

# Circles of Support and Accountability



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# Overview

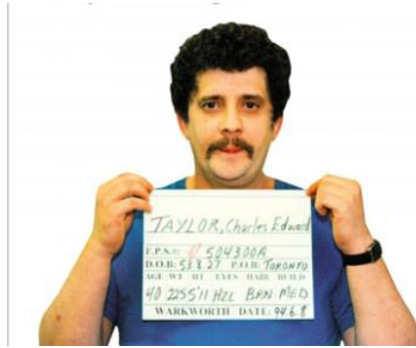
- What are Circles of Support & Accountability?
- Sky News Documentary
- Characteristics of Core Members
- Do Circles work?
- Discussion

*Thanks to Martin Clarke and Circles staff*

# What is a Circle?

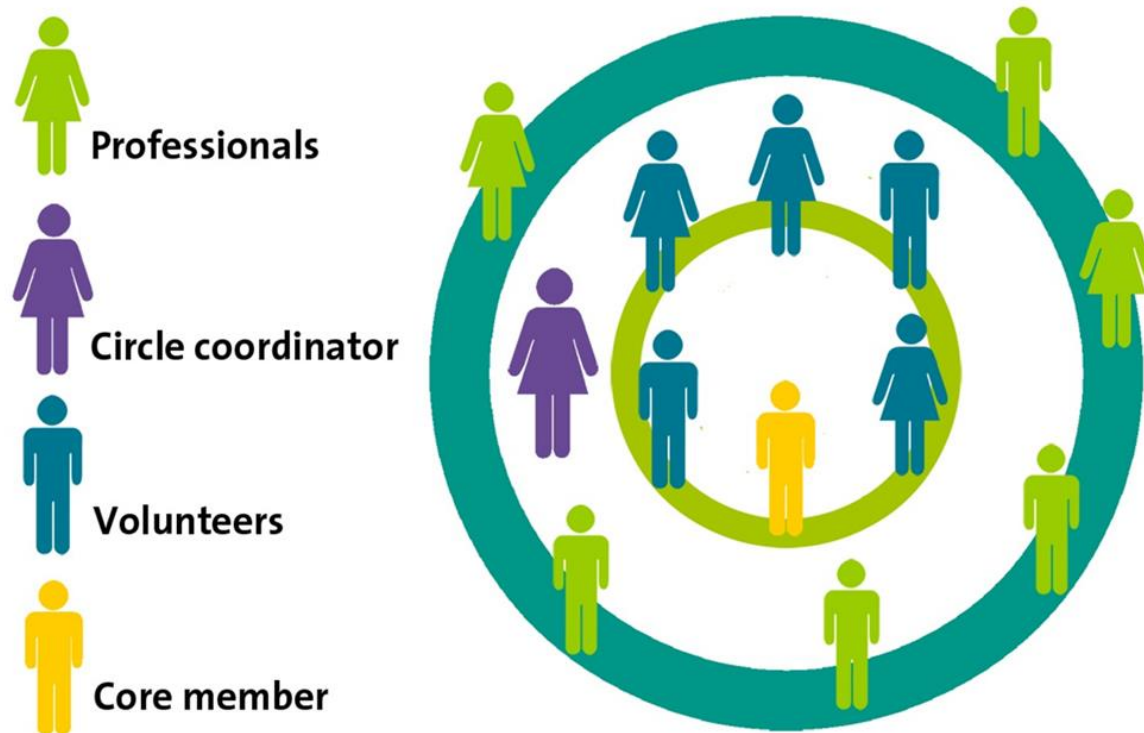
- A 'Circle of Support and Accountability' (CoSA) is a group of volunteers from a local community which forms a Circle around a sex offender ('Core Member') in order to provide a supportive social network that also requires the Core Member to take responsibility (be 'accountable') for his/her ongoing risk management.

