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=IwAR3hAqmx5qkme3YrlJCAAz60bTlyejXpPhe2e9pdkzspB2lWvBh3_a9MI4U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8Hdcz_fXQk&fbclid=IwAR3hAqmx5qkme3YrlJCAAz60bTlyejXpPhe2e9pdkzspB2lWvBh3_a9MI4U)
Circles of support and accountability: The characteristics of core members in England and Wales

MARTIN CLARKE\textsuperscript{1}, LEAH WARWICK\textsuperscript{2}, AND BIRGIT VÖLLM\textsuperscript{1,3},
\textsuperscript{1}Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust - Institute of Mental Health, Nottingham, UK; \textsuperscript{2}Circles UK, Reading, UK; \textsuperscript{3}University of 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

- Rape (Girl) [VALUE]
- Rape (Boy) 8,5
- Rape (Adult) 4,3
- Sexual Assault (Girl) 42,1
- Sexual Assault (Boy) 25,3
- Sexual Assault (Adult) 11,6
- Internet Offences 20,3
- Possession of images 27,9
- Other 16,2
Index Offence sentence

- Non-custodial
- Prison < 4 years
- Prison 4-9 years
- 10+ / Indeterminate
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: 31.1%
- Medium: 30.7%
- High: 25.8%
- Very high: 12.4%

OASys children

- Low: 59.2%
- Medium: 26.4%
- High: 7.5%
- Very high: 6.9%

MAPPA level

- 1: 44.4%
- 2: 42.2%
- 3: 9.5%
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
Circles of Support and Accountability for Sex Offenders: A Systematic Review of Outcomes

Martin Clarke¹, Susan Brown², and Birgit Völlm¹,²
# Overview of studies

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Start (%)</th>
<th>End (%)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family contact (n = 172)</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>.814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Known Debts (n = 123)</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>.454</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental Health difficulties (n = 173)</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>.824</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alcohol problems (n = 176)</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>.143</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drug problems (n = 177)</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>.727</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Foren. Psych. Tx (n = 174)</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Gen. Psych. Tx (n = 154)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse Treatment (n = 155)</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
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Changes in Circumstances beginning / end of Circle, ctd.

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Circles</th>
<th>Controls</th>
<th>Significant difference?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual offence re-arrest</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any re-arrest</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any reconviction</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-incarceration for technical violation (revocation)</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-incarceration for new offence</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any re-incarceration</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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