Celebrate with us on 10th July!

Join us as Circles South West holds its Summer Celebratory Event and Annual General Meeting in Taunton on 10 July, at Somerset County Cricket Ground... and yes, it includes cucumber sandwiches!!

With contributions from the Prison Reform Trust, Change Point Learning, University of the West of England, and the National Probation Service it’s set to be an interesting event for professionals and volunteers. We hope to see you there!

There’s so much to celebrate.....

Record number of Circles:
In 2013-14 we had a record-breaking twenty active Circles across the South West. Circles were delivered in all Police/Probation Trust areas. We piloted our first pre-release Circle with meetings both in and out of the prison when the Core Member was released on Temporary Licence. A Core Member said “They (the Circle) help me not to re-offend by making me think more.... I now step back whereas before I would go straight for it... I need to listen more, they are helping me to divert from situations that wouldn’t be good for me”

Record numbers of volunteers
At the end of 2013-14 we had a pool of 91 trained volunteers of whom 83 were in a Circle. A conservative estimate of the in-kind value that our volunteers have brought this year through their direct contact with Core Members is a staggering £35,000. We trained and selected 65 new volunteers and delivered refresher/advanced training events for experienced volunteers.

A volunteer said “ I have a great belief in restorative justice... and this is a practical way of the community taking responsibility for the reintegration of offenders”

Record funding levels [but we aren’t complacent, far from it]
We secured significant income from new sources in 2013-14 including the Cabinet Office Rehabilitation Social Action Fund, Wiltshire & Swindon Police & Crime Commissioner’s Innovation Fund and Devon & Cornwall’s Police & Crime Commissioner’s Small Grants Programme. Angus Macpherson, Police and Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire & Swindon said “I admire the work which Circles South West does to support sex offenders when they return from prison to their community. My funding will help such people to find training or a job, improve their social and life skills and turn away from offending”.

Developing our volunteer pool in size and expertise
In January, March and May we held two-day introductory training & assessment events for new volunteers. We’re grateful to police and probation colleagues as well as experienced volunteers for their valuable contributions to these events.

We also held an advanced training event for more experienced volunteers in April ‘Motivating the Core Member: Balancing Support & Accountability’. This was led by Clark Baim, the Co-Lead National Trainer for the Probation Service Sexual Offending Groupwork Programmes for 12 years until 2012. Drawing on his professional training in group psychotherapy, this skills-based training helped Circles volunteers to develop their skills in motivational interviewing and in promoting the Core Member’s progress towards a better life, incorporating positive goals and safe behaviour. A volunteer said “The training was enlightening re previous circles [in which I have volunteered] and provided useful material for work with the current core member....really loved all of it”.

Training & assessment events for new volunteers are scheduled for July, August, September, October and December. There is also a refresher event for experienced volunteers in November.

New team members
Sara Radford, Circles Coordinator for Wiltshire & Avon... joined us in February working full-time. “I’m a social worker who has worked with young people and adults in the criminal justice system within both voluntary and statutory agencies for the past 20 years (eek!). I started my...
career with East Sussex Probation Service before moving to Brighton Youth Offending Team.

“In 2008 I started work with Tomorrow’s People Trust working to set up a residential, work-based community for ex-offenders in Hampshire. I moved to Bristol from Brighton a couple of years ago and since then have worked for Avon & Somerset Probation Trust (including a short stay in HMP Leyhill) and with a charity supporting young people with complex needs.

“I have a particular interest in leading innovation and being part of the implementation of new projects which have real social value; the work of Circles of Support and Accountability perfectly fits my personal and professional philosophies. I am really looking forward to travel across Avon, Wiltshire and beyond to work with the range of extra-ordinary people giving their time to expand the important work of Circles. When not working I enjoy exploring any place I haven’t been - Hull to Hawaii - and keeping fit running and walking with my dog.

Jamie Stephenson, Circles Coordinator for Devon

...also joined us in February on a half-time contract. Jamie is also employed half-time as a Probation Officer in Devon.

“I guess its true to say I’ve had a varied and colourful range of paid employment since leaving school and becoming a probation officer in 2000, including time as an RSPCA Inspector, fisheries science technician, trainee farrier, farmer, animal rights campaigner, despatch rider, London bus driver and youth worker for the Prince’s Trust...

“I qualified as a probation officer in November 2000 and worked in various teams for Devon and Cornwall Probation Area between 1998 and 2007, including a three-year secondment to HMP Channings Wood. I worked in the public protection unit, managing offenders at multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) in the community, in the courts team and in case management and the programmes teams. I’ve been a Home Office accredited facilitator on a number of community and prison based sex offender treatment programmes.

“I was employed by the NSPCC (2007 to 2010) as a children’s services practitioner and his role included the assessment and treatment of convicted sexual offenders and non-convicted men where there were offences or allegations of sexual abuse. I was also the coordinator for the Devon and Cornwall pilot for Circles. This pilot two-year project funded through MAPPA coordinated four circles and recruited and trained in excess of 25 volunteers, many of them subsequently involved in the Circles set up in Exeter, Plymouth and Cambourne. Fortunately for Circles South West, many of these volunteers are still are involved with the project.

“From September 2010 to December 2011, I worked for families as an ‘expert’ risk assessor in the domestic violence and sexual abuse fields for the family courts.

Elle Fletcher our new Volunteer Coordinator

...began working with Circles South West on 1 April, as our Volunteer Coordinator.

“I first became passionate about working with volunteers whilst undertaking an administrative role with the NSPCC Young Witness Support Project. I then embarked on a career in volunteer management and worked in this field for several years, across three very different organisations including the Probation Service. “Now, I run a Volunteering Consultancy called Finders Keepers (when I’m not working with Circles South West!), through which I help organisations who need additional support with their volunteers. “Whilst I’m based in Cornwall, I cover all counties in the South West.

And finally…

We are delighted that Joe Ennis will remain in post as Dorset Coordinator as his Probation Service secondment has been extended.

Circles’ Got Talent (well you can judge…)

We are about to launch a promotional film about Circles in the South West! It stars some of our experienced volunteers, core member and supporters. Come to the Celebratory Event on the 10th July for the Premiere!

Help us prevent sexual abuse and sexual violence in our community

Are you an experienced Circles Volunteer willing to share your experience with new volunteers? With suggestions for development training?

Are you a public protection professional with a suitable referral? Willing to provide input on our volunteer training events?

Do you have access to a community venue suitable for a Circle?

Can you display our advert for volunteers? Or circulate it via a mailing list or social media?

Do you have the time and skills to provide remote administrative support on a voluntary basis?

Get in touch

email us at info.circlessw@gmail.com

or fill in the contact form at www.circles-uk.org.uk/local-projects/south-west-england

Celebratory event and AGM details

10th July, 1:30-4:45, 5:00-6:00 in Taunton. If you would like to attend and have not yet booked your place, please email us at info.circlessw@gmail.com

Don’t take our word for it…. The independent evaluation is now well underway. Funded by the Cabinet Office, Dr Kieran McCartan’s team at the University of the West of England is evaluating the impact of 74 Circles across 4 English Regions, and 22 of these are Circles we have established in the South West. Sincere thanks to all volunteers and other stakeholders contributing to this valuable research.

And finally a big

THANK YOU

Sincere thanks to you, our volunteers, funders and supporters. It is because of you that our charity is a growing success.