# A bit of history



- Started in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, in 1994
- Charlie Taylor to be released without ongoing probation support
- Harry Nigh, Mennonite pastor – Guidance and support
- Spontaneous response became more formalised
- Quakers instrumental in bringing Circles to the UK
- 2002: Three pilot sites
- 13 projects in UK, up to 200 new Circles a year
- Circles UK formed in 2007 – national organisation to support development and effective operation of Circles
- Projects in about 15 countries worldwide

# How do Circles operate?



## Phase One

12 – 18 months

Weekly group meetings

Individual volunteer contact

Feedback to agencies

## Phase Two

6 – 9 months

Formal supervision by coordinator ends

Support given on a more informal basis

# What do Circles do?

## Support

- Improving motivation
- Reintegration
- Improving skills
- Social network
- Emotional support
- Positive modelling
- Assistance with practical issues, e.g., job applications

## Accountability

- Monitoring progress
- Challenging beliefs and attitudes
- Extra layer of surveillance

# Inside Circles

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8Hdcz\\_fXQk&fbclid=IwAR3hAqmx5qkme3YrIJCAAz60bTlyejXpPhe2e9pdkzspB2IWvBh3\\_a9MI4U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8Hdcz_fXQk&fbclid=IwAR3hAqmx5qkme3YrIJCAAz60bTlyejXpPhe2e9pdkzspB2IWvBh3_a9MI4U)

# Characteristics of core members

**CBMH** CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR  
AND MENTAL HEALTH

Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health  
27: 191–206 (2017)  
Published online 20 May 2016 in Wiley Online Library  
(wileyonlinelibrary.com) DOI: 10.1002/cbm.2003

## Circles of support and accountability: The characteristics of core members in England and Wales

MARTIN CLARKE<sup>1</sup>, LEAH WARWICK<sup>2</sup>, AND BIRGIT VÖLLM<sup>1,3</sup>,  
<sup>1</sup>Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust - Institute of Mental  
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Nottingham - Institute of Mental Health, Nottingham, UK

