

Circles4EU

Definitions and Standards



Date: 17th December 2013

Prepared by: Susan Brown and Birgit Völlm

Contact: Birgit Völlm, University of Nottingham, UK
birgit.vollm@nottingham.ac.uk

Version: Final

This document has been produced with the financial support of the Daphne III Programme of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.



Funded by
the Daphne Programme
of the European Union

Table of contents

Introduction	3
Definitions and standards:	
Circles Principles	4
Guiding Principles	4
Provision Principles	5
Operating principles	5
Circles Standards	7
Operational Delivery Standards	7
Organisation / Governance Standards	7
Circles Processes	9
Circle Formation	9
Exclusion Criteria	9

Introduction

This document outlines Definitions and Standards for the Circles4EU Network. It addresses the following areas:

- Circles principles (section 1)
- Circles standards (section 2)
- Circles processes (section 3)

These areas combine to give an overview of the fundamental and underlying principles of Circles, as well as more practical aspects relating to Circle provision.

Consultation process

This document has been created through a process of consultation amongst members of the Circles4EU network.

The consultation involved circulation of a discussion document followed by a subsequent teleconference discussion group. The findings were then presented during a workshop at a meeting of Circles4EU partners in October 2013, enabling a face to face discussion amongst partners. This document represents the outcome of this consultation process.

Circles4EU Definitions and Standards

1 Circles Principles

The principles section is divided into three areas, relating to different levels to which the principles apply. These are as follows:

- 1.1 The fundamental guiding principles of CoSA (*i.e.* the reasons why CoSA exist)
- 1.2
- 1.3 The fundamental provision principles of CoSA (*i.e.* the most important Circles strategies)
- 1.4 Operating principles (statements that help to ensure the guiding and provision principles are followed)

1.1 *Guiding principles: why do we need circles?*

The following guiding principles serve as backbone for the existence of CoSA, and provide an answer to the question “Why do we need Circles?”.

These are the underlying principles for the work that takes place in a Circle, and communicate the beliefs and values that are in action when a Circle is provided.

The guiding principles are as follows:

Safety – We work towards the objective of no more victims

Responsibility – Holding individuals and organisations to account for their actions

Inclusiveness – Managing risk through inclusion not exclusion

Community Involvement – Recognising the importance of community involvement

Growth and Learning – Recognising that with necessary support and challenge, people have the ability to grow, learn and change their behavior

Individuality and Respect – Treating people with humanity and respect

1.2 Provision principles: the most important Circles strategies

This section contains the fundamental Circles strategies or 'action oriented' principles. The following four principles (or strategies) are taken from the research of Höing, Bogaerts and Vogelvang (2013):

Inclusive strategies: regular meeting and group discussion, providing moral and practical support within the core members' own context, engaging in social activities together.

Change promoting strategies: improving social and problem solving skills of the core member, confronting the core member with his (or her) responsibilities.

Risk reduction strategies: discussing the relapse prevention plan, monitoring the core members' behavior, confronting the core member with risk related information and reporting risk concerns to the professionals.

Process-oriented strategies: supporting the development of a positive group dynamic and a balanced execution of the three former mentioned Circles strategies.

The above strategies should be balanced against each other, and take into account the needs of the core member.

1.3 Operating principles: to ensure the guiding principles and strategies are followed

Operating principles drive the practical working of Circles. They make sure that the guiding and provision principles are followed. The operating principles are as follows:

- Partnership and joint working with the relevant agencies (or state and non-governmental organisations) underpin all the work of Circles
- The Core Member's involvement is voluntary. Participation cannot be specified as part of any statutory requirement, nor can failure to engage by itself result in a breach
- Circles promote openness and honesty whilst operating within agreed boundaries of confidentiality

