



Evaluating Yorkshire and Humberside Circles of Support and Accountability 2011-2015:

Core members, volunteers & partnership working

circles
yorkshire and
humberside
delivering circles of support
and accountability

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Introduction

Introduction

Yorkshire and Humberside Circles of Support Accountability (YHCOSA) registered as a charity in 2009 and ran the first Circle in 2010. This report looks at the journey of the first 4 years of YHCOSA's operations with the aim of highlighting good practice and areas to improve upon. This report will be used to help YHCOSA build upon its strengths and move forward as an expert charity working with people who have committed sexual offences, and the community volunteers that support them.

This evaluation explored three key themes: core members, volunteers and statutory partnerships.

The core member theme utilised existing data from 38 YHCOSA male core members who have completed a Circle in Yorkshire and Humberside since 2011. This theme had two elements; firstly, to investigate the offending rates and post Circle behaviours of these men. Secondly, to analyse the pre to post Circle scores on the Dynamic Risk Review (DRR, Bates & Wagner, 2012), a measure used nationally to try and assess the dynamic risk factors related to sexual offending in core members.

The Circle volunteer theme considered the contribution of the volunteers to Yorkshire and Humberside COSA (YHCOSA). This included what motivates them to be involved in Circles, what benefits they see from their volunteering and if there are any difficulties or negative consequences that result from their involvement.

The partnership-working theme was assessed based on 42 operational statutory staff opinions of the added benefit of the YHCOSA model, which uses Coordinators as Probation Officers.

Background

A Circle of Support and Accountability is a group of 4-6 volunteers from the local community who form a Circle around one core member - an individual who has previous convictions for sexual offending. The individual needs to be motivated not to reoffend and assessed by Circles as emotionally lonely and socially isolated.

Volunteers support the core member to resettle into the community and establish a safe, positive and purposeful life. At the same time, the volunteers hold the core member to account for any risky behaviour or intentions, thus acting as a safety net for the local community and identifying concerns early.

The first Circle of Support and Accountability (COSA) started in Canada in 1994. COSA was developed by Mennonites in response to the high profile release of a child sexual abuser into an unaccepting community with no statutory supervision.

Since 1994 there have been multiple evaluations of Circles in both Canada and the UK. Evaluations have been promising, showing reduced recidivism and positive re-integration into local communities. These findings will be discussed in more detail in the introduction to core member theme.

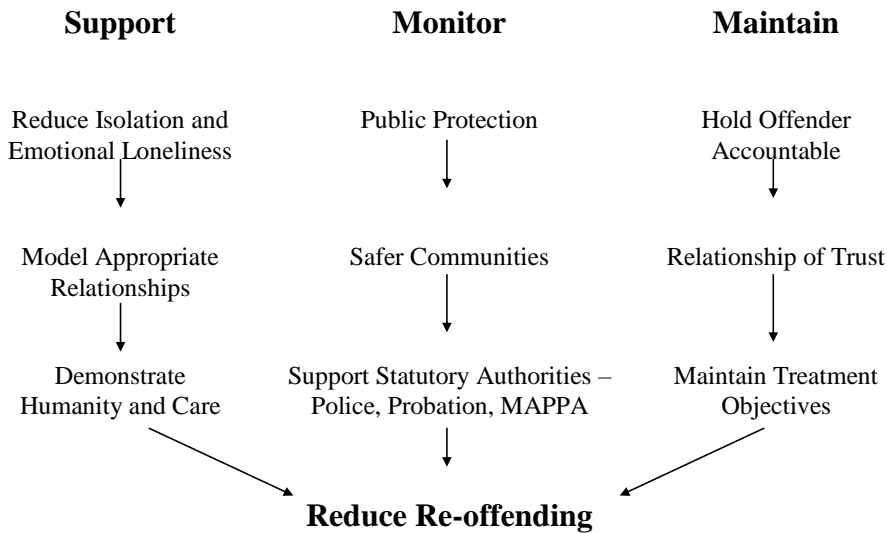
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) were instrumental in introducing Circles to the UK. They researched the Canadian approach, brought the concept to the attention of the Home Office and invited stakeholders, currently working with people who sexually offend, to investigate how the model may be implemented in the UK. The Home Office, impressed by the impact of Circles appeared to have on high-risk people who have sexually offended, commissioned three pilot projects. The pilot projects became operational in 2002 in Hampshire and Thames Valley (managed by Quaker Peace and Social Witness), The Lucy Faithfull Foundation and Greater Manchester Community Chaplaincy.

The pilots indicated that Circles run in the UK had a similar impact on recidivism to the Canadian model Bates, Saunders and Wilson (2007). However, there were some significant differences. The development of a UK based model of Circles involved statutory services as partners and was more risk focussed than the Canadian model. Community involvement was still paramount, with the 'magic ingredient' being the volunteers, but statutory services were seen as key to enable adequate risk assessment and identification of appropriate offenders for a Circle.

A UK model was developed based on 3 key principles: Support, Monitor and Maintain (Saunders and Wilson 2003)

Figure 1 - The Three Key Principles

The Three Key Principles



1

The UK developed Circles model is very much a partnership approach and consists of 2 Circles. The 'inner' Circle comprises 4/6 trained community volunteers and the core member (a man or woman who has committed a sexual offence). The inner Circle meets weekly and aims to provide a supportive social network that also requires the core member to take responsibility (be 'accountable') for his/her ongoing risk management. The Circle also provide support and practical guidance in areas such as developing social skills, finding suitable accommodation or helping the core member to find appropriate hobbies, interests and employment. The 'outer' Circle includes the professionals in this process. Each outer Circle is different depending on the core member and it may include professionals such as representatives from Probation, Police, Housing Support and Mental Health services. The professionals are there for advice and guidance when needed and they also receive regular updates and attend Circle reviews. Key to this entire process is the Circles Coordinator, a trained professional whose role is to assess a potential core member's suitability for a Circle, source, match and supervise volunteers and oversee the Circle.

After the initial pilot funding the Home Office renewed funding for all the original projects to enable further investigation into the Circles approach.

At the same time as the funding was renewed, the Ministry of Justice was also working with the existing projects on the notion of developing an independent charity. The main purpose of this charity was to ensure compliance to the Circle model across the country. This charity became Circles UK and was set up in 2008.

Early development into Yorkshire and Humberside

In 2005, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation used some of the pilot funding to set up Yorkshire's first Circles in South Yorkshire. At the same time as Lucy Faithfull were setting up in South Yorkshire, Humberside and North Yorkshire were also independently exploring the Circles model.

A North Yorkshire Probation Manager visited Canada to learn about Circles and came back inspired! North Yorkshire Probation, in partnership with SOVA (A national charity which supports ex-offenders) subsequently funded its own pilot.

In Humberside a member of the Quaker Peace and Social Justice Group who was helping to set up Circles UK noticed there were no Circles in his local area. He investigated neighbouring regions and found that both South Yorkshire and North Yorkshire were 'organically' growing projects that met local needs and resource availability. This led to 3 very different infrastructure approaches within Yorkshire and Humberside, none of which knew about one another initially

In 2007, the professionals and volunteers involved in their own local Circles started meeting regularly and formed a 'steering group'. This group discussed collaborative working and joint funding considerations. Lucy Faithfull Foundation and SOVA as national charities decided not to lead regionally, therefore in 2009 the steering group made the decision to form a separate charity – Yorkshire & Humberside Circles of Support and Accountability (YHCOSA).

Key people who had been involved in the initial set up of the pilot projects continued to be involved and were instrumental in establishing YHCOSA. Many of them, along with a variety of other interested parties, opted to become Trustees. In the early stages of YHCOSA there was discussion about how best to deliver the UK model and be financially sustainable. The decision was made to continue with the existing model, which centred on using qualified Probation Officers as Coordinators. This model was based on 2 clear rationales:

Firstly, the belief that the level of professional defensibility around the risk assessment and management of people who have sexually offended in the community is increased by having a Probation Officer as a Coordinator.

Secondly, in a time of austerity, Probation Trusts in Y&H were committed to the concept of COSA, but were restricted in making direct financial contributions. Provision of staff to act as Coordinators was assessed as a pragmatic solution and relevant contribution to YHCOSA.

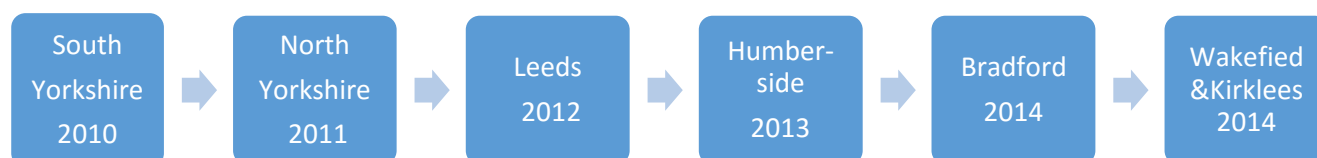
In 2011 YHCOSA was awarded a Big Lottery Grant. This, alongside growing financial support from the Police, other smaller grants and the secondment of Probation Officer Coordinators enabled YHCOSA to invest in the growth, development and availability of Circles across the region.

YHCOSA Project Growth

Over the last 4 years YHCOSA has expanded and now offers Circles across Yorkshire and Humberside. From numerous, small, organically grown projects, YHCOSA have worked hard to become a robust and knowledgeable regional charity. Winning awards such as The Guardian Small Charity Award and the Butler Trust Award. YHCOSA now offer a consistent regional service, with over-arching values, principles, policies and practice.

With the growing support of statutory services, community groups and volunteers, YHCOSA is proud to report the establishment of its 64th Circle and plans to offer Circles in Lincolnshire in the near future.

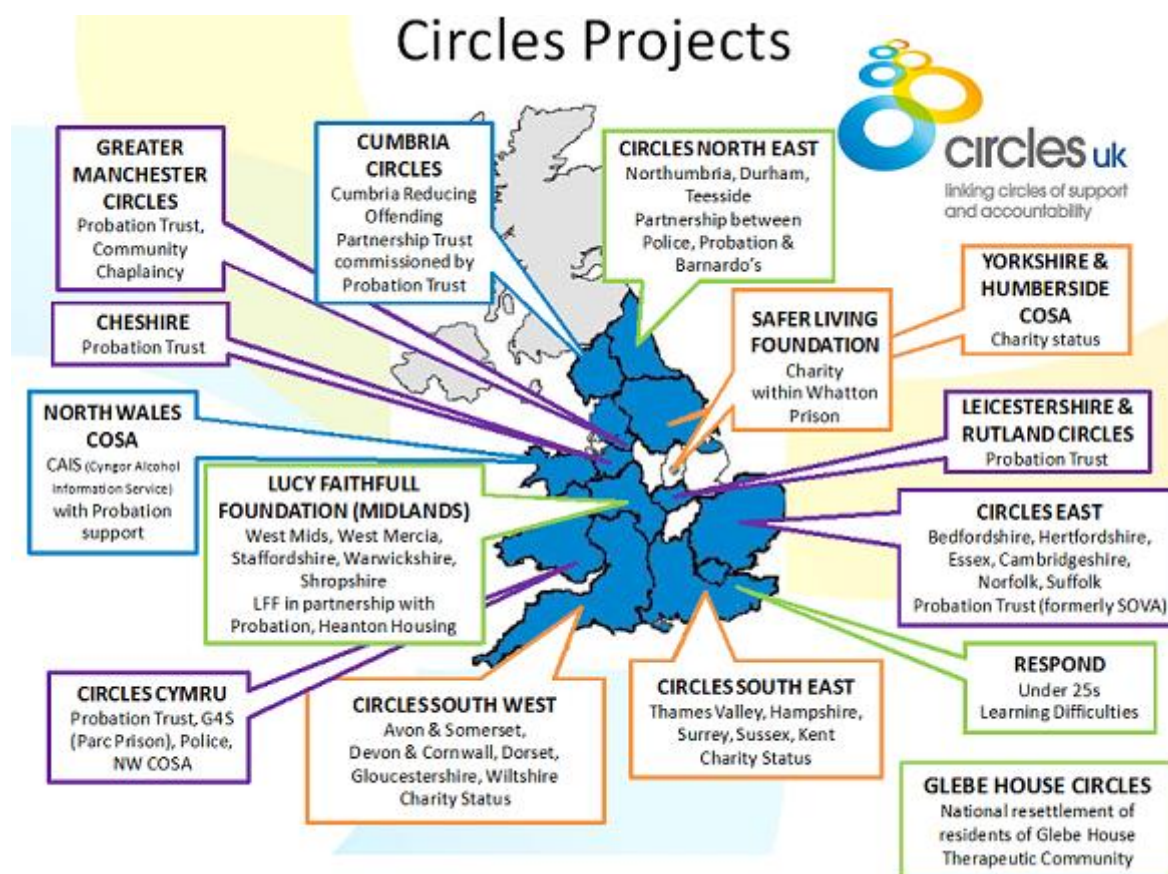
Figure 2 - YHCOSA Project Growth



National Circles

At the same time as YHCOSA was growing and developing, many other areas in the UK had heard about the success of Circles, and projects were emerging right across the country. There are now 15 projects across the UK.

Figure 3 - Location of National Circles Projects



Over the last 21 years Circles have grown both in the UK and worldwide (America, Australia, Europe) and there is an increasing body of evidence (Duwe 2012; Bates, Williams and Wilson 2013) that suggests Circles can help to reduce reoffending in high risk men.

YHCOSA are committed to delivering the most effective Circles possible in their local area. To enable this, a review of the Circles run so far, volunteer experiences and partnership working has been undertaken.

In this report these three themes will be presented as 3 separate studies, each with its own introduction, method, results and discussion. Case studies are included between studies to remind the reader of the real life impact of Circles. At the end of the report the themes will be discussed together and areas of improvement will be highlighted.

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Case Studies

Part 1

Core Member Case Study 1

Bill is a man in his thirties with convictions for sexual offences committed against boys. When the volunteers first met Bill, he had just moved from the Probation Approved Premises into a local authority flat. He was 350 miles from his own town and had settled in an area where he had no previous ties. His flat had no furniture or carpets and he was totally isolated; the only other person he knew in the area was another offender he had met in the Hostel.

Bill engaged well over the lifetime of the Circle. It became obvious to the volunteers that, despite appearing confident, he really struggled to try new things and was worried about meeting new people for fear they would reject him, or find out about his offending history.

The volunteers supported him to identify some volunteering he would be interested in. An allotment project was identified and Probation made the initial contact and disclosures were made and it was agreed he could attend up to two days a week. Bill's confidence and social skills grew rapidly whilst he was involved in the project and he completed some horticulture qualifications, which gave him a sense of pride and achievement.

Volunteers supported him to try a number of new activities including playing pool, joining a gym and attending a book club. Bill was able to improve his confidence in being in busy public places and became confident enough to talk to some of the other gym members he saw there regularly.

As his confidence grew, he was required to go to an employment agency by the benefits agency. Despite being really nervous, he was able to complete the basic skills course they asked him to do and then, as he had found it so enjoyable, he volunteered to go on several other work skills courses to build up his CV.

Ultimately, the Circle came to an end when Bill secured full-time employment, working shifts, which made meeting regularly problematic. It was clear how much progress he had made in terms of his confidence, self-esteem, social skills and willingness to engage in activities.

Six months after the Circle ended, he had maintained his job and was regularly picking up additional shifts, which showed how much his employers valued his work. He now had friends amongst his colleagues, and they would go out socially once a month. He had been able to buy himself some new clothes and to redecorate his flat and buy new furniture, so he felt comfortable and secure there.

Volunteer Case Study 1

I am a male in my mid-sixties. Now retired, I spent my working life in the electrical industry. I have three very grown up children and two grandchildren from my long ago dissolved marriage. For many years now I have been in a relationship with a lady who gets on very well with my offspring, (as do I with hers). Basically I see myself as just an ordinary, working class guy the likes of which you could meet anywhere.

I decided that as I now have time to spare I could spend some of it helping others in need. I chose Circles as it is becoming increasingly obvious that the sexual abuse of children is more widespread than any of us realised it was, (hardly a day going by without reports of such, both historical and new).

Being part of a Circle has been at times demanding and frustrating but satisfying when eventually we Circle members felt that we had managed to create a new social life for the core member that would distract him from his sexual desires. (I am sure he will have these desires throughout his life but I like to think that we have helped to make him realise that it is so very wrong to act these out).

The core member in our circle, being released from prison into a strange town had become very reclusive. It became apparent to the Circle members that his only associate was another offender that he had met in the bail hostel. This was, of course, in strict contravention of his release conditions. We reported this and prompt action was taken. This is a clear example of us holding him to account for his actions.

We discussed with him possible pastimes that he might like to pursue, helped him to set these up, and he now has activities three days a week. Combined with his weekly ex-offenders course and our circle meetings, he now has quite a social life!!! This is a clear example of our supporting him.

I feel that the Circles organisation is very well run by a group of people who have dedication to their objectives. I personally feel that I have had their whole help, advice and support whenever I have needed it. Whilst we cannot guarantee that the core member will not re-offend, I feel that we have greatly reduced that possibility.

Our particular Circle has now reduced to fortnightly meetings. These consist of a few minutes establishing that the core member has no issues that we can assist with, organising the next meeting, and thereafter take the form of a social gathering, discussing everyday topics. This indicates to me that we have fulfilled our objectives and I take great satisfaction from this.



Core Members

Core Members

Introduction

This strand of the research aims to investigate the impact of attending a Circle in Yorkshire and Humberside (YHCOSA) on core members. There will be two parts to the study- Part One will provide a descriptive analysis of the men attending Circles in YHCOSA. It will also investigate the re offending rates and post Circle behaviour of men who have been involved in a Circle, with a focus on any reduction in harm to victims. Part Two will analyse the pre to post scores of the Dynamic Risk Review (Bates & Wagner, 2012). This measure is used by YHCOSA (and all Circles projects nationwide) to assess the dynamic (changeable) risk factors related to sexual offending in core members (See Appendix 1). The results of both studies will be presented followed by recommendations for practice.

Part One- Demographic characteristics, reoffending rates and post Circle behaviours

Background

The research on Circles and the impact on recidivism are growing steadily, and are starting to demonstrate a positive and significant effect on reoffending rates. Wilson, Cortoni and McWhinnie (2009) evaluated a Canadian National sample of Circles, using 44 high-risk sexual offenders and matching them with 44 sexual offenders not in a Circle. Follow up time was 35 months on average and the groups were carefully matched on several factors. Those attending Circles had 83% less sexual offending, 73% less violent offending and 71% less general offending then the comparison group, and acquired 74% fewer charges and convictions.

However, there was a significant difference between the groups on one out of the two risk measures used, with the comparison group being more at risk. The authors argue that both groups were still of moderately high risk, and that the differences between the groups in offending were so large that this did not have an impact. They did undertake further statistical analysis, controlling for the risk score and the results indicated that the Circles group still had significantly lower odds of recidivism than the controls.

Duwe (2013) conducted the first (and only) Randomised Control Trial (RCT) of Circles using 31 Circle core members and 31 controls in Minnesota. Eligible offenders who wanted to take part in Circles were randomly assigned to either condition. Ethical concerns were addressed, as rather than Circles being withheld, there were not enough volunteer resources to provide a Circle for all those willing. Average follow-up time was two years for both groups. The results showed that the Circles group offended at around half the rate of the controls (25% vs 45%) for any offence. The only significant difference between the groups was for re arrest (Circles 38.7% vs control 64.5%). Out of all the offenders there was only one re arrest for a sexual offence (in the control group). The authors also carried out a costs- benefits analysis and reported a saving of 11,716 USD per person as a result of attending a Circle, an 82% return on investment. Circles ranks almost top in cost effectiveness for adult treatment programmes.

RCT designs are recognised as gold standard, so the results can be interpreted with a degree of confidence. It should also be noted that Circles are effective in spite of the increased monitoring and accountability that the core members receive compared to controls (i.e. they have more people checking on them).

