

Previous research Qualitative research :

Assessing the impact of Circles of Support and Accountability on the reintegration of adults convicted of sexual offences in the community

Extract from Executive Summary: This report is the result of a three year study. The original aim of the research was stated as 'to assess the extent to which CoSA Projects contribute towards the reintegration of adult sex offenders into the community'. The more specific objectives of the research were to:

- Examine the frontline practices of CoSA
- Describe the cohort of Core Members who have completed or are currently in a Circle
- Explore the experiences of Core Members
- Identify the key components which are associated with re-integration in the community
- Explore the background, motivation and experiences of volunteers
- Investigate the links between the operation of CoSA and statutory provisions for sex offenders, such as Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), probation and the police
- Assess the relative importance of factors and services in the process of reintegration for sex offenders
- Contribute towards the development of good practice

The report is based on a literature review, collection of administrative data on Core Members, interviews with Core Members, interviews with volunteers and interviews with key stakeholders. 70 interviews were conducted, 30 with Core Members, 20 with volunteers, and 20 with key stakeholders from Police, Probation and Project Coordinators, from a number of ongoing CoSA Projects in England and Wales. For all interviews, the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach was adopted. In addition, the Core Members and volunteers completed short questionnaires to collect socio-demographic data.

Thomas, T., Thompson, D. and Karstedt, S. (2014) 'Assessing the impact of Circles of Support and Accountability on the reintegration of adults convicted of sexual offences in the community', University of Leeds, online at: <http://www.law.leeds.ac.uk/research/projects/assessing-impact-cosa>

Link to executive summary: www.law.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/research/ccjs/CoSA/CoSA-Executive-Summary.pdf

Link to report: www.law.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/research/ccjs/CoSA/CoSA-Full-Report.pdf

Circles of Support and Accountability: How and Why They Work for Sex Offenders

Abstract: Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) provide re-integrating sex offenders with a group of trained volunteers who support this rehabilitation process. Effect studies show promising results in reduction of recidivism. This study provides a theoretical underpinning and empirical validation of the CoSA intervention model, based on a grounded theory analysis of 38 circle narratives, reflecting the experiences of 21 circles. Four circle functions appear to be essential, with inclusion being most important. Inclusion is serving basic human needs and is motivating the sex offender to allow monitoring and being held accountable. Program integrity and a positive group development are essential preconditions for circle effectiveness.

Höing, M., Bogaerts, S. and Vogelvang, B. (2013) 'Circles of Support and Accountability: How and Why They Work for Sex Offenders', *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 267-295

Link to article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15228932.2013.808526>

Doing Something About It: A Follow-up Study of Sex Offenders participating in Thames Valley Circles of Support and Accountability

Abstract: The paper describes the establishment and first four years of operation of Thames Valley Circles of Support and Accountability (TVCOSA), an organisation which recruits and trains public volunteers into support groups for sex offenders released from prison back into the community. The paper examines the literature around the evaluation of sex offender treatment methods and discusses the problems in demonstrating the effectiveness of interventions in this area of criminal justice. Due to low numbers involved in the intervention at the point of study (14) a qualitative approach is used and the focus of the paper is on analysing incidents of recidivism (e.g. any further instance of offence-connected behaviour) displayed in the men accommodated by the programme and subsequent actions taken by TVCOSA and other Public Protection Agencies to manage risk. Thus far none of the sex offenders involved has been reconvicted for a sexual offence. An account is given of the rehabilitation undertaken with each sex offender undergoing the programme and some key statistics relating to the group are summarised. The paper concludes with some detailed proposals for further evaluation of the TVCOSA initiative.

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

Link to article: www.cjp.org.uk/bjcv/volume-5-issue-1/