- All those involved in the delivery of Circles are appropriately trained and supervised
- The Core Member is willing to engage in the process. Ideally they will acknowledge that they have engaged in sexually harmful behaviour and have a motivation to change. However, it is accepted that this may not always be the case and emerging evidence suggests that individuals can still benefit from interventions if they do not acknowledge (all of) their harmful behaviours. Both insight and motivation may be low initially but may increase through the lifetime of a Circle. Ultimately, it is at the discretion of the Circle Coordinator to decide whether a Circle is appropriate for any given individual
- There is a consistent approach to the delivery of Circles whilst still enabling growth, learning and development to take place
- Delivery is informed by best practice
- There is a commitment to provide data for evaluation purposes

2. **Circles Standards**

With the above principles (guiding, provision and operating principles) in place, the principles must be translated into standards or quality indicators that support practice, and enable its monitoring.

This section addresses two types of standards: operational delivery standards and organisation/governance standards.

2.1 *Operational delivery standards*

The following operational delivery standards have been agreed as important to the safe and robust delivery of Circles:

- There is a consistent and high standard of operational delivery
- There are procedures in place detailing the process of allocating and managing a Core Member's involvement in a Circle
- Procedures and guidelines are identified and implemented to ensure the safe delivery and operation of a Circle
- Communication and information sharing systems are in place to ensure the effectiveness and safety of a Circle
- Joint working and partnership with other agencies/professionals (state and non-governmental organisations) to ensure risks are identified and managed and that public protection is the Circles Project's first priority
- Risk management procedures are undertaken prior to the commencement of a Circle in the community

2.2 *Organisation / governance standards*

The following standards relate to the governance structure of Circles projects (and national Circles organisations). These standards focus on the *management* of Circles projects (as opposed to individual Circles themselves). Standards include quality control and/or compliance standards for Circles projects and national Circles organisations.

- There is an effective and transparent governance and accountability structure
- There are financial management procedures and control measures in place

- Planning, reporting and evaluation systems and procedures are demonstrable
- Recruitment, training and supervision procedures are in place so that there are suitable staff to manage and deliver Circles
- Recruitment, training and supervision procedures are in place to ensure volunteers are suitable, appropriately allocated and safely managed
- There is consistent representation of Circles, including when engaging in promotion of CoSA (*i.e.* a consistent organisational identity)

3. Circles Processes

Leading on from Circles principles and standards is the most detailed level, which relates to Circles processes. In this section, the operational delivery standards (2.1 above) are translated into processes that need to be installed for Circles to function properly. Two types of processes are presented below: those for Circle formation, and those for inclusion and exclusion of core members.

3.1 Circle formation

The following processes relate to the formation of Circles. Each of these processes is important for the safe and effective delivery of Circles:

- There should be a formal process in place for the recruitment of volunteers
- There should be a formal process in place for the training of volunteers
- There should be a formal process in place for the recruitment of Circles coordinators (*i.e.* a defined set of attributes / experience / skills that are necessary to undertake the role)
- There should be a formal process in place for the training of Circles coordinators
- There should be a formal process in place for the recruitment of core members
- There should be a formal process in place for the recruitment of members of the outer circle
- There should be a defined exit strategy for core members
- There should be a defined exit strategy for volunteers
- There should be a formal procedure in place for when recidivism occurs

3.2 Exclusion criteria

Certain exclusion criteria may be applied by some existing Circles providers, and it is likely that new-starter and orienting countries will consider applying exclusion criteria. Individuals classed as 'psychopath' (e.g. displaying high scores on the PCL-R checklist) and those with significant psychiatric disorder are most likely to be excluded.

However, there is no evidence to suggest that these people will not benefit from Circles. In addition, where provision of Sex Offender Treatment Programmes exists, individuals are no longer excluded on the basis of personality pathology or other mental disorder. As such it is suggested to not apply strict exclusion criteria but consider each person individually in terms of their likely engagement and response to Circles. However, it is also of note that if working with offenders with significant psychiatric morbidity, additional training and risk management procedures may have to be in place, and where this may not be possible, this may lead to a decision by the project to exclude certain individuals.