Bates et al (2013) conducted an evaluation of the first 10 years of the Circles South East project in the UK. 71 core members were compared with a group of 71 sexual offenders, matched for risk, who were selected as suitable for Circles but did not attend. The average follow-up was 4 years and 7 months. Violent and sexual offending was higher for the comparison group but the difference was not statistically significant, with Circles members reoffending (sexually or violently) at a quarter of the rate of the comparison group. There was a reduction in harm effect for the Circles members, with none of them committing a contact violent or sexual offence.

The emerging results on the impact of Circles on re offending are positive and promising, if not always statistically significant. In addition to reconviction data it is also important to look at if there has been a reduction in harm to victims. Additionally, in line with the Circles ethos, consideration should be given to improvements in the quality of life of the core members.

The present study

Since the start of the YHCOSA project in 2011 a total of 64 Circles have been set up. This study will look at 38 of those Circles. It will not include Circles still running (18), or Circles that finished before 90 days (8). This follows previous research that used 90 days as a cut off based on the notion that before this point core members are not considered to have gained significantly from the Circle (Wilson, et al 2009). This study is a review of the first few years of YHCOSA, essentially whilst the project has still been in development. As such the data is sporadic in places and does not exist for all men who have completed Circles in YHCOSA. Demographic variables will be explored in order to understand who is being referred and accepted on to Circles in Yorkshire and Humberside. Risk data in the form of the Risk Matrix 2000/s (RM2000/s) will also be gathered. The RM2000 is a static risk assessment tool used by the Police, Prisons and National Probation Service and is designed to predict sexual and nonsexual violent reconviction among men who have been convicted of a sexual offence.

This study aims to conduct a preliminary exploration of how these core members have behaved post Circle in terms of reported sexual and non-sexual offending behaviour using data obtained from the Police National Computer (PNC). It will examine post Circle behaviours and consider reduction in harm. At the present time no control group has been utilised, and the study is investigative and exploratory.

Research questions

What are the demographic and risk characteristics of men engaging in Circles in YHCOSA?

What is the rate of sexual and non-sexual reoffending following completion of a Circle?

What are the recorded and non-recorded post Circle behaviours of the core members?

Is there any evidence of a reduction in harm to victims?

Method

Participants

There were 38 male participants in this study. This represents the total number of men who have completed a full Circle (at least 90 days) between March 2012 and July 2015. One female has taken part in a Circle in YHCOSA during this time, but was excluded from this analysis. All participants have been previously or currently convicted of a sexual offence, served a custodial or community sentence/sanction and are living in the community.

Procedure

The demographic data and RM2000/s scores were gathered from the YHCOSA database. The RM2000 data had previously been completed by the Offender Manager or Circle Coordinator (trained Probation Officer). The reconviction data was gathered from the Police National Computer (PNC) by Police Liaison Officers working with Circles. The collection of both the data sets was made throughout July- August 2015. The post Circle behaviour data was gleaned from members of YHCOSA staff who have worked closely with the core members, YHCOSA files and included information from the PNC checks. Demographic and risk data held on the database was checked for errors against the files and any mistakes rectified.

Results/analysis

The demographic and risk characteristics will be presented followed by the results from the PNC data, including a subgroup that have been at risk post Circle for at least 2 years. Data on post Circle behaviours and any reduction in harm will also be presented.

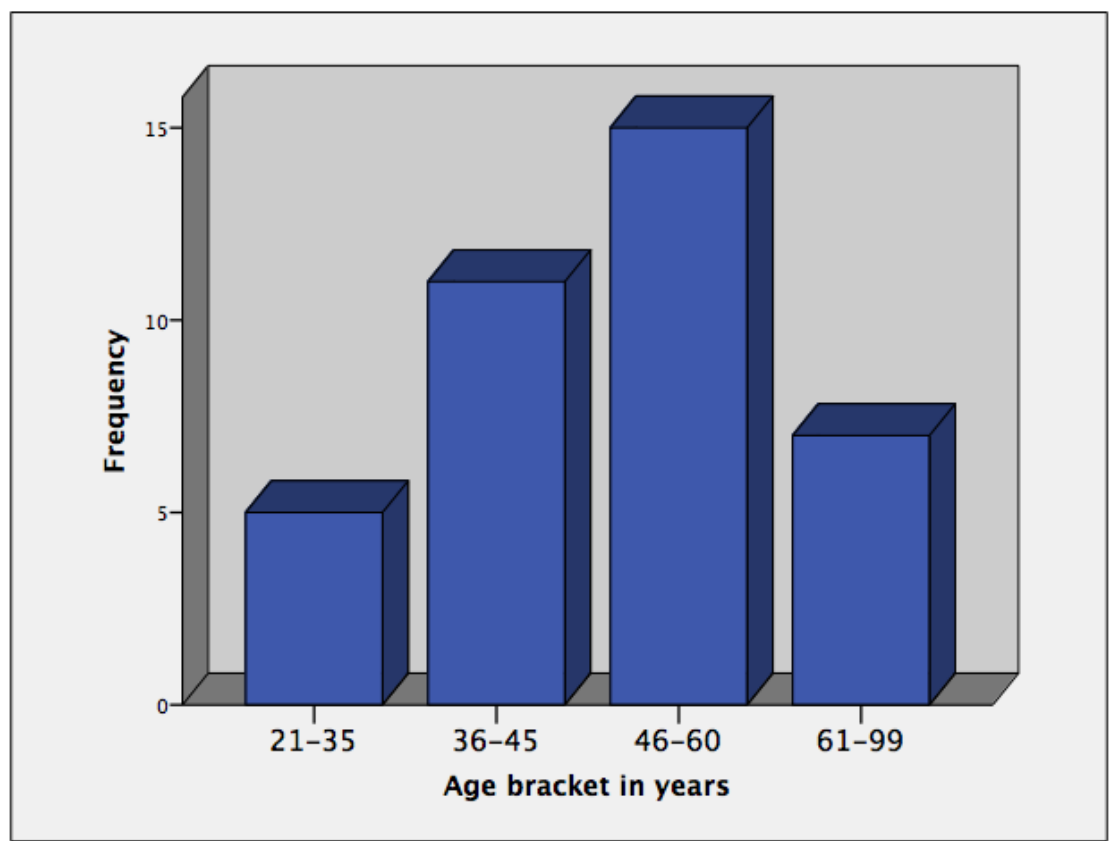
Demographic and risk data

Length of a Circle

The average length of a Circle was 11 months and 6 days (*SD*= 2.9). The range was 4 months to 1 year and 5 months.

Age

Figure 4 - Age ranges of the 38 core members.



5 men (13.2 %) fell into the 21-35 bracket, 11 (28.9 %) into the 36-45 category, 15 (39.5%) into the 46-60 band and 7(18.4%) into the 61+ bracket.

Ethnicity

37 (97.4%) of the 38 core members were White British. 1 (2.6%) was Asian or Asian British (Pakistani).

Offending behavior and treatment

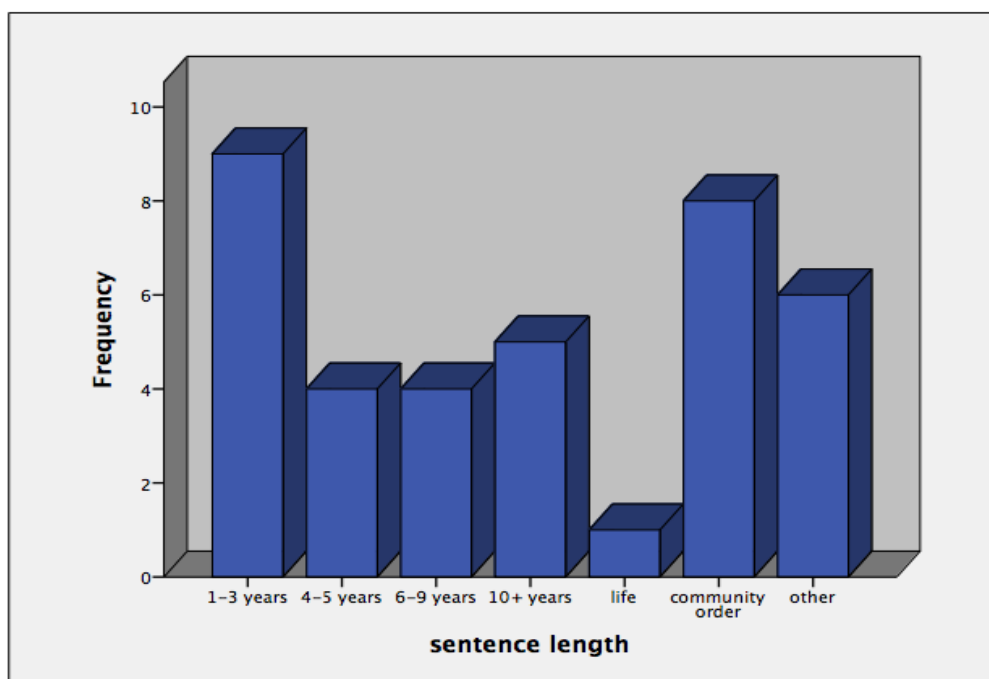
7 (18.4%) of the 38 core members had an index offence against an adult victim (aged 17 or above). 21 (55.3%) had an index offence against a child victim and 2 (5.1%) had an index offence against both adults and children. 8 (20.5%) were convicted of internet offending.

19 (50%) of the 38 core members had no sexual pre convictions and 19 (50%) had been previously convicted of a sexual offence.

26 (68.4%) of the 38 core members had completed treatment for their sexual offending behavior. 12 (31.6 %) had not completed any sexual offender treatment.

Sentences

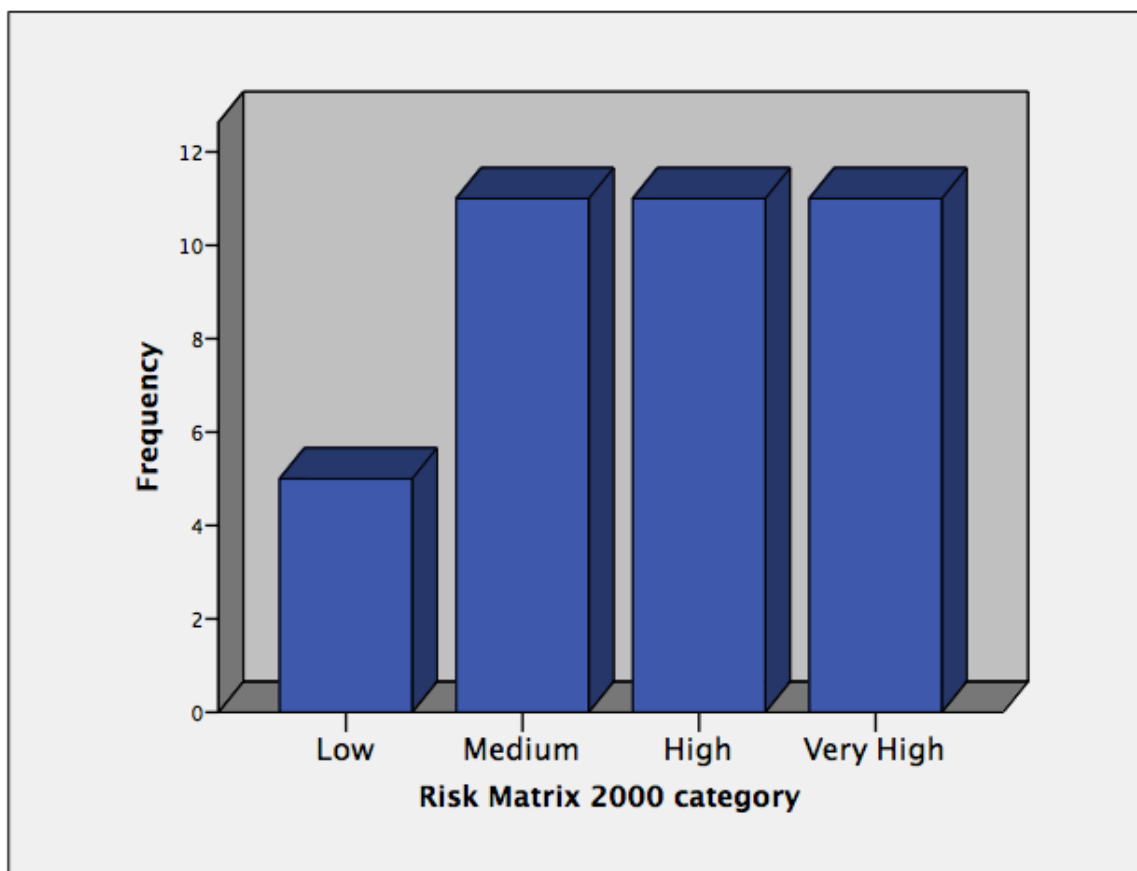
Figure 5 - Current sentences and community sanctions received by the core members.



23 (59%) had received custodial sentences. 5 (13.5%) had received a prison sentence of 10 years or more and 1 (2.7%) core member had received life imprisonment and was serving a life license in the community.

Risk categories

Figure 6 - Risk Matrix 2000/s categories for the core members



5 (13.2%) fell into the Low risk category, 11 (28.9%) into each of the Medium, High and Very High categories.

PNC data

All 38 men were included in the PNC data collection. The mean follow up time was 19 months and 18 days ($SD=11.1$), with a range of one month to 41 months (3 years and 5 months).

Table 1 - Sexual and non-sexual reconvictions of core members using PNC data

Offence category	Frequency
No offence recorded	30 (78.9%)
Reconvicted of sexual offence	1 (2.6 %)
Reconvicted of violent offence	0
Reconvicted of other/minor offence	2 (5.2 %)
Breach of Sex Offender Prevention Order (SOPO	2 (5.2 %)
Caution/conditional caution	1 (2.6 %)
Deceased	1 (2.6 %)

The majority of participants had not reoffended (78.9%). There was one reconviction for a sexual offence, two for 'other/minor non-sexual offending, and one for a conditional caution. There were no violent reconvictions. 2 participants had breached their Sexual Offender Prevention Orders.

PNC follow up for subgroup

Out of the 38 participants in this study, 15 had been at risk in the community post Circle for at least 2 years. Two years is the minimum recommended time for a follow up with sexual offenders. Whilst this reduces the sample considerably it is useful to explore this data. It should be noted that some of these men will have been at risk of sexual offending in the community for longer than the 2 years in total, however for the purposes of this study, 2 years at risk, post-Circle is explored. This group had spent a mean of 10 months 15 days in a Circle ($SD= 3$). The mean follow up time was 30 months and 15 days ($SD= 6.8$) with a range of 24- 41 months (3 years and 5 months). All were White British apart from 1 participant who was Asian/Asian British (Pakistani). 1 (6.7%) fell into the 21-35 years age bracket, 6 (30%) each into the 36-45 and 46-60 category and 2 (13.3%) into the 61+ age bracket.

Table 2 - Number of offences recorded by risk category for 2-year follow-up group.

RM2000/s category for all participants	Sexual offending	Violent offending	Other/min or non sexual offending	Caution/ conditional caution	Breach of SOPO	Total reconvictions for risk category	Reduction in harm*
Low n=2	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A
Medium n=6	0	0	0	1	0	1	Yes
High n=3	0	0	1	0	0	1	Yes
Very High n=4	1	0	1	0	1	3	Yes
Total n= 15	1	0	2	1	1	5	

* Reduction in harm represents any decrease in harm between the index sexual offence and the reconviction. All reconvictions were non-contact or minor/non sexual.

1/15 (6.7%) of the participants had been convicted of a sexual offence (non-contact) 2 years post Circle, and this individual fell into the High-risk band of the RM2000. There were no violent reconvictions. There were a total of four reconvictions (1 Medium risk, 1 High risk and 2 Very High risk), with two reconvictions for 'other/minor offences' and one conditional caution in addition to the sexual offence. 1 had breached his SOPO (Very High Risk). All but one of the convictions/cautions reported for the full sample of 38 participants also fall into this sub sample. There was one participant (Low Risk) who breached his SOPO with a follow up of only 15 months and therefore was not included in the 2-year follow up group.

Post Circle behaviours and reduction in harm

There was a noticeable reduction in harm for all of the men who had been reconvicted. The one sexual reconviction was a non-contact offence (drawing indecent images). This participant's index offence was also a sexual non-contact offence, but was more severe and included the presence of victims (indecent exposure). There were two reconvictions for minor/other non-sexual offences. These were for shoplifting and criminal damage. The index offences of both these participants were sexual offences against children, so this represents a significant reduction in harm to victims. The recorded caution was a sanction for failing

notification requirements, with the index offence of this participant being a sexual offence against a child. Again, this represents a clear decrease in harm to victims. The individual who breached his SOPO was found in possession of an unapproved mobile phone. His index offence was a sexual offence against a child.

Discussion

Demographic and risk characteristics

Circles in YHCOSA run for an average of 11 months and 6 days ($SD= 2.9$). The range was 4 months to 1 year and 5 months. This is in line with the expected/recommended time of around 12 months, and is comparable to other projects both in the UK and internationally.

Most participants fell into the 45- 60 age bracket (15, 39.5%), and there were also 7 (18.4%) in the 61+ age bracket. Least fell into the 21- 35 age bracket (5, 13.2%). The research suggests that those falling into the 18- 24 age bracket are the most at risk, with risk declining steadily with age after this point. (Thornton, 2006). There is some evidence that high-risk, older men (60+) continue to reoffend sexually (Nicholaichuk, Olver, Gu & Wong, 2014). It seems that Circles attracts older men, and it may be that younger men have more social/familial support and hence are not considered for referral at the same rate as older men. It is important to ensure that those offered Circles are most at risk of reoffending.

Only one (2.6%) out of the 38 participants was not White British, falling into the Asian or Asian British (Pakistani) group. This percentage does not reflect the Asian/Asian British makeup of the population of England and Wales which is around 6% (Office of National Statistics, 2011) and much higher in some areas covered by YHCOSA (for example in Bradford it is 20%, Bradford Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2010). Additionally, there is some evidence that Asian/Asian British groups are over represented in the male sex offender prison population (Cowburn, Lavis & Walker, 2008). There were no Black participants in Circles and this ethnic group makes up to 10% of the male sexual offender prison population in England and Wales. Therefore YHCOSA is either not receiving referrals for the ethnic minority groups, or is not placing men from these groups into a Circle. As one criterion for attending a Circle is that the individual is socially isolated, it may be that sexual offenders from these groups tend to have more social/familial support, and so a Circle is not deemed necessary by their Offender Manager. This needs exploring, and if necessary

YHCOSA will need to consider if it needs to do more to provide support to this group of men (or women).

7 (18.4 %) of the 38 core members had an index offence against an adult victim versus 21 (55.3%) having an index offence a child victim. 8 (20.5%) were convicted of internet offending. As Circles are intended to target higher risk men, these figures are likely a reflection of risk level. Three times as many men had offended against children as adults. It is also likely that a man who has sexually offended against children suffers from increased stigma; is less likely to have a job, a relationship, friends and family support (victims may well be family). Therefore they are more likely to be isolated and lonely, and as such more likely to be in a Circle.

Of the 38 participants, 5 (13.2%) fell into the Low Risk RM2000/s category, 11 (29%) in each of the Medium, High and Very High risk categories. 57.8 % of the group were in the High category or above, and 42.1% of the group were Medium risk or lower. The rate of sexual reoffending for Low risk men is 1% over a 4-year period versus 27% for Very High risk men (Barnett, Wakeling & Howard, 2010). YHCOSA's referral criteria are men who are High risk and above, however almost half fell into the Medium or below group. Lower risk men should only be considered if there is a risk of imminent offending. YHCOSA should continue to adhere to the risk guidelines, and ensure that resources are directed towards men who are High risk or above.

PNC data and follow up

There was only one sexual reconviction out of the sample of 38 men and this was a non-contact offence. Focusing on the 2-year post Circle follow-up data of 15 men, there were a total of four reconvictions (1 Medium Risk, 1 High Risk, 2 Very High Risk), with two reconvictions for 'other/minor non sexual offences' and one conditional caution in addition to the sexual offence. There was also a Breach of SOPO recorded (Very High Risk). There were no violent reconvictions. The 2-year follow-up sub group missed one Breach of SOPO by a Low Risk participant who was sanctioned 15 months post Circle.

