reliant upon interdependence. A Circle in which there is social exchange would allow for relationships between Core Member and volunteers to develop, Core Members could seek and receive support and be held accountable for their behaviour. “One of the basic tenets of SET is that relationships evolve over time into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments” (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005, p.2). Interdependence, therefore is the foundation upon which success in Circles is built.

However, social exchange is not a straightforward process as individuals differ in their exchange orientation. Some individuals, strong in exchange orientation are said to be more likely to return a good deed, whilst those weak in exchange orientation are said to be less likely to reciprocate. A weak exchange orientation may be more prone to negative outcomes such as anger. So, whilst, the presence of social exchange is necessary for Circle success, the mere existence of exchange is not enough to ensure success. Social exchange theory postulates that an individual’s exchange orientation may influence behaviour which can lead to positive or negative outcomes. Applied to Circles, it helps to explain how those with high exchange orientation are more likely to reciprocate their appreciation of the relationship through mutual effort, commitment and the development of trust, as demonstrated in the present research into successful Circles. Whereas those with a weak exchange orientation may be prone to distrust, lack of engagement and anger or evasiveness toward discussions surrounding topics on risk or accountability, as demonstrated in the present research into unsuccessful or failed Circles.

Fractures to Circle relationships may be avoided through prior agreements between Core Members and volunteers. Social exchange theory posits that some parties may negotiate rules through which exchange occurs. Circles subscribe to this notion through laying out agreements of accepted behaviour upon the commencement of a Circle. Such negotiated rules may be beneficial to alleviating some disruptions to relationships, however, the effectiveness of such is likely to be dependent upon individuals exchange orientation.

In a review of the literature Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) discussed how within an organisational setting, the perception of support led to higher levels of performance, less absenteeism and more commitment. Whilst there are distinct differences between employer-employee settings described in the research and the Circle structure, there are similarities in the application and perception of support which can be considered on two levels: volunteers in receipt of support from the Coordinator and Core Members in receipt of support from the volunteers. There is evidence to suggest that perceived support is important to Circle outcomes at both levels. At the level of volunteer support, Lowe and Willis (2018) identified the importance of volunteer training and coordinator support in preparing volunteers for an effective Circle. Whilst Höing, Bogaerts and Vogelvang (2015) identified high levels of social support both between volunteers and from Circle coordinators yielded positive effects upon volunteer satisfaction and determination to continue. At the level of Core Member Support, Fox (2016) established that social support was the greatest need of Core Members. Furthermore, in the present research, the most successful Circles were those in which Core Members were provided with the autonomy to decide which areas of their life to focus on and were supported in their decisions. These examples illustrate how higher levels of perceived support led to better outcomes at both levels (Bohmet et al., 2016; Höing et al., 2014). Reaffirming the idea that support should be offered to Core Members before incorporating accountability.

Trust has been described as a form of social exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Through the process of exchange, bonds between individuals may be weak (relationships as transactions), or strong (relationships as interpersonal attachment). Relationships as transactions are described as shallow. Fox (2016) postulated that less successful Circles were characterised by a shallow level of involvement from volunteers. On the other hand, relationships as interpersonal attachment are the result of stronger bonds which have been evidenced to exist within the most successful Circles, where Core Members benefitted from a deeper involvement from their volunteers (Fox, 2016). Fox (2015b) explained how Core Members take time to develop trust in their Circles, not initially realising that their volunteers wanted nothing but for their Core Members to succeed. Before trust can be built, support must be first be perceived.

Volunteerism is an exchange of an individual's time, and as such, can be perceived as being less concrete (Drollinger, 2010). However, consistency and availability of volunteers is valued by Core Members (Gilliam et al., 2020). Therefore, a consistent, supportive approach is beneficial in developing Core Members' trust in volunteers. The process of exchange is demonstrated in research by Fox (2016). "Core members often expressed that they had never experienced such unconditional support, and it motivated them to make their team proud" (Fox, 2016, p.18). Therefore, successful Circles rely upon support before trust can be developed. If Circles focus on supporting Core Members, over time, Core Members may become more willing to discuss risk having first developed relationships based on trust and honesty. If Core Members are to be treated as any other individual, it should be simple to see how the development of a trusting relationship must come before disclosure of concerns of a sensitive nature. Even in a professional context, rapport-building is viewed as an essential step in the development of trust (Sharpley et al., 2000). Trusting and supportive relationships were presented as the basis for successful Circles in chapters 8 and 9.