# Characteristics of core members

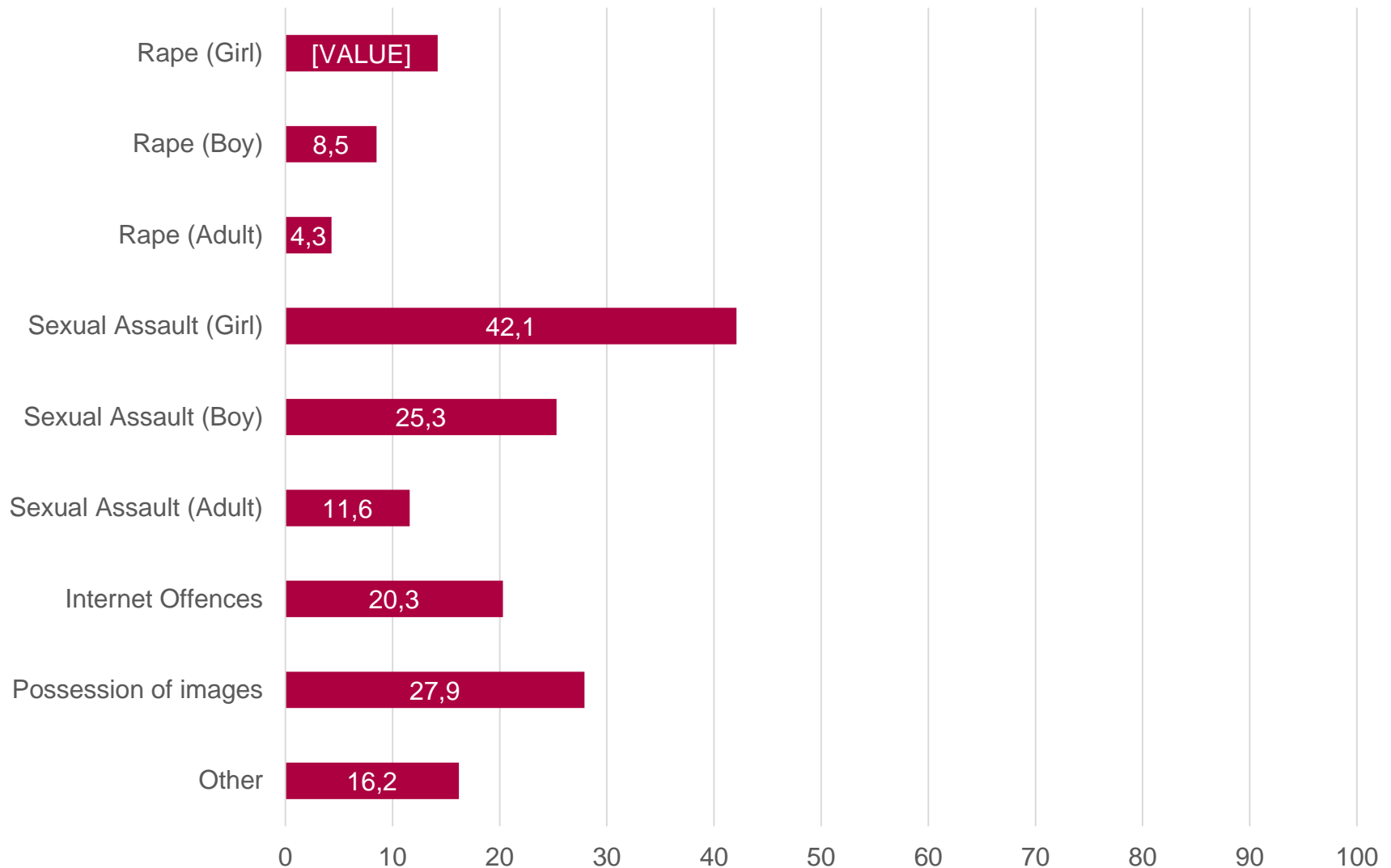
- Based on routinely collected, anonymised data extracted by Circles projects from their case files and collated by Circles UK
- 275 male Core Members from 10 project areas, 2002 - 2013
- Data pertaining to:
  - Demographic information
  - Offending
  - Referral information
  - Intervention history
  - Risk
  - Circumstances at beginning and end of Circle