Initially the study had aimed to compare the actual rate of sexual reoffending with the expected rate of sexual offending according to RM2000/s, the methodology adopted by Bates et al (2013) in their 10-year evaluation of UK Circles. However with small numbers this was not possible. The lack of a control group meant that no comparison could be made in terms of whether this rate of reoffending was likely to be greater or less than if the men had not taken part in a Circle. However, the individual that reoffended sexually fell into the Very-High Risk category of the RM2000/s. Falling into

this category means he is in a higher risk group than 93% of sexual offenders. After 4 years at risk, 27% of High Risk sexual offenders had reoffended sexually (Barnett et al, 2010).

Reduction in harm

There was a noticeable reduction in harm for all of the men who had been reconvicted. The one sexual reconviction was a non-contact offence that was deemed less serious than the sexual index offence. The other reconvictions were for minor/other non-sexual offences and a caution. The index offences for these men were all sexual offences against children representing a clear decrease in harm to victims. The two breaches of SOPOs recorded were also evidence of a reduction in harm (possessions of mobile phones). This provides some evidence that engaging in a Circle has a positive impact in terms of reducing harm (particularly to children in the cases identified). This result should be followed up by comparison to a control group.

Methodological issues and future research

This was an exploratory study and at this stage no control group was available, which is a serious limitation, as the findings cannot be wholly attributed to the effect of being in a Circle. Future research should focus on providing a (ideally matched) control group of men who have not received a Circle.

Another key issue in terms of follow up is the small numbers in the sample (just 15 with 2 years follow-up). A comparison with the expected rate of sexual reoffending was not possible. A future evaluation at YHCOSA could aim to work towards this approach.

Follow up time was short (2 years), although was comparable to the Duwe (2013) RCT study of COSA which used a follow up time of 2 years. There is some research to suggest that offending rates increase as formal supervision ends (Marques et al, 2005). Given the structured support of Circles it could be hypothesized that the ending of a Circle may precede an increase in offending, however this did not seem to be the case. Follow up was taken from the end of the Circle and not from the beginning of the 'at risk' period (end of custodial/start of community sentence). Therefore **actual** time at risk was likely to be longer than 2 years for some of the sample, with the Circle falling into the at-risk period.

The use of recorded sexual offences is notoriously associated with an under reporting of actual sexual offending behaviour. This study based its findings on PNC data, but

this was supplemented by knowledge of the staff and volunteers that have worked closely with these men. This additional knowledge arguably serves to make the data richer. Typically studies follow men 'on paper', without the added benefit of knowing them personally and following their stories. In addition to official data, unofficial data should continue to be gathered in order to supplement future investigations.

Summary

Despite the limitations of the design, this exploratory study obtained PNC data for 38 core members and 2-year follow up data for a sub group of 15. Only 1 core member had a proven sexual reconviction and this was for a non-contact offence. This core member fell into the Very High risk category of the RM2000/s. Additionally, there was evidence of a reduction in harm when examining the post Circle behaviours.

Part Two. Dynamic Risk Review and protective factors

Background

The Dynamic Risk Review (DRR: Bates & Wagner, 2012)

This tool was developed in response to the requirement to start to collect relevant risk information on core members. Bates et al (2013) designed a 17-item checklist based on the four dynamic risk domains used in the Structured Assessment of Risk and Need (SARN: Thornton, 2002), all of which have been found to be related to the risk of sexual offending. The SARN assessment is used widely across England and Wales to assess sexual offenders' pre and post accredited sex offender treatment programmes.

The DRR was designed to gather dynamic risk information that could eventually be used to compare the change in a core member across time (e.g. pre to post Circle). Each item is scored on a 7-point Likert scale and provides a total risk score for the core member. It is not a collaborative process and is usually completed by the Circle Co-ordinator with input from the volunteers.

Initial analysis by Wagner & Bates (2012) try and validate the internal validity of the DRR used data from 39 core members (a total of 108 DRRs). Results showed a limited degree of internal validity with the identification of three factors that approached satisfactory reliability. Wagner & Bates also analysed DRRs from a subgroup of 13 core members to investigate if there was any significant reduction in these identified risk factors during the first nine months of a Circle. Statistically significant progress was found for a limited number of core members on two identified

risk factors. This tool is still in its infancy and cannot offer any predictive validity at this stage. Further work is being undertaken on a national level to explore the validity and reliability of this measure.

Protective factors

There has been little research on the likely protective factors for sexual offenders. A recent paper by de Vries Robbe, Mann, Maruna and Thornton (2014) investigated the possible protective factors for sexual offending and suggested eight domains including healthy sexual interests, capacity for emotional relationships, social and professional network, goal directed living, good problem solving, employment /purposeful activity, sobriety, and hopeful and optimistic attitude. Further research into this area is necessary.

Present study

The DRR as an assessment tool is limited, but it is currently the only measure that is gathered pre to post Circle for core members. As such, at this exploratory stage, the data gathered will be analysed for direction of individual change, and not be relied upon as a prediction of any specific outcome. The questions are useful as they are based on established dynamic risk factors. Data is also collected in YHCOSA on presence or absence of family contact, employment and current relationships pre and post Circle (all protective factors in the sex offender literature). In addition to the DRR, this data will also be analysed for any change pre to post Circle, although due to the nature and focus of the Circle it is only expected to impact on the protective factor of employment.

Research questions

Is there any change in the desired direction pre to post Circle on the items of the DRR?

Is there any increase pre to post Circle, on the protective factor of employment?

Specifically, are more core members engaged in either voluntary, part time or full time work post Circle?

Method

The study used a pre to post, within individual design; scores on the DRR were compared for each individual pre to post Circle and then analysed statistically for change. The protective factors were counted for presence and absence pre to post Circle for each individual, and then analysed for change.

Participants

DRR data from 23 participants was included. This subset had at least 2 full DRRs completed at least 90 days apart and those who did not have this information recorded were excluded. Several men were excluded due to missing information (15). This forms 39.5 % of the initial data set. The participants in this sub group were 95.7% (22) White British and 4.3% (1) was Asian or Asian British (Pakistani). The mean length of their Circle was 11.5 months ($SD= 2.54$). 21.7% (5) fell into the Very High RM2000/s category, 34.8 % (8) into High, 30.4 % (7) into Medium and 13 % (3) were in the Low category.

Procedure

In YHCOSA the DRR is completed at the start of a Circle and then at 3 monthly intervals by the Circle Co-ordinator and volunteers. It is completed in the absence of the core member, but is discussed with him in later meetings. The DRR is entered onto a database along with demographic information. No scoring is required. Cases were excluded as detailed above, namely due to missing data. The protective factors data is collected by YHCOSA as a requirement for Circles UK. The information is completed by the Circles Co-ordinator and stored on the YHCOSA database. This data was all retrieved for analysis in July 2015.

Results

Dynamic Risk Review

The data was not normally distributed so a non-parametric related samples Wilcoxon signed rank test was used to compare the medians of the pre to post ratings on the DRR. Change in the desired direction was found on all factors of the DRR pre to post Circle.

A statistically **significant difference** (using $p > .05$) was found pre to post Circle on the following DRR factors;

Feelings of powerlessness or hopelessness

Struggling with problematic sexual thoughts

Spoken an excessive/inappropriate degree about sexual matters

Feelings of emotional loneliness

Feelings of inadequacy in relationships

Low self esteem

Protective factors data

The full dataset of 38 men was used during this section.

Employment

Table 3 - Core Member employment status pre and post Circle

	Pre Circle employment	Post Circle employment	% difference
Full time	7.5% (3)	17% (7)	+10%
Part time	7.5% (3)	12.5% (5)	+ 5%
Retired	15% (6)	12.5% (5)	- 2.5%
Student	2.5% (1)	5% (2)	+ 2.5%
Unemployed	60.0% (24)	40% (16)	- 20%
Voluntary work	2.5% (1)	7.5% (3)	+5%
Total	38 (missing 1)	38 (missing 1)	

There was no significant difference ($p < .05$) pre to post Circle using the related samples McNemar test on any variable, although change on each variable was in the desired direction. The difference between the number of core members being unemployed post Circle decreased by 20% and this was approaching significance.

Relationships

4/38 (10.5 %) participants were in a relationship at the beginning of their Circle. Post Circle, 6 (15.8 %) were in a relationship, a 5.3 % increase. This difference was tested using the related samples McNemar test and was not significant ($p < .05$).

Family contact

22/38 (57.9%) had contact with their family at the beginning of their Circle. Post Circle 24/38 (63.2%) had contact with at least one member of their family, again an increase of 5.3 %. This difference was tested using the related samples McNemar test and was not significant ($p < .05$)

Discussion

A statistically significant difference was found pre to post Circle on 6 DRR factors including; feelings of powerlessness or hopelessness, struggling with problematic sexual thoughts, spoken an excessive/inappropriate degree about sexual matters, feelings of emotional loneliness, feelings of inadequacy in relationships and low self-esteem. It is positive that there was a decrease in the two sexual thought categories, as sexual preoccupation and sexual interests are known to be amongst the strongest predictors of sexual recidivism (Hanson & Morton Borguon, 2005). This change will need examining further through the use of a validated measure. The Circle process is designed to try and impact on factors such as emotional loneliness and inadequacy/low self-esteem, and again it is positive that a change is noted here.

The other seven factors showed a change pre to post in the desired direction but this change was not significant. These included sexualised attitudes towards children, hostile and negative views towards women and high emotional identification with children. The Circle process has not been designed to target these areas. Problem solving, appropriate activities and hobbies, reckless behaviour and realistic relapse prevention (RP) strategies were the other areas. Circles do try and target these areas and it may be that the results reflect the limitations of the measure. Additionally, data is held on areas such as appropriate activities and hobbies in the volunteer meeting minutes, and on RP strategies in the quarterly meetings held with between the Circle Co-ordinator and statutory partners, but this data was not accessed for this study.

In terms of the protective factors there was a small change in the desired direction for each of the employment variables, with unemployment decreasing by 20% (reaching significance). Family contact increased as did the number of men in relationships post Circle, although these differences were not significant. It is likely that this is due to the method of data collection. The data used was the categorical data recorded by the Circle Co-ordinator regarding the presence or absence of each factor, pre and post Circle. However richer data regarding all 3 protective factors is held in the minutes of the volunteer meetings and could be accessed for future research.

Methodological issues and future research

The key limitation of this study was the absence of a reliable and valid measure. The DRR is in infancy and although an initial study showed some limited internal validity, it holds no predictive or psychometric value. There is no standardised training either locally or nationally with Circle Co-ordinators and volunteers on how to complete the DRR, and inter-rater reliability has not been established. The decision to use the DRR was made as no other measures are collected pre to post Circle, and this issue will need rectifying in order to be able to run a future evaluation. It is also recognised that there was no control group for this study and therefore any change may not be down to participation in a Circle. Again future research would need to look at recruiting a comparison group.

The measurement of the protective factors data was blunt. It would be useful to collect richer data, such as that held in the volunteer minutes. Pre to post psychometric data relating to the potential protective factors outlined in the research could also be collected

Summary

There was a change in the desired direction on all items of the DRR, with significant differences on 6 items. Changes in the desired direction were also found on three protective factors, although these differences were not significant. Despite the limitations, this study provides a useful starting point to begin to examine pre to post change within individuals participating in a Circle.

Summary Study One and Two

PNC data for was obtained for 38 core members and 2-year follow up data for a subgroup of 15. Only 1 core member had a proven sexual reconviction and this was for a non-contact offence.

There was evidence of a reduction in harm when examining the post Circle behaviours

There was a change in the desired direction on all items of the DRR, with significant differences on 6 items. Changes in the desired direction were found on three protective factors

Recommendations for practice

Direction of resources- Direction of resources towards High and Very High Risk men only. This would fit with the data (the only sexual re offence was by a Very High Risk man) and with the published research, which suggests that Low Risk men are very unlikely to reoffend sexually. The risk of imminent offending should still be incorporated, however selection should essentially be driven by risk.

Ethnic minority groups- explore whether the needs of the local population are being met in terms of providing Circles to all groups. Is this related to referral or selection, or is the issue a wider one in terms of whom Circles attracts?

Assessment and evaluation strategy- This should be implemented as soon as possible. A national approach would be best, but in the absence of this- local policy is essential. A piece of work should be undertaken to overhaul the data collected pre and post Circle. Data relevant to risk *and* protective factors, in the form of reliable and valid measures should be collected pre and post Circle. PNC data should be collected as standard and the local Police force to inform YHCOSA if an ex core member commits another offence or comes to the attention of the police. As proven/recorded sexual offending tends to underestimate actual sexual offending it is important to collect unofficial data too. This is key to future evaluation research.

Missing data- Missing/incorrect data was a real problem experienced during the data collection period of this study. It is recognised that YHCOSA was only set up as a charity 4 years ago and the focus has not been on data collection. However, from now on there needs to be a clear focus and local strategy, involving staff, co-ordinators and volunteers to ensure that data is collected and recorded in a timely and structured fashion in order to aid future evaluation.

Establish control group- the only way to conduct a valid reconviction study is to establish a control group. Whilst it is unethical to withhold treatment where the intervention is already known to have benefits, a control group could be possibly be established by looking at the waiting list approach or at those who have been referred but didn't take up a place. The preferable option would be to match each core member as they started a Circle to another sexual offender who hasn't been offered one. This would take some work. Viable options should be explored prior to the next evaluation at YHCOSA.

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Case Studies

Part 2

Core Member Case Study 2

Robert is 50. He has numerous convictions for Rape and Indecent Assault of children aged 5-14 and served 10 years in prison

Robert was living in a Probation hostel whilst the assessment for his Circle began. The assessment process took a few months due to his High risk. He moved in the local authority accommodation during the early stages of the Circle. Prior to the Circle he knew very few people in the area, no close contacts apart from other people convicted of sexual offences that he met during his sentence. In order to safeguard victims, he was not allowed to return to the area where he lived.

He was referred to Circles by his probation officer, who thought it would be a safe way to reintegrate Robert into the community. Robert was subject to a number of licence conditions and managed jointly by Police and Probation under MAPPA. He was regarded as a high risk of serious harm by the authorities charged with managing him.

There were four volunteers within the Circle: 1 man and 3 women. Various ages and occupations; one a market researcher (47), another works in a prison (24), another is training to be a social worker (27) and one worked in a local casino (30).

Rod found it difficult to accept the authority of the conditions placed upon him and had previously ignored the instructions of his probation officer, resulting in recall and reoffending. Health issues and social isolation made it difficult for him to make positive changes to his lifestyle.

In the past 6 months, during the Circle, he has moved on with his life, obtaining voluntary work, been responsible for providing meals for those who cannot afford food by participating in a local scheme. He has committed to remain offence free. He started a computer course, and he has a healthy regular routine involving productive activities and helping others. He has joined a local social club. At every stage the Circle have been involved in ensuring he made appropriate choices in terms of activities and have been closely involved with Police and Probation during the Circle. He has come to accept the restrictions placed upon him and the Circle continue to remind him of why his restrictions are important in terms of keeping others safe. The combination of support and restrictions has been really helpful in achieving this.

Volunteer Case Study 2

It was during my time in the Chaplaincy at Doncaster Prison (2002-2012) that I first heard about Circles of Support and Accountability. I was helping many men who were serving custodial sentences for sexual offences and the work of Circles seemed to be an excellent way of extending that support once they were back in the community. The dual aim of providing support for the core member and trying to ensure there are no more victims is essential. A Circle is a microcosm of society and as such models how decisions are arrived at through discussion with friends and how differences of opinion and difficulties are dealt with. Sometimes it is through involvement with a Circle that the core member comes to realise that the legal measures put in place as a consequence of his/her actions are there for his/her protection as well as that of the public.

I have been involved with five Circles and have thoroughly enjoyed working with lots of very different people, dealing with practical issues, often helping the core member to grow in confidence and be prepared to try new things so as to have a fuller life, enjoying celebrations and working through difficulties. Support for the volunteers from the circles organisation has been excellent. However, the length of time it can take to get a Circle going can be frustrating!

I am 56, married with two children aged 32 and 30 (one of whom is married). In addition to being a prison Chaplain for ten years, I have been a fire fighter and run marathons, worked as a personal assistant/secretary and continue to run my own secretarial business. I have also had various voluntary roles and am involved in the local church and Christian organisations.

We live in the countryside with our dogs and I spend a fair chunk of my spare time photographing wildlife.

I had a new hip put in 2 days ago.

When's the next Circle?



Volunteers

The Volunteers

Introduction

Circles could not exist if it was not for the many volunteers who give their time to the Circles projects across the country. To date, the research conducted into Circles of Support and Accountability has focussed almost exclusively on the core members, and particularly on the impact being in a Circle has had on their risk of reoffending. However, attention needs to be given to not only whether Circles are effective at reducing risk, but how this is brought about. This section of the evaluation is to consider the contribution of the volunteers to Yorkshire and Humberside COSA (YHCOSA). It will consider what motivates them to be involved in Circles, what benefits they see from their volunteering and if there are any difficulties or negative consequences that result from their involvement.

Background

A Circle is made up of one core member and a group of around 4 volunteers. Volunteers are all adults (over 18 years) who represent their local community. The volunteers who have contributed to YHCOSA have come from a wide variety of backgrounds and with a range of initial motivations. When a group of volunteers is put together, coordinators choose from the pool of volunteers they have available, selecting volunteers who represent the diversity of the local community in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, work status and whose skills and experience match the needs of the core member as far as is possible.

The involvement of volunteers from the community is one of the underlying tenets of Circles; by agreeing to voluntarily meet with and offer support to the core member, they help to reduce the core member's experience of stigmatisation and isolation, experiences which are known to increase the risk of reoffending (Maruna, 2001; Hanson & Bussiere, 1998). The fact that they are willing to meet every week without pay or professional obligation, shows their acceptance of the core member as a person and demonstrates that they are willing to support the core member if he/she is willing to continue in their commitment to no more victims.

The volunteers are fundamental to the successful functioning of Circles; indeed Circles cannot exist without them. As a result of this, it is vital that YHCOSA is able to recruit and retain reliable, committed volunteers who are able to successfully build empathic, supportive relationships with the core member they are working with.

The volunteer role is somewhat difficult to define, as they are asked to maintain professional boundaries, without being “professionals” and they should represent their local community. They support the core member and hold him/her to account whilst not encroaching on the role of the police, probation or treatment professionals. They are asked to recognise and report risky behaviours, but are not able to complete risk assessments.

YHCOSA has developed a rigorous assessment and recruitment process for volunteers, recognising the importance of identifying suitable individuals to be involved in Circles. This process involves completion of an application form to illicit an understanding of their motivation, and the skills and experience they could bring to the project and core members they engage with. Two references from individuals who know the volunteer well (over 12 months) are then secured. Potential volunteers attend an initial screening interview, before two days of induction training, throughout which their participation is assessed. This is followed by a formal post-training interview and a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service, previously Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)) check. The rigorousness and length of time taken to complete this process reflects the importance of recruiting appropriate individuals and also getting to know the volunteers to enable matching of volunteers and core members to take place. It does mean that some less committed volunteers “self-screen” themselves out of the process early on.

As the YHCOSA project has developed and grown, a recognition of the absolute importance of recruiting and retaining volunteers who are sufficiently committed, reliable and resilient to the demands of this sensitive and often emotionally demanding process has become apparent. Several factors which may impact on this are considered below.

Volunteer Satisfaction

Volunteering in a broader context has been researched previously to identify factors which encourage individuals to give their time freely and what the “gains and drains” for them are (Hoing, et al. 2014). Several authors have reported that the volunteers’ satisfaction with the organisation, the role they fulfil and their sense of achievement will all be related to the likelihood they will want to continue volunteering.

Organisational factors are also shown to impact on an individual’s resilience and the likelihood of negative impacts (Clarke, 2011, Paton, 2009), thus the necessary support structures and organisational culture are vital. This evaluation will assess YHCOSA volunteers’ satisfaction with their volunteering experiences and identify any

areas for improvement for the future. Paton (2009) proposes job satisfaction as a meaningful proxy for resilience as it “can capture the cumulative impact of positive and negative experiences and is a valid predictor of the likelihood of officers remaining in the profession over time” (p. 157).