So far, this chapter has demonstrated how success and failure in Circles can be framed within the social exchange theory. Circles may be more or less successful dependent upon Core Members' ability to trust, as a result of the quality of volunteer-Core Member relationships that are formed. These relationships are mediated by Circle members exchange orientation, perceived organisational and interpersonal support. Next, this chapter draws on the theory of relational desistance to explain how successful Circle outcomes, achieved through successful social exchange, may result in desistance.

Weaver and McNeill (2015) drew on Donati's work and postulated that social relations are central to the desistance process. The authors argued that the process of reciprocity is reliant on enduring bonds which generate relational goods which they describe as trust, solidarity, loyalty and mutual concern. Though they warn that social relations can also produce relational bads, described as domination, fear and mistrust. Applied to Circles at the most basic outcome level, the theory explains the process of successful Circles producing relational goods and failed Circles producing relational bads. Success and failure were conceptualised in this thesis through the core principles upon which Circles were founded. Each of which align with the components of the theory. *No more victims*, describes the goal of Core Member desistance and *no one is disposable* represents the social relations upon which Core Members

rely. This thesis has demonstrated the importance of Core Member-Volunteer relationships in the development of trust. Additionally, the importance of positive external support was presented in Chapter 8. Chapter 8 demonstrated how Core Members personal circumstances, outside of the Circle had a positive or negative influence upon Core Member behaviour and reintegrative efforts. Circles with successful outcomes benefitted from external pro-social support networks such as friends, family, work colleagues, religious communities and professional support. Whereas, Circles with failed outcomes were subject to pro-criminal associates, that often discouraged Core Members from attending Circles, engaged in substance abuse and sought to extort money from Core Members. Core Members from failed Circles also had little to no contact with pro-social networks.

Relational desistance is used here to demonstrate how social relations are important both internally within the Circle and externally outside of the Circle. In both settings, the presence of a supportive and trusting environment is theorised to produce relational goods, whilst the presence of negative social relations is theorised to produce relational bads. The formation of relational goods or bads may ultimately determine whether the Circle will succeed or fail, and is the result of an amalgamation of the quality of support or non-support received both within and outside of the Circle. Whilst success in Circles has the potential to promote desistance (Duwe, 2018), Circles is not miraculous approach, it is simply the results of people helping people. It is a humanistic approach that values Core Members as humans above all else. In its most successful form, Circles demonstrate the power of humanity through volunteer individuals who exhibit resilience and commitment toward their Core Members. However, it is important to note that the recidivism rates of individuals with sexual offence convictions are known to be low (Ministry of Justice, 2020). It should therefore be noted, that whilst distinct differences are noted in the approaches of volunteers within successful and failed Circles, most Core Members would naturally be expected not to re-offend due to the low recidivism rates associated with this offence type. This positivist approach, taken by members of the most successful Circles may be likened to a GLM approach.

Ward et al. (2006) postulated that a causal relationship exists between risk management and goal promotion in people with sexual offence convictions. The authors explained that where goal promotion is encouraged, risk is automatically reduced. Ward et al. (2006) stated that goals relate to emotional states that can be positive or negative. Mann et al. (2004)



demonstrated how approach and avoidance goals influence treatment-receivers motivation to engage. The GLM approach can be applied to Circles to explain Circle effectiveness and Core Member engagement. Circles that focus on support and use approach goals are more aligned to the GLM. This means they are more likely to promote positive states in the Core Member and result in relational goods. Alternatively, Circles that focus on accountability are more aligned to the RNR model. This means they are more likely to promote negative states in the Core Member and result in relational bads. This argument could be taken further to suggest that Circles following a GLM approach would be more likely to result in success whilst those following an RNR approach would be more likely to fail. The RNR approach has proven to be effective in risk management treatment programmes (Ramsay et al., 2020) whilst the GLM is more theoretical in nature. However, neither have yet been evidenced to be effective in the context of Circles and this remains an area for further research. Furthermore, to differentiate between the theoretical influence of the GLM upon Circle successes and the RNR upon failures would be a reductionist approach. It has been discussed earlier in this chapter that many other factors influence social exchange and Circle reciprocity. Kemshall and McCartan (2020) further identified factors beyond social capital that may contribute toward the reintegration of individuals with sexual offence convictions. Kemshall and McCartan (2020) postulated that expanding social capital to that of recovery capital inclusive of cultural, physical, human, and social factors, better encapsulates the elements which work together to promote the rehabilitation of those in receipt of support. Furthermore, enabling a better understanding of how such individuals reintegrate in society.

