

Previous research Previous reviews of literature/research relating specifically to Circles :

Helping Sex Offenders to Desist Offending: The Gains and Drains for CoSA Volunteers -A Review of the Literature

Abstract: In Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA), a group of trained volunteers support sex offenders in their desistance process by engaging in a long-lasting empathic relationship. Is it safe to employ volunteers in this way? This literature review provides an overview of both theoretical explanations and empirical evidence of the possible impact of this type of volunteerism on the volunteers themselves. Fifty original research articles and reviews met the selection criteria of a systematic search. Results on effects of volunteering in general, effects of volunteer work with offenders, and effects of working with sex offenders on professionals are summarized and integrated. Generally, volunteering supports and improves physical health and mental well-being, personal growth, and citizenship. However, working with sex offenders in an empathic relationship generates both positive and negative effects on psychological and social function. Personal characteristics, task characteristics, and organizational characteristics moderate and mediate the impact.

Höing, M., Bogaerts, S. and Vogelvang, B. (2014) 'Helping Sex Offenders to Desist Offending: The Gains and Drains for CoSA Volunteers-A Review of the Literature', Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment, published online 5th June 2014, DOI: 10.1177/1079063214535816

Link to article: <http://sax.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/06/05/1079063214535816>

Circles of Support and Accountability: An Innovative Approach to Manage High-Risk Sex Offenders in the Community

Abstract: Sex offenders cause particular concern upon release and are often received with apprehension or hostility by the community. This in turn may increase their feelings of loneliness and poor self-esteem hindering re-integration and potentially increasing re-offending. Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSAs) were first developed in Canada in 1994 and introduced in the UK in 2000. A "Circle" consists of a group of four to six volunteers with the offender as the "Core Member". Appropriately trained volunteers support and hold to account the core member, who has to volunteer to be part of the scheme, by providing them with social contact and practical support while at the same time maintaining links to statutory agencies alerting them of any risk issues. Following completion of initial pilots the scheme is currently rolled out across the UK. This systematic review will describe the Circles model and its history and summarise the empirical literature particularly with regards to outcomes.

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

Link to article: www.benthamscience.com/open/tocrij/articles/V003/48TOCRIJ.pdf