Motivation

Volunteers become involved in any volunteering role for a variety of reasons, but they must perceive some benefits to doing so, as there is, by definition, no financial reward. These motivations can be categorised as “outward” or “Inward”. For volunteers who are outwardly motivated these benefits result from perceived prestige from “doing good” for others, or seeing the benefits to their community or core member (outward/altruistic motives) for others these benefits will be in terms of self-improvement (inward/material motivation) (Dwiggins-Beeler *et al.*, 2011). Haslewood-Pócsik, Smith and Spencer (2008) conducted an assessment of the IMPACT (Innovation Means Prisons and Communities Together) Circles project in the North West of England. Their study included interviews with 11 volunteers, which identified that inward motivations about increasing their career prospects were the most cited motivations in this (limited) group of volunteers. This has been replicated in other small-scale studies of Circle Volunteers in the UK. For example, Bellamy and Watson (2013) identified internal, career ambition based as the most cited motivation, whilst Thomas, Thompson and Karstedt (2014) reported 60% of the volunteers (n=20) in their study were outwardly motivated and for those who were initially inwardly motivated there was a tendency for this to shift outward as they experienced Circles and saw the benefits to the core member..

Anecdotally, YHCOSA has found that volunteers who become involved through internal motivations can be less likely to complete a full Circle and less likely to return to be involved in more than one Circle, which has implications for training and resources, and the consistency and reliability the core members experience. Thus, one of the intentions of this evaluation is to examine whether there is sufficient evidence to support this anecdotal impression. It is hypothesised that there will be a difference in the degree of satisfaction, and thus resilience between volunteers motivated primarily by internal reasons and those who are motivated by external, more altruistic goals.

However, it is recognised that a significant proportion of volunteers are involved in YHCOSA as a means of achieving employment and career development opportunities. Thus, this evaluation will consider the number of YHCOSA volunteers who identify career based motivations and who have been successful in gaining employment or other volunteering opportunities as a result of their being involved in YHCOSA.

Gender

Fergusson and Ireland (2006) found that women generally hold a more positive view of sexual offenders than do men. Indeed Clarke (2004) also reported significantly more females in her sample of sex offender treatment staff. There are also generally more females in volunteering roles, particularly in “caring” or interpersonal volunteering roles, as opposed to practical or sports based roles (Rotolo & Wilson, 2007). As one of the underlying tenants of YHCOSA is community representation, it is important to the operation of Circles that there are sufficient male volunteers available.

Age

In Clarke’s (2004) study of sex offender treatment staff, being young increased the risks of experiencing negative impacts from working with sexual offenders. This may have been mediated in part by the link between age and professional experience, or life experience more broadly, which encourages the development of positive coping mechanisms, and which could contribute to increased resilience. Thus, this study will examine the gender balance of volunteers and consider any implications of this for the delivery of Circles.

Research around volunteers in other areas suggests that although volunteers vary widely in age, there is a tendency in many volunteer roles for older individuals to be involved (Wilson, 2000). Indeed there is a body of literature which has specifically focussed on the physical and mental health benefits and improved social opportunities and connectedness through volunteering for older adults (see Cassidy, Kinsman, Fisher & Bambra, 2008 for a review).

Current study

This evaluation will examine the degree of satisfaction YHCOSA's volunteers experience, including their assessment of the degree of support they experience from the organisation. Indirectly, this will give an indication of their resilience. It will look at the demographic makeup of the volunteers when they apply and current volunteers to determine to what extent YHCOSA is successfully representing the local communities it works within. Additionally, consideration will be given to whether there are elements of the recruitment process which are unfairly discriminating against volunteers from minority groups.

Methods

Participants

All the participants in this study are current or past volunteers from YHCOSA.

Measures

Data for this study was collected from a number of sources, enabling there to be comparisons and increasing the rigor of the design:

Volunteer Demographic Data: Requested from all volunteers who apply. This data is held on all applicants who have completed the "Equal Opportunities Monitoring" form with their application since 2012. There are 456 completed forms for applicants including 120 for current volunteers (NB. Not all applicants chose to complete this form, and some people declined to answer certain questions, so the figures for each category do not necessarily add up to these totals).

Volunteer Surveys: Sent to all current volunteers every 6 months since summer 2013 (4 sets of responses). Completed anonymously by Survey Monkey. (See Appendix 2 for survey). There are 86 responses available to these surveys.

Project records: Details of references supplied and volunteers gaining employment.

Evaluation Questionnaire: A questionnaire designed specifically for the purposes of this evaluation (See Appendix 3). An invitation to the volunteers to complete this survey was sent out via an email that contained a link to the questionnaire which they could complete anonymously on Survey Monkey. This email was sent to all current and previous YHCOSA volunteers.

The questionnaire included:

Demographic and descriptive information

Participants were asked their age and gender. They were also asked how long they have volunteered for, how many Circles they have been in and whether they are still volunteering.

Motivation

Volunteers were asked to indicate their initial motivation for becoming involved in Circles and their current motivation in “free-response” questions. When the volunteers’ responses had been collated, three independent raters classified each of their motivations as “inward”, “outward”, “both” or “neither/unclear”, to reduce subjectivity in categorising the responses.

Table 4 - Volunteer Motivation

Motivation Type	Definition
Inward	Motivated by career development or self-improvement goals
Outward	Altruistic motivations, for the “greater good”, community safety motivations.
Both	Where the response includes both inward and outward components.
Neither/Unclear	Where the response cannot be categorised as inward/outward

Volunteer Satisfaction Index (VSI)

The VSI (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2002) was selected as a measure of satisfaction as it was specifically developed for volunteers rather than paid workers. All scales of the VSI were included; “organisational support”, “participation efficacy”, “empowerment” and “group integration”. Responses are on a seven point Likert-type scale ranging from 1- “Very Dissatisfied” to 7- “Very Satisfied”. The terminology used in the questionnaire was adapted to suit the common parlance of YHCOSA i.e. “the organisation” was supplemented with “YHCOSA”, and “the clientele served by the organisation” was replaced with “core members”.

A single response to the question “Unless unforeseen changes occur in your life, do you see yourself volunteering for another Circle after your current one finishes? 1= certainly not, 7- certainly”, was included to represent the volunteers’ intention to remain, again adapted from the original VSI question to make it YHCOSA specific.

Free Response Questions

In order to allow volunteers the option to give further detail about their experiences, two free response questions were included; “Please list the three things you most enjoy about being involved in Circles” and “Please list the three biggest challenges of being a Circle volunteer”.

When the responses had been compiled, a researcher identified several themes from the responses. Again three independent raters then categorised the response into the themes they felt relevant. A frequency count was conducted for each of the themes identified.

Results

The demographic information will be presented followed by the results from the VSI and the volunteer surveys.

Demographic Information

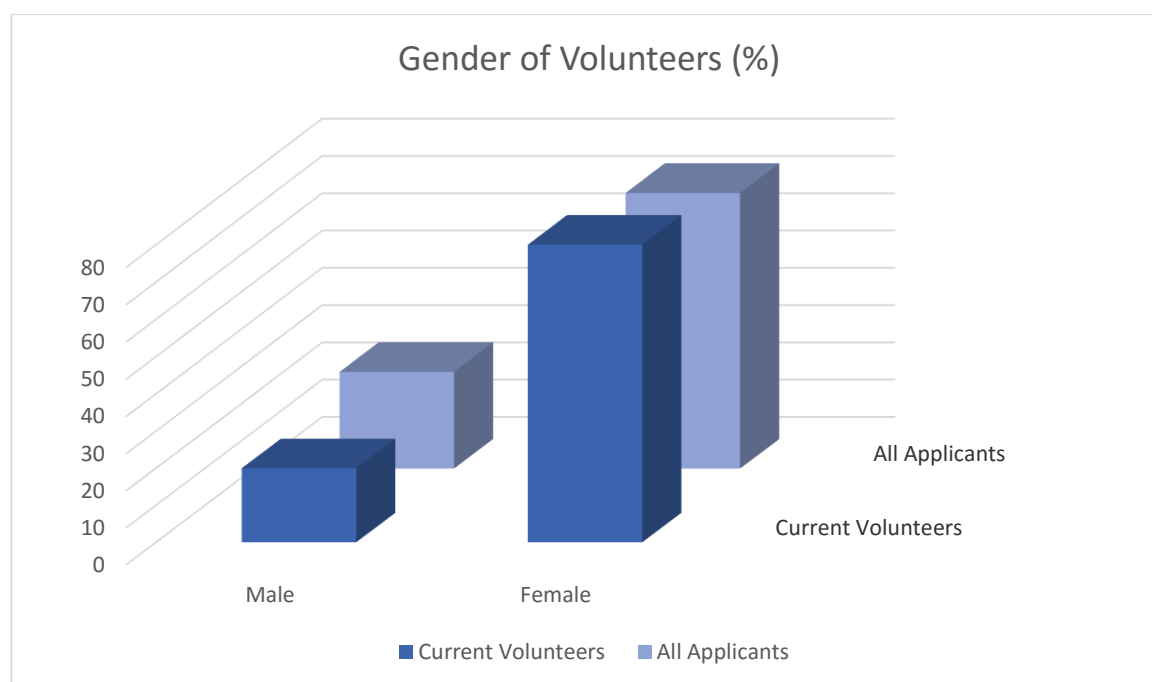
The age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion and disability status was examined, using data collected from volunteers at the point of application. Comparisons were drawn between the proportions of individuals represented by each of the various groups at the point of application and for all current volunteers. This will allow consideration of whether the recruitment, training and selection processes are equitable or whether they disadvantage any minority groups. NB. There are currently 120 volunteers and 456 applications were included from the 595 received (applications which contained no demographic data were discounted). Where figures reported do not add up to 126 and 456 respectively, this is because some applicants declined to answer some questions on the Equal Opportunities form attached to the application, or responded “prefer not to answer”.

Gender

Table 5 – Gender of current volunteers and applicants

	Current Volunteers		All Applicants	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Male	24	20%	119	26%
Female	96	80%	337	74%

Figure 7 – Gender of applicants and volunteers



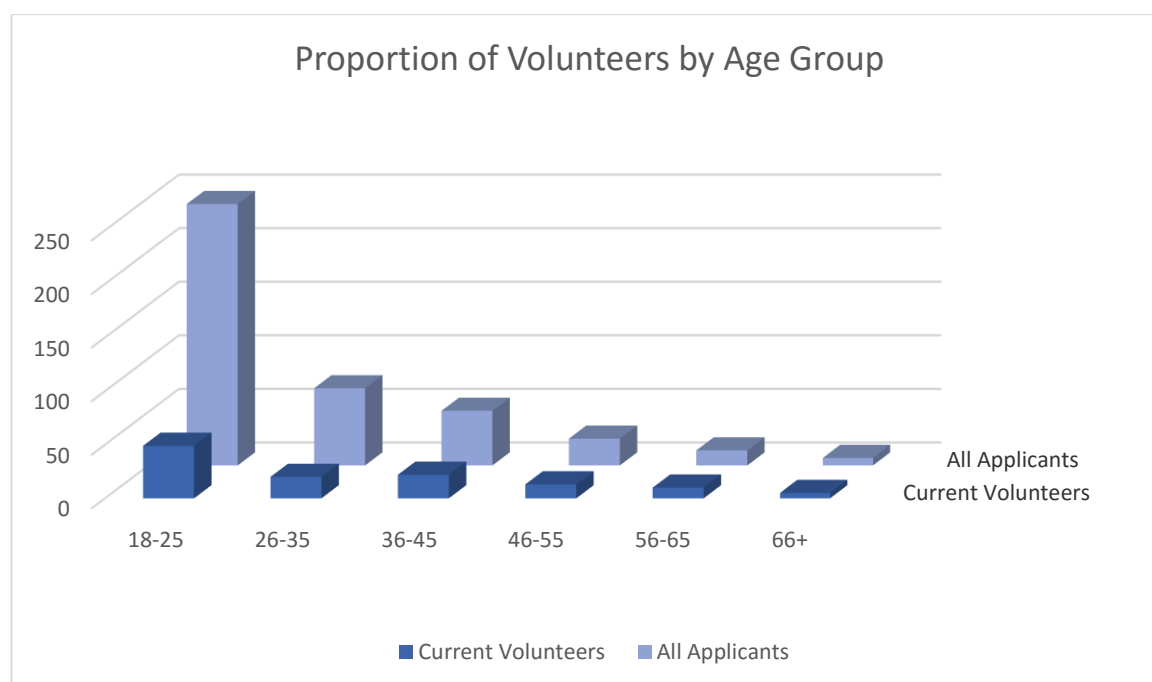
It is clear that there are many more female volunteers than males. However, the proportion of males in both groups is largely similar. Thus, overall difference in gender appears to result from the proportion of applications received rather than any bias in the recruitment and selection process.

Age

Table 6 – Age of current volunteers and applicants

Age Bracket	Current Volunteers		All Applicants	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	49	41%	244	56%
26-35	20	17%	72	18%
36-45	22	18%	51	13%
46-55	13	11%	25	6%
56-65	10	8%	14	4%
65+	5	4%	7	2%
Total	119	-	413	-

Figure 8 – Age of applicants and volunteers



The anecdotal accounts regarding the age of volunteers in YHCOSA's Circles is reflected by the data as there are many more younger volunteers (18-25) than any of the other groups. Similar to the pattern observed with gender, the pattern of age distribution in current volunteers is a reflection of the overall age of applications received.

Disability

Table 7 – Disability status of current volunteers and applicants

	Current volunteers		All Applicants		Wider Population*
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage
Disability Declared	13	11%	37	9%	19%
No Disability	107	89%	373	91%	81%

Data from ONS Census data 2011 for Yorkshire and Humberside

There are a significant number of volunteers who declare a disability.

Religious Beliefs

Table 8 – Religious beliefs of current volunteers and applicants

Religion	Current Volunteers		All Applicants		Wider Population*
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage
Christian	18	25%	122	34%	59.5%
Muslim	4	6%	12	3%	6.2%
None	36	50%	194	54%	33.1%
Other	14	19%	29	8%	1.2%

Volunteers of different religions do not appear to be disadvantaged or deterred by the recruitment process as the percentage of volunteers in each group is broadly similar, or even higher, in the current volunteers than the initial applicants.

Ethnic Background

Table 9 – Ethnic background of current volunteers and applicants

Ethnicity	Current Volunteers		All Applicants		Wider Population*
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage
Asian	6	5%	17	4%	4.3%
Black	6	5%	18	4%	0.9%
Mixed	3	3%	12	3%	0.6%
Ethnicity					
White	101	85%	358	86%	85%
British					
White	4	3%	11	3%	2.5%
Other					

The vast majority of people who have applied to be a YHCOSA volunteer consider themselves White British. As the percentage of volunteers for each ethnicity is almost identical in the current volunteers to that of all the applications received, this suggests the recruitment and selection process is equally accessible to all ethnicities of applicant and does not discriminate against applicants on the basis of their ethnicity.

Sexuality

Table 10 – Sexuality of current volunteers and applicants

	Current Volunteers		All Applicants		Wider Population*
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage
Heterosexual	109	92%	377	95%	98.5%
Homosexual	7	6%	11	3%	1.5%
Bi-Sexual	2	2%	9	2%	

The majority of volunteers declare their sexuality as heterosexual.

Summary of Demographic Information

The results from the demographic information collected from volunteers through their application forms suggest that YHCOSA is successfully engaging with a broad cross section of the local community.

Results of the Evaluation Questionnaire

A total of 43 volunteers returned the Evaluation Questionnaire, a response rate of approximately 36%, of whom 34 were still volunteering and 9 were previous volunteers. There were 31 (72%) females and 12 (28%) males, which is broadly representative of the larger volunteer pool.

The ages of respondents are grouped as follows.

Table 11 – Age of respondents to evaluation questionnaire

Age	Frequency	Percentage of respondents	Percentage of all volunteers in age bracket
18-25	6	14%	12%
26-35	10	23%	50%
36-45	10	23%	45%
46-55	6	14%	46%
56-65	6	12%	60%
65+	5	14%	100%

Thus, in this respect, the volunteers who responded to the questionnaire do not represent the total pool of volunteers as few of the younger volunteers completed the questionnaire, whilst the majority of the older age groups responded.

Motivation

Volunteers were asked to respond to an open ended question asking about their motivation for being involved. Their responses were then coded by a team of 3 independent researchers to categorise them as 'Inwardly Motivated', 'Outwardly Motivated', 'Both' or 'Neither/Unclear'. Interrater reliability was substantial (Kappa = .764)

Table 12 – Frequency of motivation category identified

	Frequency	Percentage
Inward	12	27%
Outward	25	57%
Both	5	11%
Neither/Unclear	2	5%

This suggests that only a minority of volunteers hold wholly inward motivations.

Volunteer Satisfaction

The average response to the overall Volunteer Satisfaction Index and each of its five scales are given below:

Table 13 – Volunteer Satisfaction Index Scores

	Max Possible Score	Mean Score	Median	Standard Deviation
Volunteer Satisfaction Index	154	129.6	139	23.49
Organisational Support	70	60.29 (54.71)	65 (57)	11.28 (10.04)
Participation Efficacy	35	28.68 (29.59)	29 (30)	5.82 (4.09)
Empowerment	21	17.66 (18.31)	18 (19)	3.21 (2.61)
Group Integration	28	22.93 (23.89)	24 (28)	4.59 (3.80)
Intention to Remain	7	5.80 (6.46)	7 (7)	1.68 (1.04)

(Figures in brackets are the published norms for the scale. Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley 2002)

Thus, YHCOSA's volunteers report high levels of satisfaction with their experiences. Scores are broadly similar to the published norms for the VSI. Of particular note is the high degree of satisfaction with the Organisational Support, which is somewhat greater than the published norms.

There is a significant positive correlation between Volunteer Satisfaction and Intent to Remain ($r = .68, p < .001$). This suggests that there is a great benefit to the organisation in ensuring volunteers are satisfied and well supported, as this increases the likelihood of them remaining involved for further Circles.

Best and Most Challenging Experiences

Volunteers completing the survey were asked to comment on their three best things and three biggest challenges with their YHCOSA Volunteering. These responses were then categorised by three independent researchers. These are the broad themes which emerged:

Best Things

Volunteers were asked to list the three “Best Things” and three “Biggest Challenges” about being involved with YHCOSA. The frequency of the themes identified in their responses are presented in the following table.

Table 14 - The Best Things category frequencies

Theme	Frequency
Other Volunteers	25
Core Member	14
Making a Difference/ Success	12
Reducing Risk/ Preventing Harm	9
Gaining Skills/Knowledge	5
The Organisation	3
Other	3
A Challenge	1
New Experiences	1
TOTAL	73

Based on 32 respondents giving a maximum of three items each

Table 15 - The Biggest Challenges category frequencies

Theme	Frequency
Lack of Progress of core member	11
Other volunteers/ Working in group	10
Time Commitment/ Fitting with other Commitments	9
Other	7
Lack of Trust/ Dishonesty	6
Restrictions/ Boundaries	4
Hearing Distressing Things	4
Time waiting for Circle/ Inactive	2
Challenging/confrontations/disagreements	2
Worry about Reoffending	1
TOTAL	56

Based on 32 respondents giving a maximum of three items each

Thus the average number of responses per respondent was 2.28 for the Best Things, but only 1.75 for the Biggest Challenges, which suggests more positive experiences.

Volunteer Surveys

Responses to the regular (twice yearly) volunteer surveys were consolidated and examined. These surveys are completed anonymously and have been introduced as a means of volunteers raising awareness of any concerns they may have or to make suggestions for improvements in addition to feeding- back about their experiences.

Table 16 – Percentage of positive response to Volunteer Surveys

	% rating answer as 5 or 6 (Scale 0-6)
I have had support when I needed it	95%
I have got what I expected from the organisation	87%
My contribution to the organisation has been valued	92%
The organisation communicates well with the volunteers	93%

Emotional Well-being

Only 4.8% (4/84) volunteers reported a decrease in their emotional well-being – responses to other questions in 2 of these cases suggest a sense of frustration at not being able to be more involved in the project (length of time waiting for Circles to start/ between Circles).