It is, however, easy to understand how someone would be more likely to engage, develop trusting relationships and reciprocate goodwill, in an environment where they are provided autonomy to develop their good life plan with support from peers (Mann et al, 2004; Weaver & McNeill, 2015). There is no reason to believe this would not also be true within Circles. However, Circles are limited in the support they can provide to Core Members as they do not go on indefinitely. Any form of attachment that is developed between a Core Member and their volunteers is temporary, (excluding those occasions in which volunteers maintain casual contact with their Core Member upon closure of the Circle). Whilst Core Members may reap the rewards of social exchange throughout the duration of the Circle, it is yet to be ascertained whether the benefits of the Circle last beyond the Circles closure. The Circle

provides Core Members with the opportunity to form trusting, supportive relationships during the Circle which may be helpful in modelling positive relationships. However, it is dependent upon the Core Members social exchange orientation as to how much a Core Member can truly gain from a Circle, as Core Members with a weak exchange orientation may struggle to benefit as much as a Core Member with a high exchange orientation. This may hold implications for the selection of Core Members who would gain the most from involvement in a Circle. Although, it could be argued that individuals low in exchange orientation, are the ones who may be most in need of support. Circles have much to offer, particularly to those who lack positive pro-social relationships, although ultimately it is up to each individual Core Member to grasp the opportunity of a Circle and make the most of the support offered.

#### 10.6: Reflections

Circles UK have been heavily involved in the research process from design to implementation. This has impacted upon my independence and autonomy in the research process. Upon commencement of the PhD, I was aware that I would be working within a research team, alongside Circles UK to complete a national evaluation. Initially, I saw this as an exciting opportunity to be involved in a large project. The evaluation had already begun when I started, and the evaluation outlined several areas of investigation that Circles UK wished to explore. I joined the project with some of my areas of interest, both in terms of addressing the literature gap and fulfilling the requirements of the PhD. Having previously volunteered with Circles, I had a good understanding of the Circles process and the challenges volunteers faced in supporting Core Members. I was aware of the way meetings were recorded through the use of minutes and EOCR and hoped to utilise the vast amount of data accumulated through these means. Additionally, I had planned to explore Core Member and coordinators experiences of Circles through interviews. Initial methodological plans were made to approach research into success and failure using phenomenological interviews with Core Members and stakeholders. However, Circles UK had already decided they wanted case studies conducted and as a result, they would not support their coordinators engaging with in-depth interviews. Circles UK further rejected attempts to negotiate coordinator interviews in addition to case studies.

The evaluation consisted of six project areas which were funded through the Big Lottery. This meant that the potential participant pool was limited to those involved with the six included projects. As gatekeepers to all potential participants, Circles UK held the final decision on all research design and implementation. As a result, in-depth interviews with Core Members and Stakeholders were no longer viable and case studies had to be adopted as a PhD study. This meant shorter interviews with Core Members, coordinators and volunteers had to be developed to take account of all participants perspectives when exploring specific Circles. In essence, the short interviews were used to capture a snapshot of participants perspectives that would be brought together to create each case study. At times I have held concerns over the reliability of the research output due to the involvement of Circles UK in directing the research design. However, I am assured in the knowledge that I have maintained transparency throughout. Having volunteered for Circles before this research, I felt able to relate to many of the Coordinator and volunteers' experiences reported in interviews. However, I was acutely aware of how my experience of Circles may shape the qualitative analyses. At all times, I worked to ensure my own experiences and assumptions were put aside whilst simultaneously focussing upon the participant's experiences of Circles.

Whilst the decision to utilise case studies was taken by Circles UK and not something I had initially set out to do, I supported the venture throughout. Despite this, the case study research has come with several difficulties. Due to the research being funded by the Big Lottery in support of six specific projects, I was unable to recruit participants from outside those funded areas. This meant that from the beginning I had a limited potential participant pool. Circles UK supported the research by promoting a recruitment drive to encourage coordinators to both participate themselves and encourage others to participate. At times it seemed that some coordinators may have been resistant to participate, as was their right. Throughout the recruitment process, I regularly raised the issue of informed consent and participants right to withdraw. I was concerned that some coordinators may have been pressured to participate when they may have otherwise chosen not to. Those that did participate, were very supportive of the research and assisted with sharing information about the case studies with their respective Circles that they coordinated.

