



First International COSA Conference

Whatton Circles – The First Prison Based Circles Project

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The Safer Living Foundation (SLF)

The SLF is a charitable organisation

Joint venture between:

- HMP Whatton
- Nottingham Trent University
- MAPPA
- National Probation Trust (Notts)
- Nottinghamshire Police
- Age UK
- Circles UK



Why we began...

- Concern some high risk prisoners were leaving HMP Whatton without family or community support
- Particularly
 - Intellectual Disabilities
 - Elderly (+ 55 years)
- Worrying as social isolation is a significant risk factor for further reoffending.



Establishing the SLF

- Charitable status approval February 2014
- Funding :
 - NHS England
 - The Co-operative Society
 - Allen Lane Foundation
 - Police and Crime Commissioner
 - Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust
 - Nottingham Trent University
 - The Lottery
- Plus Fund Raising Events:
 - Sponsored bike ride for supporters
 - Raised money through JustGiving
 - The prisoners at Whatton



The SLF Aims

Following the success of community CoSA projects in the UK:

- First prison based CoSA in the UK - set up under the SLF charity at HMP Whatton.
- Each Circle - 6 months before release & 18 months after release (time periods are approximate).
- The first two Circles will start Winter 2014
 - **4 Circles in year 1**
 - **8 Circles in year 2**
 - **12 Circles in year 3**
- Core Members will consist of sex offenders
 - **Intellectually Disabled**
 - **Elderly (55 years+)**



Why ID and/or Elderly?

- Vulnerable categories of sex offenders who often find transition from prison to community difficult and socially isolating
- Sexual offending rate is 6.8x higher in sex offenders with Intellectual Disabilities compared to the general population of sex offenders (**Craig & Hutchinson, 2005**)
- Sexual offending is the only crime to be repeated with age as sexual offences are often motivated by problems typically associated with old age, such as loneliness and social isolation (**Hart, 2008**)
- Those who do not meet the above criteria but who have a severe lack of social support on release will also be considered.



Previous Research

- Studied 71 / 100 Circles (South East of the UK) in the first 10 years since the project started
 - Compared to control (persons referred to, but not placed, in a Circle) Core Members had a significantly lower number of sexual or violent re-offences.
(Bates, 2014)
- Critics state there is not enough evidence to confirm CoSA significantly reduces sexual recidivism
 - Existing research varies in quality /lack of statistically significant results
- Low base rates make demonstrating a reduction in reoffending rates difficult
- New CoSA projects must implements research to assess and success



Our Research

- Strand One

- Questionnaires pre and post Circle

- (Hope, Group Cohesiveness, Personal Growth, Social Support, States of Change)*

- Evaluate the impact and effect of the Circle on the Core Member
 - Compare Core Members and matched control group.

- Reconviction data collected

- Stand Two

- Qualitative and mixed method research

- Interviews with 6 offenders pre and post Circle

- Explore expectations, hopes and fears of release and whether this changes during their time as a CM
 - To explore their experiences of being in a prison-based circle

- Interviews with Circles volunteers

- To understand their experiences



Importance of the Research

- First time in the UK that CoSA will be established within a prison setting
- First time CoSA will focus specifically on ID/ elderly offenders
- Evaluations of rehabilitative initiatives within prisons have not always been evaluated effectively
(Mann 2014)
- A gap is often found between practice and research with the research being carried out retrospectively
- Research significant on an international scale, informing and benefiting academics, practitioners and policy-makers alike



Thank you for your attention!

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