Employment Prospects

100% of volunteers who were aiming to improve their vocational skills (n = 60) thought they had increased to some extent. 42/60, 70% rated this increase as 5 or 6 on the scale (0-6). 30 volunteers have got new jobs and YHCOSA has supplied an additional 31 references for either employment, education or further volunteering.

As a commendation of their experiences, 100% of volunteers who responded to the surveys (n=86) would recommend this volunteering to others.

As one volunteer said in the survey:

“The whole organisation is amazingly professional and brilliant to work with. I have volunteered elsewhere, and the support is nowhere near as good as Circles. Very proud to be part of your world.”

Discussion

The aim of this strand of the evaluation was to examine the experience of volunteers involved in delivering Circles for YHCOSA. The discussion will consider the results presented from the analysis of the demographic data collated from volunteers, responses to the regular volunteer satisfaction surveys and the evaluation questionnaire completed for this research. Recommendations for future developments will be considered.

Volunteer Demographics

The results from the demographic information collected from volunteers through their application forms suggest that YHCOSA is successfully engaging with a broad cross section of local communities. There are some areas where the volunteer pool could be considered imbalanced, in terms of not reflecting the broader demographics of the local community, for example with the over-representation of young people being involved or under-representation of males. However, this appears to follow on from the proportion of applications received rather than a bias in the selection process.

It does appear that some younger volunteers “self-screen” themselves out of the process possibly because of the rigorousness or commitment required by the selection process. Alternatively, some may be deselected through the recruitment process as they cannot evidence the necessary commitment, experience or resilience YHCOSA requires from volunteers. Ultimately this is reducing the proportion of younger volunteers who actually join Circles and whilst this age group is still over-represented, it is much less pronounced than the degree of disproportion at the application stage. This is beneficial as it reduces the number of young volunteers who are trained but then not offered an opportunity to volunteer, as in selecting balanced representative volunteers to form a Circle, Coordinators are unable to accommodate large numbers of younger volunteers whilst keeping the Circle representative of the wider community.

The smaller proportion of males choosing to be involved may reflect the results of previous research which suggests that men tend to have less positive attitudes to people who have committed sexual offending compared to women (e.g. Clarke, 2004). Also, there is a relative lack of males in “caring” volunteering roles across the spectrum of opportunities available.

Recommendation: In order to challenge this, some specifically focused advertising and targeting of potential male volunteers for YHCOSA would be advantageous.

The volunteer pool represents the proportion of minority groups in Yorkshire and Humberside (Office of National Statistics, 2011) well overall. However, in some of the areas YHCOSA covers, the local community is substantially different to these general findings, for example Bradford has a higher proportion of Asian residents (20%, Bradford Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2010), and thus it is imperative to be able to recruit a representative volunteer pool to reflect these areas.

Recommendation: To ensure the volunteer pool is more representative of the wider community (age and gender) and increase diversity, a targeted strategy could be developed to create volunteer advertising which is specifically relevant to under-represented groups.

Volunteer Motivations

The responses to the evaluation questionnaire suggest that only a minority (12, 27%) of volunteers who responded to the evaluation questionnaire hold wholly inward motivations. This has been defined as volunteering for career development or self-improvement motivations. However, this must be considered within the limits of this sample of volunteers, who are not necessarily representative of the whole volunteer pool, as is evident in the demographic make-up of this group. This finding could be an artefact of the volunteers who completed the survey; arguably outwardly motivated volunteers (defined as those volunteering for altruistic motivations) and those who are more involved and committed to Circles or have greatest spare time available, may be more likely to complete the questionnaire, and thus do not necessarily reflect the whole population of Circles volunteers. Younger volunteers (who are under-represented in this sample in comparison to the wider volunteer pool) may be more inwardly motivated as they may be looking for employment related experience for their CV. Anecdotal evidence suggests that inwardly motivated volunteers may be less reliable and committed to the Circle which can result in inconsistency for the core member and increases difficulty for the Coordinator in managing the Circle arrangements.

Recommendation: Monitor the motivation of volunteers to increase information available about this for future evaluations. Continue to encourage volunteers in the recruitment and training process to consider their motivation for being involved and the impact this could have on the relationship with their core member.

A significant proportion of volunteers have professional interest in working with offenders or are involved specifically to build up experience to pursue a career in the field. In other research, core members have reported that volunteers motivated by a career in the Criminal Justice System make them feel “like a guinea pig” (Thomas *et al.*, 2014).

Recommendation: Knowledge about COSA amongst “lay people” is still limited and further work to promote the work of COSA and engage positively with the media to improve the representativeness of COSA must be a continued priority of the project.

The “Best Things” and “Biggest Challenges”

The average number of responses per individual was greater when volunteers were asked in the Evaluation Questionnaire to list the “Best Things” (2.28) about volunteering for YHCOSA, than for the Biggest Challenges (1.75), which suggests more positive experiences. This is reinforced by the fact that 100% of volunteers said in the Volunteer Surveys that they would recommend volunteering with YHCOSA to others.

Noticeably, the categories of “other volunteers” and “the core members” feature highly in both the best experiences and biggest challenges of volunteering with YHCOSA. These are fundamental to the volunteering role, but the capacity of these factors to impact on volunteers (in both positive and negative ways) must be a continued source of focus for YHCOSA in supporting volunteers, training and supervision.

Recommendation: Ensure volunteers receive on-going support and supervision throughout their volunteering, specifically asking about concerns relating to the core member and other volunteers in their Circle. Cover the potential impacts of volunteering in induction training.

Volunteer Satisfaction

The degree of volunteer satisfaction, as measured by the Volunteer Satisfaction Index (VSI), is high with a mean score of 129.6 from a maximum 154 score. If, as Paton *et al.* (2008) suggest, “job” satisfaction is a useful proxy measure for resilience, this suggests YHCOSA’s volunteers are resilient and their experience of volunteering is not having any negative impact on them. In particular scores on the “Organisational Satisfaction” factor are greater than the published norms from the original study investigating volunteers (Galindo-Huhn & Guzley, 2002), which suggests the support they are receiving from YHCOSA is ample and valued by them.

Responses to the regular volunteer surveys replicate this finding. The majority of volunteers report feeling well supported and appreciated by YHCOSA (95% rating 5 or 6 out of 6).

Recommendation: Given the complexity and potentially difficult nature of the experiences involved with being a Circles volunteer, this on-going degree of support is vital and must remain a priority for the organisation through any future development and growth.

A small minority of volunteers report a reduction to their emotional well-being as a result of their volunteering (4, 4.8%) in the regular volunteer surveys. This is a much smaller proportion than is reported in the literature about professionals working with sexual offenders (20-25%; e.g. Clarke, 2008), which is positive. It is possible that the practical arrangements for volunteering (e.g. a commitment of two hours a week, working with other volunteers who can provide support if necessary, frequency of supervision) offers a degree of protection to the volunteers as they are not exposed to the same degree as professionals. Additionally, responses to other questions in the survey imply the frustrations felt by two of these volunteers relate to the time they have been kept waiting for a volunteering opportunity, rather than from negative experiences in a Circle.

Employment Prospects

100% of volunteers who reported volunteering to improve their employability skills and prospects felt they had achieved this. In the last 3 years, 30 YHCOSA volunteers have secured a new job, and many of these were in the criminal justice system, including prison staff, probation officers, probation service officers and substance misuse workers.

Summary

The volunteer demographics of YHCOSA volunteers are broadly representative of the demographics of Yorkshire and Humberside.

There is a lack of male volunteers and some age groups are under represented.

Additional attention needs to be paid to recruiting volunteers more representative of certain communities within the region and to attract under-represented groups.

Consideration should be given to the impact of volunteer motivation on core members, in the recruitment process.

Volunteers report positive experiences through volunteering for YHCOSA and 100% would recommend being a circle volunteer to others.

Recommendations

Targeted recruitment from underrepresented groups, in particular male volunteers.

Continued screening of volunteers and rigorous recruitment processes to ensure selected volunteers are appropriate and resilient to the demands of being a Circles volunteer.

Record data about volunteer motivation to allow more detailed consideration of the impact of this on the volunteer, the Circle and core member in future evaluations.

Continue to prioritise the support and supervision of volunteers and to acknowledge their contribution.

Engage positively with the media to promote the work of YHCOSA and increase knowledge amongst “lay people” to improve the representativeness of the volunteer pool. Targeting contact with local media and media outlets specific to minority communities.

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Case Studies

Part 3

Core Member Case Study 3

Steve's initial referral gave information regarding his survival in the community. He was being 'befriended' by individuals who viewed him as an easy target in relation to sexual favours and financial gain. He has completed a SOTP but had only minimal understanding, and tended to minimise his offending. Steve had multiple convictions for sexual offences against children.

Steve was very demanding from the beginning of the Circle, and continued to be so throughout its duration. He had learning difficulties and a "High risk" of re-offending. He was socially inadequate and imposing in size. He also had many health issues.

The Circle volunteers spent much of their time seeking to educate and persuade Steve to reduce his drinking and gambling, to lesson his risky behaviours and to discourage non-suitable friendships. He kept a diary to record these activities. He had frequent stays in hospital and the volunteers responded by visiting him regularly.

Both Probation and Police were pleased with the support and accountability that had been given to Steve by the Circle. Probation was particularly concerned when the Circle could not continue any longer; it was felt that the Circle had given him a sense of purpose and decreased his risk to the public. The on-going concerns such as his vulnerability, recklessness, naivety, and drinking/gambling will remain, but they have been lessened and are less dominant.

In relation to the "best thing" about Circles, Steve said, "They helped me with my letters. ...when I was down when I needed to preparewith my health and risk. I enjoyed getting back into charity work". He was full of praise for the volunteers, and felt they should receive a salary for "helping those like me to move on".

Steve will continue to give cause for concern and the Circle coordinator still engages with him regularly. However, the experience of the Circle has given him support and help; it is three years since he was released from prison, and it is hoped his ambition to live an offence free life will continue.

I'm a mother in my thirties with a Criminology degree amongst my qualifications. I have a varied employment history, including dance and fitness coaching, music and English language teaching but also hold vast experience in roles supporting vulnerable people alongside, as most of us know, the best qualification – decent/colourful life experience. In 2012, circumstance left me between jobs so I looked into volunteering and was introduced to Circles.

I found the project fitted perfectly with my views and it was also a subject area I hadn't previously been involved in so I was eager to learn more whilst have the opportunity to help towards a better world. The training was as I'd expected and worthwhile. I very nearly found an alternative project, because the process in being placed in a Circle was frustratingly long. A male volunteer had experienced the same time span so it was fortunate we both had such appreciation for the project, had realised the reasons for the lengthy process and hadn't given up because we then went on to work successfully as a Circle.

There was plenty of good fun and humour within our Circle which was crucial to fit in amongst the serious work. We were able to accompany our CM to venues he would have perhaps been discouraged from going to alone, visited him in hospital and we also did a sponsored walk across the Humber Bridge to support his wish to 'put something back into community'. We provided phone support but had to use initiative and devise ourselves a rota because our CM, began to drain us of energy, given his complex needs. CM'S have matters to overcome that many of us take for granted.

As the months passed, our CM was finding new friends in his new community. We found ourselves 'parenting' him on his choice of company and the lifestyle he was developing. We certainly did our upmost to guide him. Supportive, effective communication between volunteers proved vital. We received much support and supervision from our coordinator. The year was demanding, emotionally challenging, took up far more time than I had anticipated, rewarding, funny and I do not regret one moment! Despite the Circle coming to a natural end, I still contact our CM from time to time, as agreed. With 'no more victims' in mind, I am able to challenge his thoughts and behaviour if necessary and continue to share information with the Circles Coordinator as appropriate mostly it is rewarding for me to have become a reliable individual for our CM, external to the authorities and I hope that will serve to help him desist.



Statutory Agencies

Statutory Agencies

Introduction

Circles are a community response to sexual offending. Each of the 15 projects currently running in the UK were developed independently in the communities they are based, and as such developed very differently. However, the underpinning core components that make Circles work are the same across all projects and the quality of delivery and compliance to the Circles model is assessed by Circles UK.

Projects can only run Circles if they can evidence that they are able to meet the Circles UK code of practice. The Ministry of Justice funds Circles UK to audit projects for compliance every 18 months. The balance between overarching consistency and locally driven approaches has led to projects across the countries sharing similarities whilst also being very different.

There are many differences, for instance some projects are charities with the main business of Circles, and others started as Circles and now offer a multitude of services. There are Circles projects based within Probation Services with little charity involvement and there are projects based within charities with little Probation Services involvement. As yet there is no evidence to support which model works best; projects grew based on local need and support and it is assumed that they are the best fit for their region. YHCOSA is the only project being run as a charity and embedded in statutory services, specifically with Probation Officers as Circle Coordinators.

In 2011, the projects in North and South Yorkshire were already running Circles and using Probation Officers as Coordinators. Humberside and West Yorkshire were yet to start their first Circle. Therefore when the regions joined and YHCOSA was formed, Circles had been developing locally for 6 years. However, Circles was still viewed as a very new, innovative and risky approach. In particular statutory services and local communities were nervous of allowing volunteers to support high-risk people who had sexually offended. It was this view that precipitated the decision to continue with Probation Officers as Coordinators where possible. This decision was based on 2 clear rationales. Firstly, the level of professional defensibility their status as Probation Officers brought to the project. It was believed that Probation Officers being responsible for making the risk judgements, and having operational oversight of Circles would reassure people of the integrity of the project. Secondly, although in a time of austerity, the regional Probation Service felt strongly about supporting Circles.

Without money to commit, providing Probation Officers to fill the role of Circle Coordinators, as 'in kind' funding was one solution.

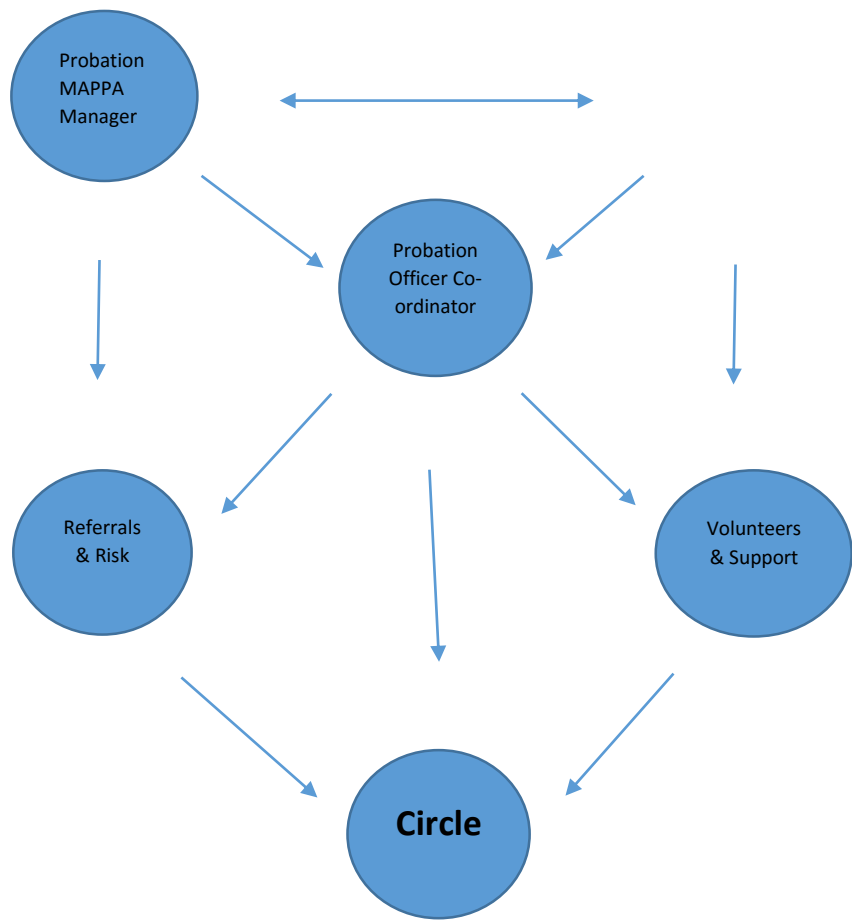
This study will explore the operational statutory staff perspectives of YHCOSA's partnership approach. There are no other studies available that evaluate the added benefits of a project being charity-led, whilst also being embedded in statutory services.

YHCOSA as the charity brings with it strong values and principles, commitment, community awareness, amazing volunteers, the ability to apply for charitable funding and ultimate oversight of Circles across Yorkshire and Humberside.

YHCOSA Coordinators are Probation Officers and they are line managed by both YHCOSA and the MAPPA Manager within Probation Services. This is because it is the Probation Services policy that everyone who has sexually offended is part of the MAPPA process. Therefore the Coordinator being line managed in part by the MAPPA Manager encourages a consideration of Circles where relevant in the MAPPA process. It is YHCOSA's policy that a referral to Circles should be considered for all high risk men or women who have been charged with a sexual offence and are assessed as high risk.

Initially, being embedded in statutory services gave YHCOSA a level of credibility, which would potentially have taken years to build. In collaboration with their multi-agency public protection arrangement (MAPPA) Manager the Probation Officer Coordinator skills and expertise were trusted to make risk and referral decisions. Ultimately this is seen to safeguard volunteers and the community whilst enabling YHCOSA to work towards its vision of 'no more victims'.

Figure 9 - YHCOSA Operational Model – shows line management relationship and responsibility for areas of YHCOSA work



Current study

This study will evaluate the added benefits as perceived by operational statutory staff (Police and Probation) of the YHCOSA current model of delivery. In particular, it will explore their views of Probation Officers working in the role of Circle Co-ordinators, and Circles being embedded within MAPPA.

Method

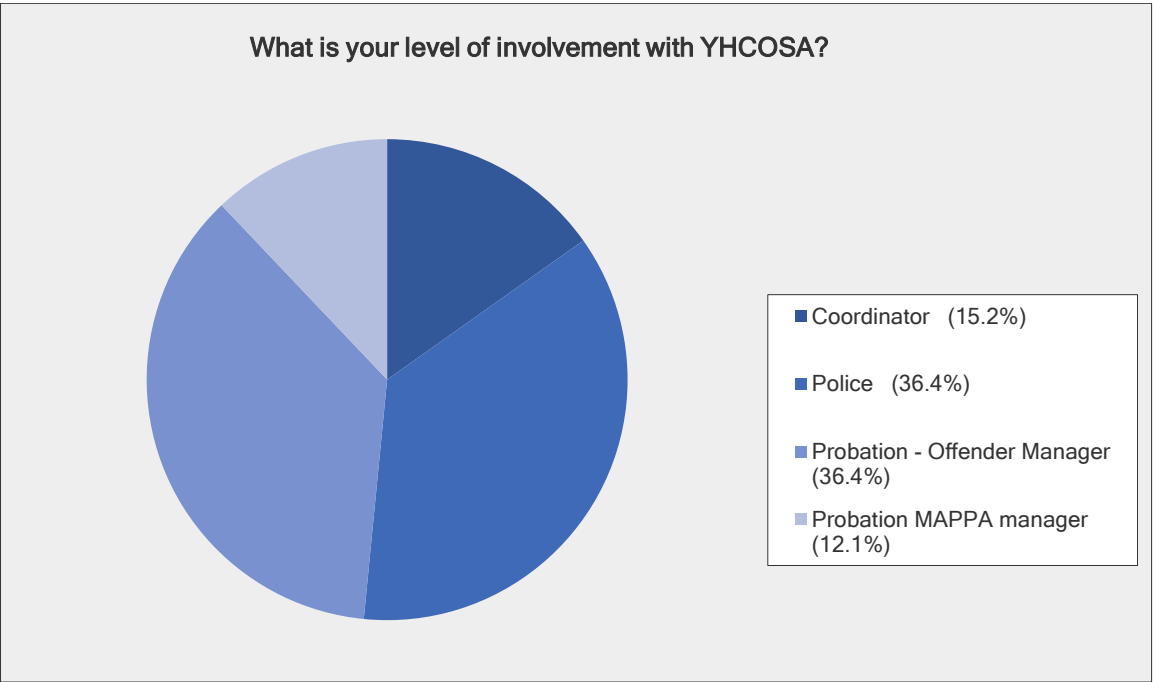
Participants

The participants (N = 34) were all operational staff working within the statutory services of Police and Probation. This included Coordinators, Offender Managers, MAPPA Managers and Police Officers. Participants were selected based on past or current involvement with YHCOSA. 5 Coordinators were approached and asked to complete a questionnaire and then send the questionnaire link to all operational staff employed by statutory services that they have worked in partnership with during their time with Circles. 52 questionnaires were sent out and 42 were completed giving a substantial return rate of 81%.