As participation was voluntary, it often meant that I would recruit willing participants with certain roles from a Circle, yet not others, for example, a coordinator but no volunteers or

Core Member. Such data on its own would not be viable for use as the basis of a case study. Additionally, Core Members were particularly difficult to recruit, although this was expected due to the sensitive nature of the research. Whilst this was an unavoidable aspect of the present research, it nonetheless presented a limitation that some case studies may not have included a Core Member's perspective. Whilst working with an external agency came with difficulties, there have also been several benefits. Ironically, a key benefit has been easy access and accrual of data.

Most of the data utilised in this research has been collected by Circles UK and shared for analysis. The only study for which I personally collected data were the case studies. Circles UK have been supportive of the research and have continuously chased up outstanding data from their providers. This has been a key benefit of working with an external agency in the completion of a national evaluation. However, there were also some drawbacks in working with an external agency. The first being the lack of autonomy in terms of research design and implementation discussed above. Another being, the requirement for regular updates.

Updates on the progress of the evaluation were required at regular intervals. Some of these took the form of formal interim reports whilst others were more informal updates upon project progress and data collection. Whilst regular updates are important in ensuring data is received timely manner, the process of data collation and reporting upon progress at regular intervals was very time-consuming. I often felt like I was giving up time in which I could be working on progressing the research, to provide updates on progress. Furthermore, on some occasions, the change in progress between updates was minimal as updates were requested regularly.

Disagreements over terminology was an ongoing issue. The present research seeks to explore failure in Circles to learn from failure and improve processes. However, Circles UK deemed the word failure to have negative connotations and disagreed with the usage of the word in the research. This meant that a lot of time was spent negotiating the use of the word failure, which was ultimately removed entirely from the evaluation report. Failure is a key component of the present research and as such the term has remained in use throughout this thesis. Understandably, Circles UK wish to provide the best possible image to secure future funding. However, there have been concerns regarding the over-reporting of successes in Circles research and an avoidance of research that investigates areas of failure. The purpose of this

research was to fill that gap and it did not feel right to sugar-coat the terminology to alleviate the concerns of the charity. Success does not exist in isolation and only by acknowledging its existence can we begin to learn from it.

Another key challenge related specifically to defining success and failure in Circles. As a relatively unexplored area in Circles, failure at first appeared to relate to Circles in which a re-offence or drop-out occurred. However, it quickly became clear that it was not so clear cut. Exploring the concept of success and failure in Circles, how this looked in practice and the different variants of such has been a great challenge. One which took quite some time in developing and refining. Due to the lack of research in this area and a lack of definition, it was difficult to progress with any of the studies in a meaningful way until success and failure in Circles were defined. I was always aware of the importance of getting the definitions right, as I understood the definitions alone influenced how data were categorised. The development of the decision matrix was a lengthy process, however, the time spent developing this enabled the clear categorisation of all subsequent empirical studies which was deemed to be a worthwhile endeavour.

#### 10.7: Limitations

This thesis is not without limitations, some of which have been discussed earlier. To recap, some of the limitations discussed within the empirical chapters consisted: variability in data quality; methodological decisions around the merging of data categories; the absence of true baseline measures of the DRR and limited available data on failures.

Furthermore, key limitations relate to researcher autonomy, participant recruitment and use of a newly developed conceptualisation of success and failure in guiding the research. This research formed part of a wider national evaluation of Circles and was conducted in conjunction with Circles UK. This meant there was limited researcher autonomy in the development of research studies. Some studies were pre-designed as part of the evaluation such as the case studies. Circles UK were gatekeepers to participants and would not support certain forms of research such as in-depth interviews. Therefore, the present research was somewhat limited in scope. Furthermore, there were concerns regarding participant recruitment throughout the research.

Circle coordinators acted as a conduit between the researcher and potential volunteer and Core Member participants. Coordinators were predominantly supportive of recruitment efforts and all potential participants were made aware that participation was voluntary. However, it was apparent that Coordinators received strong encouragement from Circles UK to support the evaluation. This support was requested by Circles UK in two forms: to help recruit potential Core Member and volunteer participants and to participate in the research themselves. Whilst Coordinators were regularly made aware of their right to refuse participation, there were ongoing concerns over the ethical implications of reminding Coordinators that participant recruitment was ongoing. It should be noted, however, that there were some non-responses from potential participants and one refusal to participate from a Coordinator. The latter was concerning research relating to a failed Circle. This has been an ongoing issue within Circles research. Elliott (2014) noted the importance of remaining objective when evaluating success in Circles so as not to over-report instances of success. Circles UK also held concerns over research into Circle failure. This meant they wished for a reduced focus on failures which was incongruent with the focus of the thesis. As gatekeepers to potential participants, this caused difficulties in gathering data on failed Circles within case studies. However, research into failure was possible within both qualitative (EOCR) and quantitative (Typology) research.