# Demographics

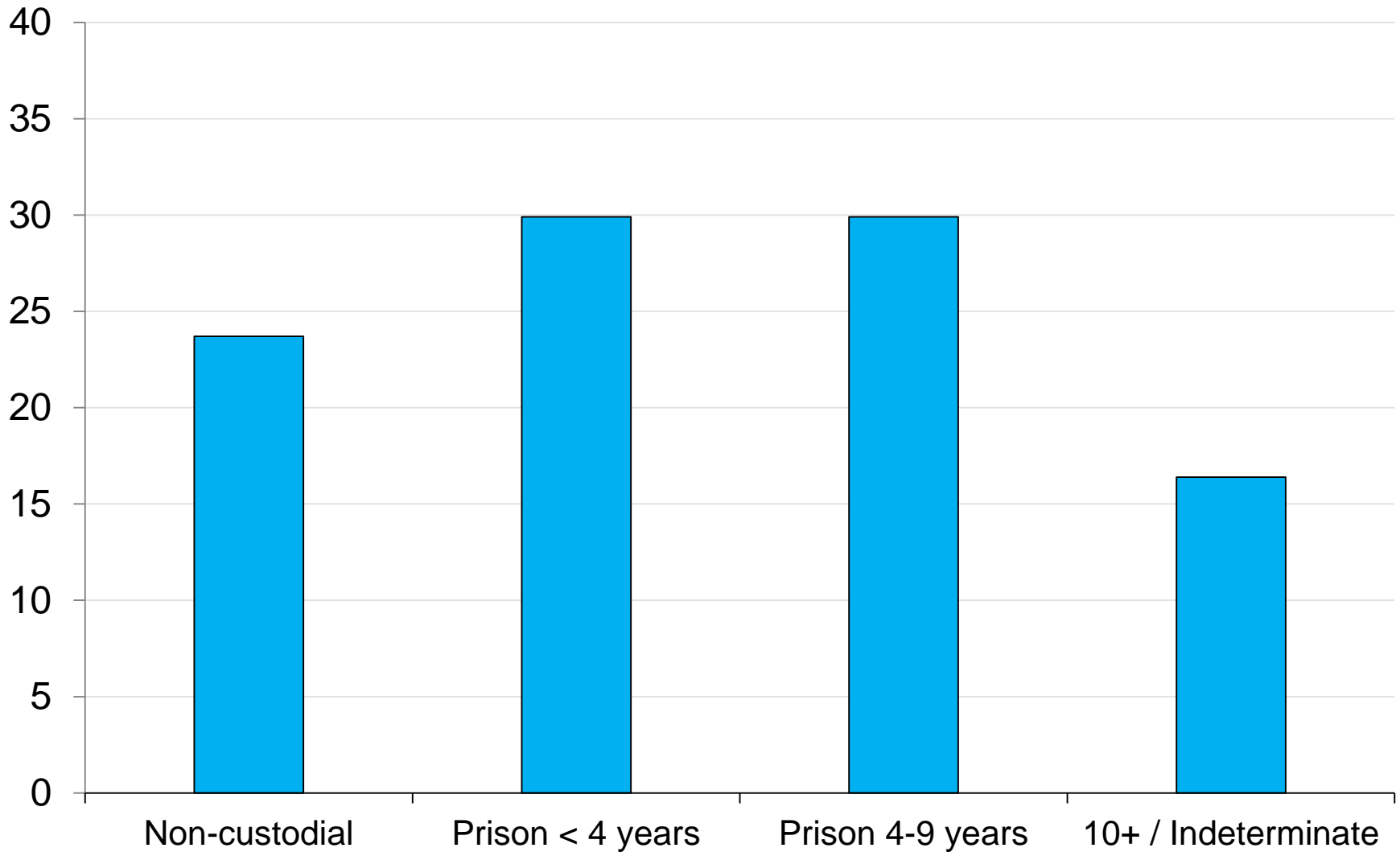
- Mean age on acceptance to the Circle
  - 46 years (SD = 14.0)
- Ethnicity (recorded for 261 Core Members)
  - White British (96.6%) or White other (2.6%)
- Sexual orientation (disclosed by 233 Core Members)
  - 169 (73%) heterosexual
  - 41 (18%) gay
  - 23 (10%) bi-sexual
- Religious affiliation (recorded for 203 Core Members)
  - 107 (53%) no religious affiliation
  - 86 (42%) Christian
  - 10 (5%) other

# Index offences

Not mutually exclusive



# Index Offence sentence

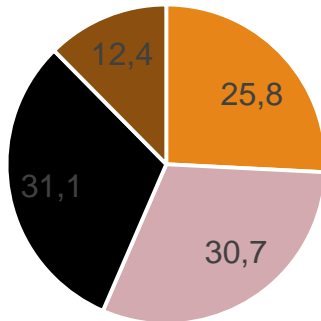


# Referrals and treatment

- Referral source (n = 242)
  - 82% Probation
  - 10% Police
  - 8% other
- Sex Offender Treatment
  - Approx. half had taken part in a prison programme
  - Approx. half had taken part in a community programme
  - 73/251 (29%) had participated in both programmes
  - 51/251 (20%) had not participated in either type