The participants who responded will have previously worked directly with the Circle Coordinators in a variety of different roles. Participants from the Police Service and NPS will have made referrals to YHCOSA and been part of the ‘outer’ professional Circle, having regular contact and reviews with the Circle members. The MAPPA Managers have oversight for the core members’ risk level upon referral and they also share line management responsibility for the Coordinators with YHCOSA.

Demographics

Figure 10 - Current job role of participants



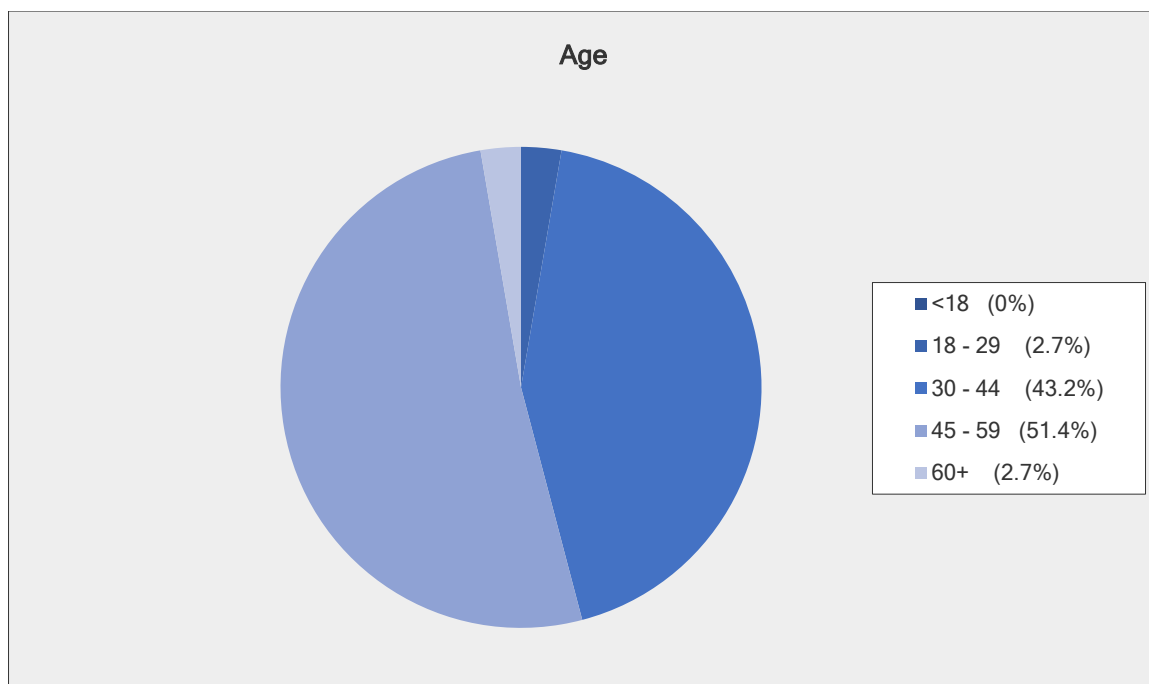
Gender

59.5% (N = 22) of respondents were female and 40.5% (N =15) were male. 5 respondents skipped this question.

Age

The age of participants ranged from 18 -60+ with the majority in the 45-59 range, closely followed by the 30–44 range. This is not surprising as the Police Service and NPS usually seek out more experienced professionals to work directly with sexual offenders.

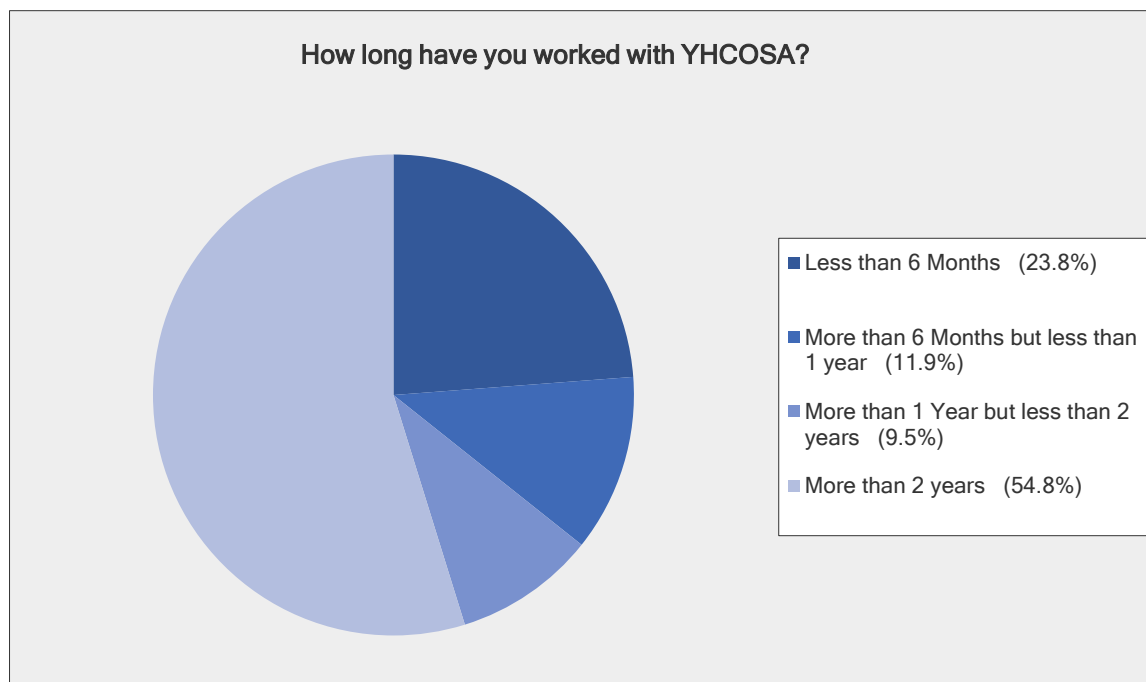
Figure 11 - Age range of participants



Length of time working with YHCOSA

The participants were asked how long they have worked in partnership with YHCOSA. The majority (N=23) had worked in partnership with YHCOSA for over 2 years and it is likely that they will have a good working knowledge of the aims and working practices.

Figure 12 - Length of time working with YHCOSA



Procedure

This study had a questionnaire design and aimed to explore views on the potential added benefits of the YHCOSA model.

Development of the questionnaire

A Coordinator, The Director of YHCOSA, Operations Manager and Chair of Trustees of YHCOSA were all involved in devising the questionnaire in order to create as wide a range of statements as possible. Each contributor provided details of the added benefits of the YHCOSA model, which were then reworked into questions. These questions were piloted and reworded where necessary.

The questionnaire collected demographic information on age and gender. The final questionnaire consisted of 34 items and was scored on a four point Likert scale (0= strongly agree to 4= strongly disagree). The questionnaire finished with 2 open questions to allow participants to give further detail about their opinion.

The questionnaire was introduced with the following paragraph.

‘As you know, YHCOSA is a partnership between statutory services and the voluntary and community sector. YHCOSA Coordinators are Probation Officers, supervised within MAPPA. Police and NPS staff have key roles within steering groups and have been fundamental in developing and growing Circles across the region. Our partnership works so that NPS staff are responsible for risk decisions and referrals and the charity recruits & trains the volunteers, quality assures the project and ensures it is fully embedded in the community. We are extremely proud of our achievements but as the only COSA project with this fully integrated partnership approach, we are keen to evaluate the extra value statutory services bring to Circles.’

Using survey monkey, the final questionnaire was sent out, via email, by the five Circle Co-ordinators, to 52 operational staff that work for the Police Service or NPS in partnership with YHCOSA. Coordinators selected potential recipients based on the following criteria – Operational member of staff, referred to/been involved with Circles, employed by the Police Service or NPS.

The survey monkey questionnaire was live for one month. The questionnaire responses were automatically stored in the survey monkey account when completed.

Data preparation

In preparation for analysing the response, the 34 items on the questionnaire were grouped into themes by 2 independent researchers. Three themes emerged.

Referrals - This group of statements asked the participants whether they thought that having the involvement of statutory services impacted on the referral process of a core member to a Circle.

Defensible and professionally trained - These statements canvass views on whether the decisions taken by Circle Coordinators are seen as more defensible because they are made by professionally trained Probation Officers.

Safety and risk – Statements reflected the view that the partnership arrangement between YHCOSA and the statutory agencies increased safety and lowered the risks associated with asking community volunteers to work with high risk sexual offenders.

In order to present the results the Likert scale categories were collapsed. The response categories of ‘Strongly Agree’ and ‘Agree’ were grouped together, as were ‘Strongly Disagree’ and ‘Disagree’.

The questionnaire finished with 2 open questions to allow participants to give further detail about their opinion. The questions asked were 'Are there any other reasons you think YHCOSA partnership with statutory services is beneficial or detrimental?' and 'Is there anything else you would like to add?'

A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 4

Results

Three themes were identified across the 34 items presented in the questionnaire. These were;

Referral process

Defensible and professionally trained Coordinators

Safety and risk.

Each theme will be presented in turn along with the rate of responses as a percentage. As previously mentioned the Likert scale was collapsed into two categories for ease of reporting. The responses to the open questions within the questionnaire were also grouped within the three themes and will be shown throughout. There will be a final amalgamation of responses to the open questions, which did not clearly fit any theme.

Theme 1: Referrals

Eleven items from the questionnaire were grouped within the theme 'Referral'. This group of statements all asked the participants whether they thought that having the involvement of statutory services impacted on the referral process of a core member to a Circle. Currently, the way referrals are made is via Police officers or Probation staff.

Table 17 - Referrals

Item	Agree	Disagree
I have more faith in the charity knowing it is imbedded in statutory services	94%	6%
I believe statutory services and charity working together gives offenders the best chance	97%	3%
Referrals are made predominately because MAPPA Values Circles	58%	42%
It's because the MAPPA Manager line manages the Circle Coordinator that Circle stay on the MAPPA agenda	50%	50%
If Coordinators were not Probation Officers Circles would run just the same	17%	83%
The MAPPA Managers' involvement does not impact referral numbers or quality	36%	64%
Being based within the NPS means Coordinators are better able to promote the project	100%	0%
More appropriate core members are selected for Circles due to Coordinators being Probation Officers	87%	13%
Probation Officer Coordinators are better able to ensure a constant presence of Police Services and NPS in the Circles life	90%	10%
Being embedded in MAPPA ensures that Circles remains on the agenda during both formal and informal case discussions.	100%	0%
I am more likely to refer a Sex Offender knowing the project is partly led by statutory services	72%	28%

Interestingly all the participants agreed that being based within the National Probation Service (NPS) meant that Coordinators could promote the project better. Also that being embedded in MAPPA ensures that Circles stay on the agenda for both informal and formal case discussions. However, the opinion was split 50/50 as to whether the MAPPA manager line managing the Coordinators means Circles stay on the MAPPA agenda.

The vast majority, 94% of participants, stated that they have more faith in the charity knowing it is embedded within Statutory services and 72% said that they are more likely to refer to the project knowing that the project is partly led by Statutory services.

Responses to the open questions regarding referral included 'I would not refer to an agency that was entirely voluntary to deal with such high risk sex offenders and members of the public volunteering'

'I think (the partnership) is beneficial as Circles referrals are predominately from the NPS and working in partnership with different perspectives aids rather than impedes risk management. The independence of YHCOSA remains the essential ingredient in the success of this partnership'

Overall the responses show that participants believe they are more aware of what Circles can achieve and thus refer to them as they trust the opinion of their colleague, a Probation Officer and because the service is part of the MAPPA process.

Theme 2: Defensible and Professionally Trained.

Eight statements were presented that fit with the theme 'Coordinators decisions are more defensible because they are professionally trained'.

TABLE 18 - Defensible and Professionally Trained

Item	Agree	Disagree
Statutory services have a lot to contribute to steering groups as they know the wider offender demographic	100%	0%
Partnerships with statutory services mean they take Circles more seriously	100%	0%
Partnerships with statutory services mean outside agencies take Circles more seriously	85%	15%
My confidence in the Circles approach would remain the same even if there was no support from statutory services	17%	73%
My colleagues are more willing to consider circles when I tell them about the statutory involvement	84%	16%
The partnership with statutory services give Circles credibility it wouldn't have otherwise	93%	7%
I am reassured that YHCOSA Coordinators are professionally qualified as Probation Officers	96%	4%
YHCOSA decisions are more defensible due to working in such close partnership with NPS.	96%	4%

Every participant agreed that statutory services have a lot to contribute to steering groups, and that the current partnership arrangements with statutory services mean that within the Police Service and NPS Circles are taken more seriously. 85% agreed that other agencies view Circles more seriously too because they are embedded in statutory services. Participants believe that Circles decisions are more defensible (96%) and the credibility and reassurance of the model is linked to the Coordinators being professionally trained Probation Officers.

The following statement by a respondent on the open response section also supports the findings in this theme. '(Probation officers as Coordinators) is beneficial due to their professional experience and skills in managing high risk offenders'.

This theme highlights how participants believe the decision making of YHCOSA is more defensible because the Coordinator making decisions about risk is professionally trained. Also that outside agencies view the decisions as more credible because of the statutory partnership.

Theme 3: Safety and Risk.

Thirteen statements explored whether participants felt the current partnership arrangement increased safety and lowered the risks associated with matching high risk sex offenders with community volunteers.

TABLE 19 - Safety and Risk

Statement	Agree	Disagree
The Partnership with NPS helps reassure me that risk will be dealt with appropriately	91%	9%
Risk issues being dealt with by a Coordinator with a Police/NPS background feel more appropriate	97%	3%
All services for high risk offenders should be embedded in statutory services	88%	12%
Access to risk and assessment information is much easier due to Coordinators being based within NPS	94%	6%
Lines of communication regarding risk are much smoother due to the Coordinators having access to the same information as referrers	72%	28%
Statutory services are responsible for high risk offenders therefore they should be partly responsible for Circles	75%	25%
Statutory staff are specifically trained and experienced to deal with risk – this makes the Circle process more robust	96%	4%
It is best practice for voluntary services working with offenders that are high risk to the public to have statutory oversight, for their safety.	87%	13%
Probation officers as Coordinators are better able to recognise risk indicators and increased risk	100%	0%
I have more confidence in the professionalism of Coordinators knowing they are Probation Officers	84%	16%
Proactive risk assessment and management is enhanced due to the Coordinators being based within MAPPA	81%	19%
A Coordinators decision regarding risk is trusted as they are a trained Probation Officer	93%	7%
The statutory partnership gives a sense of safety to volunteers working with offenders.	90%	10%

All of the participants that completed the questionnaire believed that Probation Officers as Coordinators are better able to recognise risk indicators and any increased risk. Similarly 96% felt that it is more appropriate that Probation Officers make these decisions leading to the assessment process being more robust. Three quarters of participants felt that as statutory services are responsible for high risk offenders they should be partly responsible for Circles, and 87% agree that this ensures a better level of safety for volunteers.

The opinion that Coordinators as Probation Officers enhance the safety of the project and risk assessment process is further evidenced in the following responses to the open questions.

‘I’m not sure I would trust Circles to work with such high risk offenders if it didn’t have the safety net of being so closely linked with statutory services. Being based in the NPS means risk decisions and information that needs sharing is done in a timely manner’

‘A Circle provides vital support during the critical period when statutory supervision is ending. The partnership between statutory services and YHCOSA facilitates a smooth transition from NPS supervision with a robust risk management plan’

Participants felt strongly that risk decisions ‘should’ be made by a statutorily trained professional. They also felt that the immediate access that Probation Officers have to risk information is very important, particularly during the assessment process. Overall they felt reassured that a service that relies on ‘ordinary’ members of the public working with high risk sex offenders has statutory oversight.

Coordinators Only

Two statements were specifically asked of the coordinators only.

TABLE 20 – Questions for Coordinators Only

Statement	Agree	Disagree
I feel Circles is taken more seriously because I am a colleague of those I am explaining the idea too	100%	0%
because we are internally based colleagues witness our achievements	100%	0%

All the Coordinators felt that Circles are taken more seriously as they are colleagues of the people making the referrals and similarly they all felt that this is due in part to their colleagues being able to directly witness the impact of Circles.

Additional open responses

Alongside the items on the questionnaire there was also opportunity for open responding. Participants were asked 'Are there any other reasons you think YHCOSA's partnership with statutory services is beneficial or detrimental?'

In addition to those responses highlighted in the themes above, the following comments were also received.

'I think Circles is an excellent example of statutory and voluntary sector organisations working together to contribute to the effective management of risk. Staff and volunteers from both sectors bring something very different in terms of skills and experience and it is the blending of those skills that I think makes Circles so valuable'

'Partnership work between statutory and charity based organisations facilitates inter-agency liaison and management of high risk marginalised individuals. It offers a unique way of modelling good citizenship based in a statutory framework, which allows public perceptions to be changed, public confidence increased and myths dispelled'

'Circles brings statutory work closer to working with communities'

'YHCOSA is a well-respected charity with a very clear ethic and proven track record of working with high risk sex offenders. This can only be achieved with a very close working relationship with the statutory agencies'

'The downside for me is that Circles being embedded in statutory services possibly negates the strengths that come from being a voluntary organisation'

The 'free flow' comments were extremely positive, with all but one being clear that the model is the best way of ensuring Circles are run in a safe and effective way. One comment questioned whether the statutory input negates the strengths that come from a voluntary organisation.

'Were Circles to lose statutory partnership working I believe its profile within NPS and Police Services would decline, over time'

These comments and the other findings detailed here will be discussed in detail during the next section

Discussion

The aim of the study was to evaluate the added benefits as perceived by operational statutory staff (Police and Probation) of the YHCOSA current model of delivery. In particular it explored their views about Probation Officers working in the role of Circle Co-ordinators, and Circles being imbedded within MAPPA.

In this section the key findings to the 'what are the added benefits of YHCOSA model of partnership working with statutory services' questionnaire will be discussed. This discussion will look at each of the three themes found and then finish with a conclusion and recommendations

Theme 1 – Referrals

There was a strong agreement within this theme that YHCOSA being imbedded in statutory services makes a positive difference to referrals. This was evident across many referral elements. Respondents have more faith in the charity, believing that more appropriate core members are selected for Circles as the Coordinators are Probation Officers. This is really key to YHCOSA processes and reputation. A Circle will only work if the core member selected meets certain criteria. One of these criteria is that they are assessed as 'high risk' by statutory services. Therefore the statutory workers who make the referrals need to have complete faith in the Coordinator to assess the suitability of the core member appropriately and match them with suitable and well trained volunteers. 72% of participants stated that they are more likely to refer someone who has sexually offended as they know that the project is partly led by statutory services and only 17% believe that Circles would run just the same if it was not run by a Circles Coordinator. This highlights clearly how much they rely on knowing that a colleague they trust professionally is receiving the referral and will deal with in appropriately.

Interestingly the opinions about the impact of YHCOSA involvement in the multi-agency public protection arrangement (MAPPA) were divided. Only 50% thought that the MAPPA line management of Circles makes a difference and 58% felt that referrals are only made because Circles are on the MAPPA agenda. There are multiple possible reasons for these views. The MAPPA Managers involvement is different in each YHCOSA area. Although across all the Yorkshire projects the MAPPA manager jointly line manages the Coordinators, how much involvement they have in practice depends on their other commitments. All (100%) of the respondents felt that Circles being imbedded was important to ensure the project is kept on the

MAPPA agenda, however, they did not appear to link this to the Coordinator being jointly line managed by the MAPPA Manager.