A further limitation to this research is based on a methodological decision. That is, the empirical chapters in this thesis were based on the newly developed conceptualisations of success and failure. Therefore, the results of this thesis should be interpreted with caution, within the context of the proposed definitions of success and failure outlined in chapter 4.

#### 10.8: Implications

Some lessons can be taken from this research. The most prominent is possibly also the most controversial. That is, the suggestion that it may be more effective to remove the accountability aspect of Circles. Circles research has demonstrated that a strong focus on accountability, particularly in relation to risk-related discussions in Circles are detrimental to the Core Member-volunteer relationship (Fox, 2016). Therefore, the removal of such discussions may prove beneficial to the development of trust and rapport between Core Members and volunteers (Lowe & Willis., 2019; Sharpley et al., 2000). The importance of trust development has been demonstrated throughout this thesis. Therefore, it is suggested the

removal of risk-related discussions may increase the development of pro-social relationships within the Circle. This may have implications for the reduction in Circle dropouts which may reduce Core Members social isolation and therefore reduce recidivism (Malinen et al., 2014).

At the point in time in which a Core Member joins a community-based Circle. They join as a free individual having already left prison. Whilst many may still be subject to probation and certain conditions, their risk is already being monitored by professional bodies. It is therefore suggested here, that the accountability aspect should be left to the professionals. That is not to say that risk-related concerns should not be shared with professionals if they occur. In UK based Circles, the outer Circle comprises criminal justice professionals. Rather, it is argued here that Core Members are already subject to some of the most stringent release conditions in the community and that the inner Circle may be more effective if used as a support system for Core Members' wellbeing and community reintegration. Willis (2018) questioned the use of negative labels to describe people with *prior* offence convictions. Whilst the term 'Core Member' is used as an attempt to step away from negative labelling, the use of accountability in what would otherwise be a supportive Circle is akin to silent labelling. As discussed earlier, the use of negative labelling holds implications for the recruitment of volunteers (Lowe & Willis, 2020). The Core Member is treated as someone of potential risk, rather than a reformed individual. It is argued here that this is not a positive approach. Instead, it is suggested that the Core Member should be treated as a non-offender, through a supportive and future-focused approach.

If risk-related topics are to be removed from Circle discussions, it may also be advisable to remove use of the DRR. The DRR is ineffective in its present form and requires development before it can be usefully used. If Circles focus upon the support which is evidenced to result in more successes, than risk-related topics should be left to the professionals who exist to monitor risk and protect the public. If Circles intend to continue using the DRR, at the very least they should consider including Core Members when conducting them. At present, DRRs are completed without the presence of Core Members, which goes against the ideals of Circle inclusivity and has the potential to damage relationships and Core Members' trust in the Circle.

This thesis identified that some Core Members suffer from substance misuse problems. These Core Members would benefit from specialised support in addition to the support received

from their Circle. Core Member substance misuse has been identified in prior Circles research (Clarke et al., 2017). Circles should work with external providers to make connections for Core Members to access specialist support where necessary.

This was the first piece of research to explore failure in Circles and there is room for further exploration. Results indicated that risk-focussed Circles were less successful than support-focussed Circles. Future research could investigate this further, either through randomised control trial of different approaches or through a qualitative exploration of successful and failed Circles using in-depth interviews to identify behaviour that led to each outcome.

This thesis proposed a way to conceptualise success and failure in Circles. The proposed conceptualisation provides a means to standardise measures of success and failure. Further research is needed to expand upon knowledge of failures and why they occur. This thesis has attempted to embrace rather than ignore failure to understand how processes can be improved. It should be noted that whilst the proposed conceptualisation was used as a basis from which to categorise success and failure in Circles, it is a theoretical construct. Therefore, all results categorised as successes and failures within this thesis should be considered in relation to the conceptualisation outlined in chapter 4.

