Whatton Circles – The First Prison Based Circles Project
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Safer Living Foundation - Whatton Circles

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The Safer Living Foundation (SLF)

The SLF is a charitable organisation

Joint venture between:
- HMP Whatton
- Nottingham Trent University
- MAPPA
- National Probation Trust (Notts)
- Nottinghamshire Police
- Age UK
- Circles UK
Why we began...

- Concern some high risk prisoners were leaving HMP Whatton without family or community support

- Particularly
  - Intellectual Disabilities
  - Elderly (+ 55 years)

- Worrying as social isolation is a significant risk factor for further reoffending.
Establishing the SLF

• Charitable status approval February 2014
• Funding:
  • NHS England
  • The Co-operative Society
  • Allen Lane Foundation
  • Police and Crime Commissioner
  • Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust
  • Nottingham Trent University
  • The Lottery

• Plus Fund Raising Events:
  • Sponsored bike ride for supporters
  • Raised money through JustGiving
  • The prisoners at Whatton
The SLF Aims

Following the success of community CoSA projects in the UK:

• First prison based CoSA in the UK - set up under the SLF charity at HMP Whatton.
• Each Circle - 6 months before release & 18 months after release (time periods are approximate).
• The first two Circles will start Winter 2014
  • 4 Circles in year 1
  • 8 Circles in year 2
  • 12 Circles in year 3
• Core Members will consist of sex offenders
  • Intellectually Disabled
  • Elderly (55 years+)
Why ID and/or Elderly?

- Vulnerable categories of sex offenders who often find transition from prison to community difficult and socially isolating.

- Sexual offending rate is 6.8x higher in sex offenders with Intellectual Disabilities compared to the general population of sex offenders (Craig & Hutchinson, 2005).

- Sexual offending is the only crime to be repeated with age as sexual offences are often motivated by problems typically associated with old age, such as loneliness and social isolation (Hart, 2008).

- Those who do not meet the above criteria but who have a severe lack of social support on release will also be considered.
Previous Research

- Studied 71 / 100 Circles (South East of the UK) in the first 10 years since the project started
  - Compared to control (persons referred to, but not placed, in a Circle) Core Members had a significantly lower number of sexual or violent re-offences. (Bates, 2014)

- Critics state there is not enough evidence to confirm CoSA significantly reduces sexual recidivism
  - Existing research varies in quality / lack of statistically significant results

- Low base rates make demonstrating a reduction in reoffending rates difficult

- New CoSA projects must implements research to assess and success
Our Research

- **Strand One**
  - Questionnaires pre and post Circle
    - (Hope, Group Cohesiveness, Personal Growth, Social Support, States of Change)
    - Evaluate the impact and effect of the Circle on the Core Member
    - Compare Core Members and matched control group.
  - Reconviction data collected

- **Stand Two**
  - Qualitative and mixed method research
  - Interviews with 6 offenders pre and post Circle
    - Explore expectations, hopes and fears of release and whether this changes during their time as a CM
    - To explore their experiences of being in a prison-based circle
  - Interviews with Circles volunteers
    - To understand their experiences
Importance of the Research

- First time in the UK that CoSA will be established within a prison setting

- First time CoSA will focus specifically on ID/elderly offenders

- Evaluations of rehabilitative initiatives within prisons have not always been evaluated effectively (Mann 2014)

- A gap is often found between practice and research with the research being carried out retrospectively

- Research significant on an international scale, informing and benefiting academics, practitioners and policy-makers alike
Thank you for your attention!

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