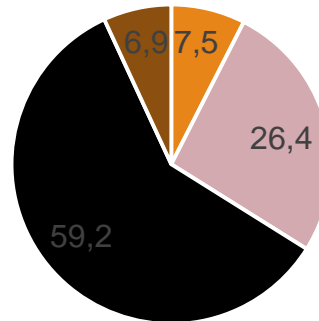
# Risk levels

Risk Matrix 2000



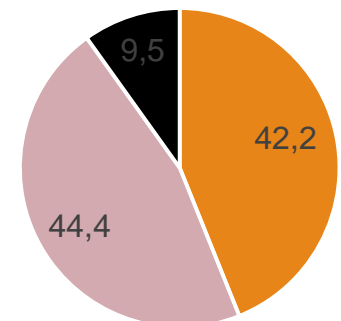
■ Low ■ Medium ■ High ■ Very high

OASys children



■ Low ■ Medium ■ High ■ Very high

MAPPA level



■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3

# Circles endings

- 192/275 (70%) had ended at the time of data collection
  - 131 (68%) had a planned ending
  - 57 (30%) had an unplanned ending, e.g., recalled, did not engage, withdrew from Circle
  - 4 (2%) type of ending not recorded
- 10 Circles ended within the first month
- 9 Circles were still meeting after 2 years
  - 2 were still meeting after 3 years

# Do Circles work?

- How would we know they do?
- Qualitative
  - Positive statements from CM, volunteers, probation, etc.
- Differences in key outcomes
  - **Re-offending**
  - Psychosocial outcomes
- Economic evaluations

# Systematic review effectiveness

Article

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## **Circles of Support and Accountability for Sex Offenders: A Systematic Review of Outcomes**

Sexual Abuse: A Journal of  
Research and Treatment

1–33

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**Martin Clarke<sup>1</sup>, Susan Brown<sup>2</sup>, and Birgit Völm<sup>1,2</sup>**

# Overview of studies

Author, year	Study type	Country	Particip.
<b>Duwe, 2012</b>	<b>RCT</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>31 / 31</b>
<b>Bates, 2014</b>	<b>Retrospective cohort study with “broadly matched” control group – referred but no Circle</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>71 / 71</b>
<b>Wilson, 2009</b>	<b>Retrospective cohort study with matched control group</b>	<b>Canada</b>	<b>44 / 44</b>
<b>Wilson, 2007</b>	<b>Retrospective cohort study with matched control group</b>	<b>Canada</b>	<b>60 / 60</b>
<b>Clarke, 2017</b>	<b>Case series with some matching</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>275 CMs</b>
Earnshaw, 2014	Case series (dynamic risk review)	UK	52 CMs
Hoing, 2014	Case series, prospective design	Netherlands	17 CMs
McCartan, 2013	Case series (Outcomes obtained from qualitative report)	UK	32 CMs
Bates, 2012	Case series	UK	60 CMs
Fox, 2013	Case series (Circles for sex offenders and other offenders)	USA	12 / 9
Bates, 2012	Case series (dynamic risk review)	UK	13 CMs
Haselwood-Pocsik, 2008	Case series (Outcomes obtained from qualitative report)	UK	5 CMs
Bates, 2007	Case series	UK	16 CMs
QPSW, 2005	Case series	UK	20 CMs
Wilson, 2001	Case series	Canada	30 CMs

# Changes in Circumstances beginning /end of Circle

	Start (%)	End (%)	<i>p</i>
Family contact (n = 172)	67.4	68.6	.814
Known Debts (n = 123)	14.6	11.4	.454
Mental Health difficulties (n = 173)	16.8	17.9	.824
Alcohol problems (n = 176)	15.3	11.4	.143
Drug problems (n = 177)	6.2	5.1	.727
Community Foren. Psych. Tx (n = 174)	3.4	1.1	.125
Community Gen. Psych. Tx (n = 154)	3.9	1.3	.219
Substance Abuse Treatment (n = 155)	2.6	2.6	1.000

## Changes in Circumstances beginning / end of Circle, ctd.

	Start (%)	End (%)	<i>p</i>
In a Relationship (n = 147)	14.3	20.4	.049
Claiming Benefits (n = 164)	88.4	82.9	.012
Employment status (n = 175)			
Employed/Student/Retired/Disabled	24.6	32.6	.001
Unemployed	75.4	67.4	
Accommodation status (n = 166)			
Partner/family/own accommodation/tenant	48.8	80.1	.001
Approved premises/hostel/others	51.2	19.6	
Community Sex Offender Programme (n = 159)	32.1	13.8	.001