#### 10.9: Conclusions

This thesis presented the results of mixed-methods research into success and failure in Circles of Support and Accountability. This work was carried out as part of a wider evaluation of community-based Circles. Whilst prior research has reported upon the successes of Circles as a community-based approach, there have been limited reports on the small number of less successful Circles. This thesis attempted to address that gap, in addition to exploring the traits of successful Circles. The results of this research have demonstrated that Core Members value and appreciate volunteer support. The thesis suggested that only where genuine relationships are formed can reciprocity and therefore relational desistance develop. However, despite the level of support offered to Core Members within Circles, Core Members' external environment can either help or hinder Core Members' progress. Whilst this finding may result in the more careful selection of Core Members, that already benefit from existing support networks to increase the rate of successes, it is Core Members who lack support who are potentially in the most need of support and guidance. If Circles subscribe to their Core Principle of *No one is disposable*, it should be Core Members that are most in need of support



that are prioritised for inclusion. In practice this would mean a continuation of prioritising Core Members deemed to be of the highest risk level. Such Core Members should be supported through a non-judgemental approach in which they are provided with the time and space to develop trust. Furthermore, where required and applicable, such Core Members should be further supported to gain access to specialist support to address substance misuse issues or mental health concerns.

The research also demonstrated that some Circles do fail. This was already known, although many Circles have previously been framed as successes with little evidence that they should be considered as such. However, it has been demonstrated that volunteers have the power to influence would-be failures through a positive and inclusive approach. Whilst this thesis did not set out to explore volunteers' behaviour, volunteers behaviour and their influence upon Circle outcomes emerged as a key finding. Whilst it may be at odds with public opinion, it has been recommended that Circles consider dropping the accountability aspect, as present research indicates it is not helpful to Core Member progression. This finding is further supported by prior literature. The removal of risk-related discussion may also help Circle members to build trusting relationships in which reciprocity and ultimate relational desistance emerges.

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# Appendices

## **Appendix 1 – Data Protection Plan**



Data protection plan.pdf

## **Appendix 2 – Participant Information Sheets**

### **Participant Information Sheet Brief (Coordinator – Community)**



PIS\_Brief\_Coordinator\_Community.pdf

### **Participant Information Sheet Brief (Core Member – Community)**



PIS\_Brief\_Core Member\_Community.pdf

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### **Participant Information Sheet Brief (Core Member – Prison)**



PIS\_Brief\_Core Member\_Prison.pdf

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### **Participant Information Sheet Brief (Volunteer – Community)**



PIS\_Brief\_Volunteer\_Community.pdf

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## **Appendix 3 – Consent Forms**

### **Consent Form (Coordinator – Community)**



Consent Form\_Coordinator\_Community.pdf

### **Consent form (Core Member – Community)**



Consent Form\_Core Member\_Community (1).pdf

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### **Consent Form (Core Member – Prison)**



Consent Form\_Core Member\_Prison.pdf

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### **Consent Form (Volunteer – Community)**



Consent Form\_Volunteer\_Community.pdf

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#### **Appendix 4 – Interview Schedules**

Interview Schedule (Coordinator – All outcomes - Community based)



Interview Schedule\_Coordinator\_All CoSA\_Community.pdf

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Interview Schedule (Core Member – Failed outcomes - Community based)



Interview Schedule\_CM\_Failed\_Community.pdf

Interview Schedule (Core Member – Failed outcome - Prison based)



Interview Schedule\_CM\_Failed\_Prison.pdf

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Interview Schedule (Core Member – Successful outcome - Community based)



Interview Schedule\_CM\_Successful\_Community.pdf

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#### **Appendix 5 – Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale**



Mental Well-Being Scale 10 Oct 2016.pdf

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#### **Appendix 6 – Dynamic Risk Review**



DRR form F.pdf

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#### **Appendix 7 – End of Circle Report**



End of circle report updated 05.10.16 v2.pdf

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#### **Appendix 8 - Circles Evaluation Report**



SOCAMRU BL final report 1 April 2020 v82.pdf

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## **Appendix 9 – Conceptualising Success and Failure in Circles of Support and Accountability**



Dwerryhouse et al (2020) Conceptualising Success & Failure in CoSA.pdf

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## **Appendix 10 – Evaluating Community based Circles of Support and Accountability**



Dwerryhouse2018\_Chapter\_EvaluatingCommunity-BasedCircl.pdf

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## **Appendix 11 – Publications and Dissemination Activities**



Publications & Dissemination Activities.pdf

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