Participants also thought (90%), that Coordinators who are Probation Officers are more likely to be able to ensure that Probation and Police engage with Circles. This could be as they are their direct colleagues, they can ask for their involvement directly, share offices, computer systems and in some cases line managers. There may also be an element of professional respect within their quick and positive response to the Coordinators request for involvement. This involvement affords a joined up multiagency approach to both support and accountability and is key to the Circle working successfully.

Theme 2 Defensible and professionally trained

It is imperative for YHCOSA that statutory services view Circles as a professional, safe and appropriate response to working with high risk people who have sexually offended. Without this view locally, YHCOSA would not be able to offer the service and thus work towards its aim of 'no more victims'. All of the operational statutory staff who completed the questionnaire agreed that they take YHCOSA more seriously due to the current statutory partnerships, and 85% of them also thought that other agencies have this view too. 96% feel reassured that decisions are more defensible due to being made by professionally qualified Probation Officers. In reality all risk and assessment decisions should be overseen by a MAPPA Manager and YHCOSA. However, this view and opinion of statutory services staff ensures that referrals continue to be made, they continue to value the YHCOSA service and core members are offered a service to help them abstain from further offending.

The steering groups are also a key element of YHCOSA. A steering group consists of various 'involved' local people, such as statutory officers, community groups, YHCOSA volunteers and staff. The steering group is the opportunity to ensure the local YHCOSA service is reflective of local community needs. The steering group also troubleshoots any issues with specific Circles and looks at ways to overcome these. 100% of respondents agree that statutory services contribute a lot to steering groups. They have an awareness of the wider offender demographic and the impact Circles can/cannot have within that.

Overall, answers showed that Coordinators being professionally trained, and thus their decisions being viewed as more defensible, was of high importance to respondents. They felt a level of reassurance, which they highlight as being necessary in order to refer high risk people who have sexually offended to meet with community volunteers. The need for reassurance was also evidenced by the importance respondents placed on statutory services being involved in local steering groups.

Theme 3 Safety and Risk

There are numerous elements of risk involved in setting up and running a Circle that YHCOSA has to manage, and that are applicable to operational statutory staff roles. The most significant include the risk of a core member reoffending and causing more harm, and the risk to volunteers by introducing them to someone who has sexually offended.

One of the main reasons YHCOSA chose to have the approach whereby Coordinators are trained Probation Officers, was to mitigate these risks as much as possible. The Coordinators have access to all statutory risk assessments, files, and MAPPA meetings and are based in the same office/have direct access to the core member's Offender Manager and Public Protection Officer. 94% of the respondents see all the aforementioned as an important measure in reducing the risk associated with matching high risk sexual offenders with volunteers. Working together government guidelines (2013) report that a lack sharing of information between professionals is often one of the main causes of serious harm to a child. The YHCOSA approach does not rely on professionals sharing information during the assessment procedure, as the Probation Officers already have access to all the information on risk, and do not need to depend on others selecting risk information to share.

In addition to having access to this information, all respondents felt that the Probation Officer Coordinators are better able to recognise risk indicators and increased risk. This is particularly useful when the Circle is up and running as the volunteers send the Coordinator minutes of each Circle meeting. The Coordinator then needs to make a professional judgement based on their prior knowledge, training and experience to decide which parts of the information they then share with the professional 'outer Circle'. Respondents to the questionnaire agreed (96%), that as the Coordinators are professionally trained to deal with risk, this makes the process more robust. A further 87% feel that the volunteers are safer with the current level of statutory involvement.

In summary, respondents felt strongly that risk management was an essential element of Circles and that YHCOSA approach to Circles with Probation Officers as Coordinators ensured the best chance of risk being managed effectively. This was judged both with regards to access to information and the level of training they have received from statutory services.

Coordinator only questions

Coordinators (100%) feel that they are taken more seriously as they are direct colleagues of the people making referrals, and similarly that this is due, in part, to colleagues directly witnessing the impact of a successful Circle. As Circles is a project with the integral element of matching volunteers to high risk people who have sexually offended, this is very important. Coordinators need to feel confident that although their colleagues may initially be sceptical of the approach, they afford them enough professional respect to engage with the service before they have witnessed Circles' impact for themselves. This is often the way that projects slowly build their reputation in the local area; colleagues accept that if a Probation Officer chooses to become a Coordinator, there may be some potential in the approach.

Open response questions

When asked 'are there any other reasons you think YHCOSA partnership with statutory services is beneficial or detrimental', the majority (13/14) responses were positive. The responses highlighted the same benefits as the questionnaire findings. For example, the statutory staff writing the open response questions focussed on how the YHCOSA partnership model brings benefits such as 'risk decisions and information are shared in a timely manner', '(YHCOSA model) offers a unique way of modelling good citizenship based in a statutory framework' and 'different perspectives (statutory & voluntary) aids risk management'. However, one comment mentioned that 'the downside is that Circles being embedded in statutory services possibly negates the strengths that come from being a voluntary organisation'. The last comment is very important to YHCOSA's overall objective. Another comment that, although positive about the partnership approach, also raises the issue of the importance of YHCOSA's charity status was 'YHCOSA as a charity remains the essential ingredient in this partnership'. These opinions reflect the overall importance of YHCOSA as a charity element to run successful Circles. Some Circles projects are wholly run by Probation, others by charities. YHCOSA decision to be a charity working in close partnership with statutory services is based on recognising the strengths of both approaches. Within YHCOSA the charity focus is on the community

response element, values and principles, volunteer recruitment and training whilst the statutory services element is focussed on risk assessment, referrals and defensible decision making.

Summary of findings

The findings from this study clearly show that the respondents value the YHCOSA current approach of Coordinators being trained Probation Officers. They recognise the benefits of a partnership approach to working with high-risk sexual offenders and feel strongly about the added benefits the statutory partnership brings to the model. The themes that emerged from the questionnaire: (1. Referrals, 2. Defensible and professionally trained and 3. Safety and risk) all highlight essential elements of the current approach.

Some of the opinions, specifically with regards to participants understanding of the service, sharing of information, defensibility of the risk assessment and confidence to refer to the service reflect the key factors in what makes YHCOSA such a successful project.

The opinions about whether MAPPA managers sharing line management responsibilities were split. This may be because since the development of the National Probation Service MAPPA Managers' commitments have changed and thus their involvement in each YHCOSA area varies. Further investigation into this is needed.

Methodological issues

The method involved a questionnaire being sent via email to statutory staff members who have operational involvement with Circles through YHCOSA. This method of collecting data excludes people who are not computer literate. There may have been statutory operational staff with opinions to share that are unaware of this evaluation. Additionally, surveys are also subject to self-selection bias in responding - that is only those who want to reply do so. Hence this misses the opinions of those who choose to abstain.

The questionnaire itself was devised utilising the experience of YHCOSA Director, Operations Manager, Chair of Board, previous Coordinator and previous MAPPA Manager. If this study was replicated, best practice would be to also involve a police representative in devising the questionnaire so that all key partners are involved.

Conclusion

Whilst being mindful of the issue that the benefits of the charity involvement in YHCOSA have not been discussed within this evaluation, it is important to note that there is overwhelming agreement from statutory operational staff that the partnership model, where Circles are embedded in statutory services, is best practice. This evaluation has evidenced that the model brings with it numerous benefits that would not be achievable without Circle Coordinators being Probation Officers. YHCOSA chooses to be fully embedded within the Probation service and those involved see this as one of the charity's core strengths.

Recommendations

The partnership model continues. Coordinators are trained Probation Officers where possible. If resource implications do not allow this, then any non-Probation Officer Coordinators will be 'buddied' with the Probation Coordinators to share best practice and access to information.

The current joint line management approach with MAPPA managers is investigated further. Elements of the benefits and difficulties need to be discussed with MAPPA Managers and strategic NPS Managers. An assessment is needed to determine whether the current role of the MAPPA manager is still useful or could be amended to meet the needs of YHCOSA and NPS better.

Statutory partners continue to be key members of the local steering groups. YHCOSA to evidence to statutory partners their worth in steering groups by sharing with them the findings of this evaluation. YHCOSA to continue to invite statutory members and hold the meetings at a convenient time and location.

References

Department for Education, HM Government (2013) Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. London: Department for Education.



Case Studies

Part 4

Core Member Case Study 4

Just as he turned 18, David was referred to Circles by the Youth Offending Team via MAPPA. He had been convicted of accessing indecent images of children on the internet. The victims were believed to have been aged between five and seven years old. The Youth Offending Team considered that he posed a high risk of serious harm to children and referred him to Circles at the end of his sentence - which is also when his contact with the Youth Offending Team was coming to an end. Following a rigorous assessment of David's needs, a group of volunteers from YHCOSA were carefully selected to begin working with him. After several planning meetings and information sharing with the police, the Circle began meeting with David every week. The first of these meetings was a disclosure meeting where David was required to tell the volunteers about his offending and agree how they could work with him to lead a responsible lifestyle in the future. The police also attended this meeting to ensure the disclosure was accurate and to discuss risk management issues around conditions imposed under a Sexual Offences Prevention Order. Following this, the volunteers and police met with David every week for nine months. He opened up to them about his problems, began to make appropriate friends and increased his confidence in handling social situations. The Circle helped David to identify ways in which he could ensure he stuck to the conditions imposed by the courts while re-integrating into the community. Through MAPPA and the YHCOSA Coordinator, David was able to access one-to-one support to learn new ways of managing his behaviour to avoid a relapse into further offending. This was encouraged through the openness of discussion with the Circle. This information would not have come to light without the support of the Circle and the close working relationship between YHCOSA and the Police. The volunteers worked hard to engage David and demonstrated a real commitment to meeting with him, leading to a good bond between every member of the Circle. Some of the volunteers provided feedback, saying: "I would describe the impact as beneficial ...I feel he has changed for the better during our work with him." David added: "It has been great to have people I can talk to and relate to."

Volunteer Case Study 4

My working life was spent as a Housing Officer with a local authority dealing with people in rent arrears, neighbour disputes and from time to time helping to resettle people following prison discharge. I am enjoying retirement and I am a busy Grandma among other things, but I knew I would want a challenge in the voluntary sector as well. As a Quaker, I have been aware of Circles since its very beginning and always wondered whether it was something I could do one day, although it did seem a daunting prospect. The organisation's approach to people just seems the natural one to me. Not only does it feel like the right way to treat people; it works.

I have been in two Circles so far and have just started on a third. It's been a steep learning curve! The core member's life journeys have been so varied and complicated and getting to know people who are so different from you is never easy.

I think the main thing I have learnt is that we often have to be content with small achievements, and that people's lives may well only change in small ways through their Circle, but that this can mean a lot. For many core members, getting a job is unlikely, and meaning in life has to come from other things. Just getting up in the morning and coming to the right coffee shop at the right time may be a huge achievement.

Developing a bit of a routine in the week helps with the social isolation which has been a big factor for all my CMs. Just feeling accepted by a group of people who are not paid to be there can be a healing and novel experience.

One thing that I have learnt is that the "social modelling" aspect of a Circle is a big thing. Ordinary people doing ordinary things and showing interest and concern for each other. One core member produced a Christmas card for each of us - the only other people in his pile were probation officers.

An unexpected bonus has been the other volunteers. Because we tend to share the same values we seem to get on really well despite differences in age and background. I have found the time before and after each Circle meeting very valuable in getting to know each other as well as for sorting out our approach and reactions to what is happening with the core member.

It isn't all plain sailing. The CM in one of my Circles reoffended - It was shocking, and goes to show you never can quite know what is going on in the inside with people. But you will never convince me that his Circle was a "failure" or a waste of time. Re-offences may be less severe, or less frequent. There may be fewer victims overall. I learnt a lot, and I believe all 3 of my core members have too.



Summary, Conclusion, Recommendations

Final Summary and Conclusion.

This report looked at the journey of the first 4 years of YHCOSA's operations with the aim of highlighting good practice and areas to improve upon. The findings from this report will now be used to help YHCOSA build upon its strengths and move forward as an expert charity working with people who have committed sexual offences, and the community volunteers that support them.

This evaluation explored three key themes: Core members, Volunteers, and Statutory partnerships.

The core member theme utilised existing data from 38 YHCOSA male core members who have completed a Circle in Yorkshire and Humberside since 2011. This theme had two elements: Firstly, to investigate the offending rates and post Circle behaviours of these men. Secondly, to analyse the pre to post Circle scores on the Dynamic Risk Review (DRR, Bates & Wagner, 2012), a measure used nationally to try and assess the dynamic risk factors related to sexual offending in core members.

The Circle volunteer theme considered the contribution of the volunteers to Yorkshire and Humberside COSA (YHCOSA). This included what motivates them to be involved in Circles; what benefits they see from their volunteering; and if there are any difficulties or negative consequences that result from their involvement.

The partnership-working theme was assessed based on the opinions of 42 operational statutory staff opinions of the added benefit of the YHCOSA model, which uses Probation Officers as Coordinators.

Summaries of Results

The core member theme

Only 1 core member had a proven sexual reconviction post Circles and this was for a non-contact offence.

There was evidence of a reduction in harm for all core members when examining the post Circle behaviours

There was a significant change in the desired direction for 6 DRR factors. These included feelings of powerlessness or hopelessness, struggling with problematic sexual thoughts, spoken an excessive/inappropriate degree about sexual matters, feelings of emotional loneliness; feelings of inadequacy in relationships and low self-esteem.

There was change in the desired direction for problem solving, appropriate activities and hobbies, reckless behaviour and realistic relapse prevention (RP) strategies. Also sexualised attitudes towards children, hostile and negative views towards women and high emotional identification with children even though the Circle process has not been designed to target these areas.

The volunteer theme

The volunteer demographics of YHCOSA volunteers are broadly representative of the demographics of Yorkshire and Humberside.

There is a lack of male volunteers and some age groups are under represented

Additional attention needs to be paid to recruiting volunteers more representative of certain communities within the region and to attract under-represented groups.

Consideration should be given to the impact of volunteer motivation on core members, in the recruitment process.

100% of volunteers seeking to improve their employment prospects reported that volunteering for YHCOSA achieved this.

Volunteers report positive experiences through volunteering for YHCOSA and 100% would recommend this volunteering with others.

Statutory services theme

There was a strong agreement that YHCOSA being imbedded in statutory services makes a positive difference to referrals.

Respondents have more faith in the charity, believing that more appropriate core members are selected for Circles as the Coordinators are Probation Officers.

Opinions about the impact of YHCOSA involvement in the multi-agency public protection arrangement (MAPPA) were divided.

Coordinators being professionally trained, and thus their decisions being viewed as more defensible, was of high importance to respondents.

The YHCOSA approach to Circles with Probation Officers as Coordinators ensured the best chance of risk being managed effectively.

Recommendations

The core member theme

Direction of resources- Direction of resources towards High and Very High Risk men only. The risk of imminent offending should still be incorporated, however selection should essentially be driven by risk.

Ethnic minority groups- explore whether the needs of the local population are being met in terms of providing Circles to all groups. Is this related to referral or selection, or is the issue a wider one in terms of whom Circles attracts?

Assessment and evaluation strategy- This should be implemented as soon as possible. A national approach would be best but, in the absence of this, local policy is essential.

Missing data- a clear focus and local strategy involving staff, co-ordinators and volunteers, to ensure that data is collected and recorded in a timely and structured fashion in order to aid future evaluation.

Establish control group- ideally to match each core member as they started a circle to another sexual offender who hasn't been offered one. This would take some work. Viable options should be explored prior to the next evaluation at YHCOSA.

The volunteer theme

Targeted recruitment of volunteers from underrepresented groups, in particular men.

Continued screening of volunteers and rigorous recruitment processes to ensure selected volunteers are appropriate and resilient to the demands of being a Circles volunteer.

Record data about volunteer motivation to allow more detailed consideration of the impact of this on the volunteer, the Circle and core member in future evaluations.

Continue to prioritise the support and supervision of volunteers and to acknowledge their contribution.

Engage positively with the media to promote the work of YHCOSA and increase knowledge amongst "lay people" to improve the representativeness of the volunteer pool. Targeting contact with local media and media outlets specific to minority communities and male applicants.

The statutory theme

The partnership model continues. Coordinators are trained Probation Officers where possible. If resource implications do not allow this, then any non-Probation Officer Coordinators will be 'buddied' with the Probation Coordinators to share best practice and access to information.

An assessment to determine whether the current role of the MAPPA manager is still useful or could be amended to better meet the needs of YHCOSA and NPS better.

Statutory partners continue to be key members of the local steering groups. YHCOSA to evidence to statutory partners their worth in steering groups by sharing with them the findings of this evaluation.

Conclusion.

This evaluation has been a journey of exploration since the inception of YHCOSA. It has analysed and explored the value and role of Circles, volunteers and partnerships.

It is very clear that many extremely committed, professional and passionate people have been involved in developing YHCOSA and working towards their aim of 'no more victims'. The journey has consisted of growing Circles projects organically in each area, and slowly expanding across the region to offer more Circles and safeguard more communities.

Lessons have been learnt along the way and practices and partnerships amended. This has ultimately led to the positive impact on communities, volunteers and core members that the results of this study have highlighted. YHCOSA are immensely proud of these achievements.

The next phase in the YHCOSA journey is to move forward and address the above recommendations. YHCOSA agree with all recommendations and have put together a plan to enable a systematic approach (see appendix 5).



Case Studies

Part 5

James is a man in his late sixties with a lengthy history of sexually assaulting boys and he has spent much of the past twenty years in prison. At the time of assessment he appeared to be motivated to engage with whatever was required to help him settle into the community and not re-offend. He admitted that he struggled to trust people and put up barriers when he felt under threat. He had neither family nor friends and was extremely isolated, the only meaningful relationships that James had were with the professionals working with him and the volunteers.

James' Circle came to an end when volunteers raised concerns with the Coordinator that James was acting suspiciously. The Coordinator shared the information with the police and they discovered that he had a mobile phone that he was prohibited from owning. There were concerns that he was on the verge of reoffending so he was returned to prison.

From a Police and Probation viewpoint it was not 'if' James would offend – it was 'when'. He was deemed Very High risk and there was an expectation that he would reoffend within his first six weeks of release. In fact he was in the community for nearly a year before being recalled and there was no information to indicate that he had committed any contact offences during this time.

Police and Probation also remarked on changes in James: the way he handled recall was different this time – he was cooperative and asked for his furniture to be given to his housing association so that someone else could be helped. Their view was that the humanity that he had experienced in the Circle had made a difference – it had given him some sense of worth - he had given up on his life a long time ago.

When James was released from prison, he asked for another Circle and appeared motivated to engage again. Through the support of this Circle he was able to establish himself in a new property. He made friends with some people who lived in his local area who were a similar age and had no offending history. Nine months into the second Circle, James asked for it to close as he realised he no longer needed support from his volunteers. He was in a different stage of his life, positive and upbeat and for the first time ever, professionals commented on how much he seemed to value his lifestyle now. The Police said they were not concerned about the Circle ending as they believed there was now a very low risk of him reoffending.

Volunteer Case Study 5

I am 20 years old and currently studying Criminology at university. I first applied to be a volunteer for circles with absolutely no idea what I was signing up to, I have not looked back since. Circles as an organisation is fantastic and an organisation I think more people need to know about. I was wary when first starting Circles and my family didn't agree; although they supported me, they were also wary. I work part-time at a local super-market whilst studying for my degree. After completing my degree this volunteering role has given me an insight to start working with sex offenders.

The experience Circles gives you is phenomenal and I genuinely feel it has made me a better person. Since starting my Circle and meeting the core member I view life in a different way. Since meeting the core member, our Circle has built up a professional relationship. Although our Circle is only in early days, we have managed to create a completed CV for our core member and have all been looking at jobs and volunteering roles which is a fantastic achievement. Being a volunteer for Circles isn't an easy job, it makes you face emotions and tasks no other job would ever do. I first went to Circles with an open mind and was not necessarily expecting to enjoy it as much as I do, if I could run two Circles I would!