# Matched control studies, Canada

Wilson, Pichea & Prinzo, 2007

- 60 CMs, 60 controls
- Mean f/u 55 m (CM), 53 m (controls)
- Extensive matching (risk, time of release, treatment) but CM higher risk
- Recidivism (charged with new offence or breach)
  - Sexual 5% / 17% ( $p < 0.05$ )
  - Any violent 15% / 35% ( $p < 0.05$ )
- Time to first failure 22 vs. 18 m (n.s.)

# Matched control studies, Canada

Wilson, Cortoni & McWhinnie, 2009

- 44 CMs, 44 controls from different projects
- Mean f/u 36 m (CM), 39 m (controls)
- Extensive matching (offending, time and area of release, treatment, phallometry), but control group higher on STATIC
- Recidivism (charged with or convicted of new offence)
  - Sexual 2.3% / 16.7% ( $p < 0.05$ )
  - Any violent 9% / 34% ( $p < 0.01$ )
- Time to first failure 17 vs. 10 m (n.s.)

# Cohort study with comparison group - UK

Bates, Williams, Wilson & Wilson, 2013

- First 100 CMs from Circles South East
  - 71 included in analysis
  - 29 excluded: 19 only in Circle for less than 6 m, 10 total less than 90 d
- Mean f/u 53 m
- 77% MAPPA level 2
- Over 80% contact sexual offence
  - Of those over 80% against children
- Comparison group
  - Referred + suitable but not received
  - Matched for risk
- Behavioural/offending outcome data
  - Breach/compliance
  - Reconviction (sexual, violence)
  - Prison recall

# Cohort study - UK, findings

Outcome	Circles	Comparison group
Sexual reconvictions	4 (3 non-contact 1 historical contact)	5 (3 contact, 2 non-contact)
Non-sexual reconvictions	3 (all non-violent)	9 (7 violent, 2 non-violent)
<b>Contact sexual or violent reconviction</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>

# The one and only ... RCT

Duwe, 2012

- US study (Minnesota CoSA)
- 31 CMs, 31 controls
- Mean f/u 2 yrs
- Risk Level 2 (moderate) risk (according to panel)
- Extensive matching
  - But more CMs had multiple prior sexual offences
- Re-offending outcome data
  - Sexual offence re-arrest
  - Any re-arrest
  - Any reconviction
  - Re-incarceration for technical violation
  - Re-incarceration for new offence
  - Any re-incarceration

# RCT findings

Outcome	Circles	Controls	Significant difference?
Sexual offence re-arrest	0%	3.2%	No
Any re-arrest	39%	65%	Yes
Any reconviction	26%	45%	No
Re-incarceration for technical violation (revocation)	48%	68%	Yes
Re-incarceration for new offence	10%	26%	No
Any re-incarceration	48%	61%	Yes

# Summary

- Circles are a voluntary scheme to help in the reintegration of sex offenders
- It is possible to recruit volunteers to get involved
- Core members have mainly offences of sexual assault against children, possession of images and internet offences with short to medium term prison sentences and medium to high risk categories
- Positive experience of all stake holders
- Initial support for change in psychosocial parameters
- Based on gold-standard RCT, evidence for effectiveness of Circles for re-offending is limited but initial support
- Limitations due to
  - Small samples
  - Low numbers of sexual recidivism

# Discussion

- Would Circles be needed in your country?
- How would the scheme be perceived?
- Could volunteers be recruited?
- Who should Circles be offered to
  - Only high risk offenders
  - All in need due to psychosocial factors
- Sole method of intervention or only as adjunct
- Should it be made compulsory?
- Balance between support and accountability
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