I cannot praise Circles enough, the work they do for the community is fantastic. I have gained a professional mind towards the work Circles do which I feel has set me up ready to start looking for a career. I have gained professional contacts within the Police force, with probation officers and risk management officers. Most importantly, every week when I come away from the meetings I feel satisfied knowing I have hopefully made a difference.



Case Studies

Part 6

Core Member Case Study 6

Gordon is a man in his 60's and his sexual offending spans 30 years. His convictions include: indecent assault of a child under 14, harassment and exposure. His current offence is one of Exposure. He intentionally exposed his genitals to the 6-year-old child of a neighbour. G has been assessed as being High risk of serious harm and Very High risk of re-conviction. He has acknowledged that he has to consistently stop himself from offending and finds it easy to identify vulnerable children.

During assessment, planning and throughout the Circle G has shown motivation to stop offending: stating, "I have to face up to my fears and I want to change or I am kidding myself". G identified that he would like support in the Circle to reduce his isolation and increase support networks, support whilst he completed his treatment programme and improve his social and practical skills. G presented as socially awkward and commented that he always felt like "the odd one out". The Circle started in February 2015 with the approval and involvement of the key agencies involved: Police, Probation and a housing support worker.

The Circle has achieved a balance between support and accountability that G responds well to. He continues to be challenged in the Circle and consequently has begun discussing risky situations within the group. Some of these have been fed back to the Police and Probation to assist with risk management. On one occasion G attended Probation with a bag of children's toys to sell at a car boot sale. He was told this was not appropriate and he said he had not given this consideration, this information was shared with Circles coordinator. Volunteers raised the concern in the meeting and as a result G admitted that he had behaved in a pre-meditated manner to "test himself". Volunteers passed this information on immediately: the next day programmes staff discussed coping strategies with G: the OM and the PPU officer completed a home visit to discuss the matter further where G disclosed that he was struggling but did not want to disappoint anyone. It is possible that this communication prevented a further offence and certainly reinforced that all agencies and volunteers working together within a Circle is about support and accountability. It is a credit to the relationship that the volunteers have with G that they can challenge him and he feels comfortable being open with them. They have since reinforced the importance of him being honest about when things are not going so well.

G's confidence, assertiveness, communication skills and appearance have improved. Since starting the Circle he is now leading a cookery group and completing voluntary work. G has been able to face his fears of social isolation and challenge himself to do things that scare him. G has also had the confidence to build a friendship with a neighbour, something he thought impossible just a few months ago. It is felt that he might not have had the confidence to complete these tasks without the support of the Circle.

The Circle has started making plans to reduce contact to one social meeting and one full meeting each month, aware that G's risk is associated with social isolation,

I am 67 years old, a mother and a grandmother. My work was as a Speech and Language Therapist, latterly in paediatrics. I loved this work because it connected with language, which is uniquely human, and which compelled exploration of being human on many levels.

I heard of Circles through Quakers: the opportunity to help someone towards a fulfilling and offence free life is compelling and surely reparation, at least a beginning, and a gift for the victim and society. It is also, for me, about compassion in the true sense of the word:

Compassion is hard because it requires the inner disposition to go with others to the place where they are weak, vulnerable, lonely and broken. But it is not our spontaneous response to suffering. What we desire most is to do away with suffering by fleeing from it or finding a quick cure for it Henri Nouwen

This means acknowledging the pain of the CM *and* the victim. **The victim is the reason we are there.**

I have learnt that, as with any group of people, one cannot cut and paste one experience on another. Some will respond more readily to the Circle process itself. The three Circles which I've shared have been very different, in age, background, nature of offence. I have learnt that the process is important and cannot be rushed. It is a gradual building and laying down of trust, of writing on the blank sheet in a safe place, which is free from judgement, but will not forget the 'accountability' which is intrinsic, and which will be easier to address from the place of trust.

Safety has been mentioned. It is central to the success of Circles. Supervision and transparency, the careful sharing of concerns and information, and support of volunteers is second to none.

I have yet to experience a tidy ending to a Circle, but have found that the frayed edges of the first one have been tidied up, and the core member is working and in a relationship.

Being in a Circle is to meet a person, not a headline or a stereotype. It can be compelling, frustrating, and hopeful. However tidily or otherwise it may finish, it helps to remember *the seed never sees the flower!*



Appendices

Section 4: Core Member Dynamic Risk Review Form

Circle Code	
Date of Review	
Review number	
Frequency of Circle meetings	
Circle Coordinator	

1. Is there evidence that the CM is struggling with problematic sexual thoughts?

0123456

Not at allA great deal

Please give brief details:

2. Has the CM spoken to an excessive and/or inappropriate degree about sexual matters in general?

0123456

Not at allA great deal

Please give brief details:

3. Has the CM expressed any sexualised attitudes towards children?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all					A great deal	
Please give brief details:						
<hr/>						
<hr/>						
<hr/>						

4. Has the CM expressed hostile or negative views towards women?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all					A great deal	
Please give brief details:						
<hr/>						
<hr/>						
<hr/>						

5. Is there evidence that the CM is displaying a high emotional identification with children?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all					A great deal	
Please give brief details:						
<hr/>						
<hr/>						
<hr/>						

6. Is there evidence that the CM is experiencing feelings of emotional loneliness?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all					A great deal	
Please give brief details:						
<hr/>						
<hr/>						
<hr/>						

7. Is there evidence that the CM is experiencing feelings of inadequacy in relationships?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

Not at all

A great deal

Please give brief details:

8. Does the CM have stable emotional relationships with any other people outside the Circle?

No one

1 person

2 people

3 or more

Please give brief details:

9. Is there evidence that the CM is experiencing feelings of powerlessness or hopelessness?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

Not at all

A great deal

Please give brief details:

10. Has the CM demonstrated reckless behaviour?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

Not at all

A great deal

Please give brief details:

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11. Has the CM expressed any hostile feelings or angry outbursts?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

Not at all

A great deal

Please give brief details:

12. Does the CM demonstrate appropriate problem solving abilities?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

Not at all

A great deal

Please give brief details:

13. Does the CM maintain realistic relapse prevention strategies?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

Not at all

A great deal

Please give brief details:

14. Is there evidence that the CM is experiencing any feelings of low self-esteem?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

Not at all

A great deal

Please give brief details:

15. Does the CM engage in appropriate activities and hobbies?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

Not at all

A great deal

Please give brief details:

16. Is the CM in stable and suitable accommodation?

Yes ☐ No ☐

17. Is the CM involved in any paid or voluntary work?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Appendix 2

Survey Monkey questionnaire sent out to volunteers bi-annually 2013 - 2015

Which area do you volunteer in?

For how long have you been volunteering with YHCOSA?

How many Circles have you been in?

Have you had the support and training that you need as a volunteer?

How have you been affected by your volunteering activities with your core member?

Have you had the supervision you needed?

Would you recommend volunteering with this organisation to other people?

Is there anything you think we could do to improve your experience of volunteering with this organisation?

Have you any other comments/ suggestions/ concerns you'd like to share with us?

Appendix 3

COSA Volunteers' Experiences and the impact of volunteering in Circles

A study of resilience, psychological well-being and experiences of COSA Volunteers

Volunteers who are, or have been, involved in Circles of Support and Accountability, are being asked to participate in this research to investigate their experiences of being in Circles.

In order to do this, I would like you to complete an on-line questionnaire on Survey Monkey which is entirely anonymous and will not ask you for any personal, identifying information. The questionnaire should take no more than 20-30 minutes to complete. The first section of this questionnaire is a number of "tick-box" answer questions, from standardised measures (psychometrics), relating to your experiences of volunteering with COSA and your thoughts and feelings related to your role.

There is a second part to the questionnaire which invites some free-flow responses from you. Please feel free to include as much or little detail in these answers as you wish.

The questionnaire does not contain any graphic descriptions.

You can withdraw from the questionnaire at any time by closing down the Survey Monkey web page and not submitting your answers. As your participation in this research is entirely anonymous and you will not be asked for any specific information that could be used to identify you, your consent is taken as given through the submission of your completed questionnaire. This means it will not be possible to withdraw your data once it has been submitted.

The researcher, Amii Hough, is the Operations Manager at Yorkshire and Humberside Circles of Support and Accountability, and has been a Circles volunteer for many years, so she has a long standing interest in the volunteer experience of COSA volunteers. This research is being conducted as part of a Masters in Applied Forensic Psychology at the University of York.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the researcher, Amii Hough on amii.hough@yhcosa.org.uk or the research supervisor Dr. Jo Clarke jo.clarke@york.ac.uk.

In the unlikely event that the testing causes distress, then you may wish to contact your local Circles project via your Circles Coordinator, or contact the Samaritans on 08457 90 90 90 or jo@samaritans.org

* Declaration of Consent

By ticking this box, I confirm that I have been informed about the aims and procedures involved in the research I am about to participate in and consent to my participation.

☐ Please tick

* About your volunteering.

How long have you been/were you a Circle volunteer (approximate number of months)?

How many Circles have you been in?

Are you still volunteering for the Circles project? 1 = Yes, 2 = No

Are you currently in a Circle? 1 = Yes, 2 = No

How old are you?

How would you describe your gender?

What was your main reasons for volunteering for COSA in the first place? e.g. Keeping children safe, belief in capacity to change, survivor of sexual abuse, experience to put on CV

What is your main reason for volunteering with Circles at the current time? (if applicable)

Why did you stop volunteering? (if applicable)

Do you have previous volunteering experience? If, yes, approximately how long (years/months)

COSA Volunteers' Experiences and the impact of volunteering in Circles

* Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following (1 = very dissatisfied, 7 = very satisfied)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How often the organization acknowledges the work I do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How worthwhile my contribution is.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My ability to do this volunteering as well as anyone else.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with other volunteers in the Circle.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with paid staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The access I have to information concerning the COSA project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The amount of effort I put in as equaling the amount of change I influence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The amount of information I receive about what the organization is doing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The amount of interaction I have with other volunteers in the organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The amount of permission I need to get to do the things I need to do in the Circle.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The amount of time spent with other volunteers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The availability of getting help when I need it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The chance I have to utilise my knowledge and skills in my volunteer work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The degree of cohesiveness I experience within the Circle.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The degree to which the project communicates its goals and objectives to volunteers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The difference my volunteer work is making.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The freedom I have in deciding how to carry out my volunteering.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The friendships I have made while volunteering here.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The progress that I have seen in my core member(s).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The support I receive from people in the organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The support network that is in place for me when I have volunteer-related problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The way in which COSA provides me with performance feedback.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unless unforeseen changes occur in your life, do you see yourself volunteering for another Circle after your current one finishes? (1 = certainly not, 7 = certainly)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

COSA Volunteers' Experiences and the impact of volunteering in Circles

The following questions allow you to give more detail to your answers. Please write as much or as little as you wish

Please list the three things you most enjoy about being involved in Circles

Please list the three biggest challenges of being a Circle volunteer

Is there anything else you would like to say.....

1. Which area do you volunteer in?

- ☐ North Yorkshire
- ☐ West Yorkshire
- ☐ South Yorkshire
- ☐ Humberside

2. For how long have you been volunteering with YHCOSA?

- ☐ 0-3 months
- ☐ 3 months - 6 months
- ☐ 6 months - 1 year
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 2-4 years
- ☐ 5+ years

3. How many Circles have you been in?

	1	2	3	4+	N/A
Number of Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Number of Mentoring Arrangements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Have you had the support and training that you need as a volunteer?

	6 Totally agree	5 Agree	4 Slightly agree	3 Slightly disagree	2 Disagree	1 Totally Disagree	0 N/A Don't Know	1 Totally agree
I have had support when I needed it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have been offered training that is useful and relevant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have learned from other volunteers and/or staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My skills have been used well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have got what I expected from the organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My contribution to the organisation has been valued	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other

5. How have you been affected by your volunteering activities with your core member?

	6 Greatly increased	5 Increased	4 Slightly increased	3 Slightly decreased	2 Decreased	1 Greatly decreased	0 Don't know or N/A
My self-confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My feeling that I am doing something meaningful/useful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My ability to share my skills/experience with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My willingness to try new things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My social and communication skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My ability to work well with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My vocational or job-related skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My emotional well-being	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other

6. Have you had the supervision you needed?

	6 Totally agree	5 Agree	4 Slightly agree	3 Slightly disagree	2 Disagree	1 Totally disagree	0 Don't know or N/A
I know who to go to for support and guidance and with questions or concerns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have had regular individual supervision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have had regular group supervision or volunteer meetings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have had the chance to make suggestions or give feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have had regular feedback on my own work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The organisation communicates well with volunteers as a whole	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other comments

7. Would you recommend volunteering with this organisation to other people?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. Which of the training suggestions below would you be interested in attending to support your Circle volunteering? (Tick as many as 4 options)

- ☐ Motivational Interviewing
- ☐ Improving listening and communication skills
- ☐ Managing Disclosure of core member's own experiences of past abuse
- ☐ Team Working / dealing with issues in group dynamics
- ☐ Future planning - goal setting and the focus on the future
- ☐ Supporting core members into education/training/employment/volunteering
- ☐ Supporting core members to disclose their offending
- ☐ Pro-Social Modelling with core members
- ☐ The Better Lives Model
- ☐ Identifying, challenging and managing grooming behaviours within a Circle
- ☐ Identifying and challenging grooming behaviours
- ☐ Increasing awareness of LGBT issues
- ☐ Dealing with disappointment/frustration when things don't go smoothly
- ☐ Introduction to the benefit system

Other (please specify)

9. Is there anything you think we could do to improve your experience of volunteering with this organisation?

10. Have you any other comments/ suggestions/ concerns you'd like to share with us?

COSA Volunteers' Experiences and the impact of volunteering in Circles

****** THANK YOU ******

Appendix 4

Distributed by email. Completed using survey monkey

Introduction to survey

As you know YHCOSA is a partnership between statutory services and the voluntary and community sector. YHCOSA Coordinators are Probation Officers, supervised within MAPPA. Police and NPS staff have key roles within steering groups and have been fundamental in developing and growing Circles across the region. Our partnership works so that NPS staff are responsible for risk decisions and referrals and the charity recruits & trains the volunteers, quality assures the project and ensures it is fully embedded in the community. We are extremely proud of our achievements but as the only COSA project with this fully integrated partnership approach we are keen to evaluate the extra value statutory services bring to Circles.'

All questions 1-39 were rated strongly agree, agree, not relevant, disagree, strongly disagree.

1. I have more faith in the charity knowing it is embedded in statutory services
2. The partnership with Probation helps reassure me that risk would be dealt with appropriately
3. I believe statutory and charity working together gives offenders the best chance
4. Risk issues being dealt with by a Coordinator with a Police/Probation background feel more appropriate
5. Access to information is easier as the Coordinator uses Probation databases
6. Statutory services have a lot to contribute to steering groups as they know the wider offender demographic
7. Partnerships with statutory services mean they take Circles more seriously
8. Partnership with statutory services mean outside agencies take Circles more seriously
9. My confidence in the Circles approach would remain the same even if there was no support from other statutory services.
10. All services for high risk offenders should be embedded in statutory services
11. Referrals are made predominantly because MAPPA values Circles
12. It's because the MAPPA Manager line manages the Circles coordinator that Circles stay on the MAPPA agenda
13. Access to risk and assessment information is easier due to Coordinators being based in Probation
14. My colleagues are more willing to consider Circles when I tell them about the statutory involvement
15. The involvement of Volunteers in such high risk work helps to highlight the importance of restorative justice
16. Lines of communication regarding risk are much smoother due to the Coordinator being based in the same building as referrers
17. (Only Coordinator answer) I feel Circles is taken more seriously as I am a colleague of those I am explaining the idea too.
18. (Only Coordinator answer) because we are based internally colleagues witness our achievements
19. I am more likely to refer a sex offender knowing the project is partly led by statutory services
20. The partnership with statutory services gives circles credibility that it wouldn't have otherwise
21. Statutory services are responsible for high risk offenders therefore they should be partly responsible for Circles

22. Statutory staff are specifically trained & experienced to deal with risk - this makes the Circle process more robust.
23. If Coordinators were not Probation Officers Circles would run just the same
24. The MAPPA managers' involvement does not impact referral numbers or quality.
25. It is good modelling for core members to see statutory and voluntary services both committed to their rehabilitation and community safety
26. It is best practice for voluntary services working with offenders who are high risk to the public to have statutory oversight, for their safety.
27. Probation Officers as Coordinators are better able to recognise risk indicators and increased risk
28. I am reassured that YHCOSA Coordinators are professionally qualified as Probation Officers
29. Statutory services are more likely to share intelligence with the Coordinators
30. Being based in the NPS enables Coordinators to better promote the project
31. YHCOSA decisions are more defensible due to working in such close partnership with NPS
32. I have more confidence in the professionalism of Coordinators knowing they are Probation Officers.
33. More appropriate core members are selected for Circles due to Coordinators being Probation Officers
34. The Partnership with statutory services ensures accountability remains part of the process.
35. Proactive risk assessment and management is enhanced due to the Coordinator being based within MAPPA
36. A Coordinators decision regarding risk is trusted as they are a trained Probation Officer
37. The statutory partnership gives a sense of safety to volunteers working with Offenders.
38. PO Coordinators are better able to ensure a constant presence of Police and Probation within the Circle life.
39. Being embedded in MAPPA ensures Circles remain on the agenda during both formal and informal case discussions.

Open questions

Are there any other reasons you think circles partnership with statutory services is beneficial or detrimental to the project.

Do you have any ideas about how the partnership could work better?

Evaluation Action Plan

Y & H Circles of Support and Accountability Mission Statement:

This policy is designed to assist Y & H Circles of Support and Accountability to achieve its mission which is “*to ensure that any person, who has committed a serious sexual offence and is considered eligible*, will have a Circle of Support and Accountability available to work with them.*”

Note: * ‘eligible’ means that the person has been identified as suitable by the statutory agencies, has acknowledged their past sexually harmful behaviour, has agreed to participate and is motivated to change this behaviour.

Y & H Circles of Support and Accountability Values:

This policy is informed by the values of Y & H Circles of Support and Accountability, which are:

- **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 partnerships and community involvement.
- **Growth and learning** – Recognising that with necessary support and challenge, people have the ability to grow, learn and change their behaviour.
- **Individuality and respect** – Treating people with humanity and respect.

Evaluation Action Plan

OBJECTIVE: To explore and meet the recommendations from YHCOSA 4 year evaluation study
 REVIEW DATE: May 2015

Proposed Action	Milestone Tasks (Key tasks that need to be carried out to implement actions)	Responsible Person	Partners to consult / engage	Progress (Details of progress to date, useful information, barriers encountered etc)
Direction of resources towards High and Very High Risk (with continued consideration of imminence of offending)	Review of current referral & selection criteria	Operations Manager	NPS Police CUK Other Projects	
Explore whether the needs of the local population are being met in terms of providing Circles to all groups	Appoint a development manager to support the current development proposed into self identifying communities	Director	Big Lottery Self identifying communities	Part of current grant bid. Initial work currently being undertaken in the catholic community.
Devise an Assessment and evaluation strategy	Further discussion with RM & CUK about best way to undertake this.	Director	York University Circles UK	
Ensure that data is collected and recorded in a timely and structured fashion	Review current data collection forms & structures	Operations Manager	Coordinators	
Continued screening of volunteers and rigorous recruitment processes	Regular review of processes. Survey volunteers, exit interviews	Operations Manager	Volunteers Coordinators	

Record data about volunteer motivation & impact on core members	Devise a form for recording. Ask in interview and via survey	Administrator & Coordinators	Volunteers Core members	
Continue to prioritise the support and supervision of volunteers	Enable regular feedback. Formalise the volunteer champion role.	Operations Manager	Volunteers Coordinators	
Engage positively with the media to promote the work of YHCOSA	Press release, radio interviews, social networking	Director	Press CUK Training group	
The partnership model continues. Coordinators are trained Probation Officers	Share the evaluation with NPS	Director	NPS	
Further investigation into the role of the MAPPA manager in YHCOSA	Discussions with MAPPA managers and strategic leads	Director	NPS	
Statutory partners continue to be key members of the local steering groups.	Share the evaluation with NPS. Choice of venue/date etc considered.	Operations Manager	NPS	