Working with Sexual Offenders with Learning Disabilities

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Circles South East
Introducing Circles South East

- A sexual harm / public protection charity
- London and the South East, Hertfordshire & Northamptonshire
- Staff team of practitioners with experience in offender management, sex offender treatment programmes, risk assessment & management
- Voluntary sector organisation
- Work with perpetrators, survivors, partners of abusers, Court assessments
What is a mainstream Circle?

- Criminal justice pathway
- Men & women over 18 years
- Convicted through the courts
- Some admission of responsibility
- High levels of risk and need
- Reduce risk; improve self-esteem; reduce social isolation; improve life-skills, employability etc
- 18 months, 4 volunteers, 1 perpetrator (Core Member)
What does a Circle look like?

The Circle comprises volunteers from the community who are supported by professional staff.
Why adapt our mainstream services for people with learning disabilities?

- Circles South East receives a significant number of referrals for individuals who have been diagnosed with either a Learning Disability (LD) and/or Autism.
- Growing awareness of the need to better equip staff and volunteers in order to deliver a model of best practice.
- An analysis of our referrals confirmed that 19% had a formal diagnosis of either LD and/or Autism. A further 4% had no formal diagnosis, but evidence was present to suggest the presence of either LD or Autism (23% in total).
## Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LD/Autism Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Age</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-cons (Sexual)</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-cons (Non-sexual)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentenced to Custody</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completed Treatment Programme</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>90%</td>
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## Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LD/Autism Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative Outcome/Behaviour (Mid-Circle)</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Outcome/Behaviour (Mid-Mentoring)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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The Pilot

- Aim: To assist in the development a model of best practice, which can be rolled out nationally
- 2½ year pilot (since extended for further 12 months, due to end October 2017)
- Six Circles
- Fully evaluated (Andrew Bates, Forensic Psychologist)
- Adapted Circle Co-ordinator
- Steering group of LD & autism specialists
What have we adapted?

- Volunteer training
- Materials in ‘easy-read’ format
- Tools/language
- Increased the Length of a Circle
- Referrals from other agencies – Social Services, NHS etc
- Unconvicted as well as convicted
- New Adapted Risk Assessment Tool
What are we aiming to achieve?

- Positive / Healthy Relationships
- Healthy Living
- Managing Life’s Problems
- Managing my Behaviour
- Well-being and Self-esteem
- Making Plans
- Time and Activities
- Personal Achievements
Learning points to date

- Higher levels of impulsivity/disengagement
- Greater need to ‘chase’, compromise & be flexible
- Volunteer training – two days not three
- Gradual introduction of volunteers can be beneficial
- Reduced numbers of volunteers per Circle
- Greater levels of interaction between Co-ordinator, volunteers and CM
- Less appealing to volunteers?
Case Study ‘B’

- Had offended against a member of his family
- Initially in prison prior to being transferred to a secure hospital (18 months)
- History of substance misuse (cannabis and alcohol)
- Mental health problems and multiple suicide attempts
- Multiple diagnoses, including frontal lobe damage and Borderline Personality Disorder
- Survivor of physical and sexual abuse
• Anti-social peer group
• Inappropriate accommodation
• Emotionally unstable
• Unable to cope with the demands of daily life
• Police, social work and mental health involvement
Progress made by ‘B’

- Risk scores reduced from 40 (out of a possible 66) at commencement of Circle, to 12 at conclusion of Circle.
- **Positive/Healthy Relationships**: renewed contact with his mother; developed pro-social friendships through attendance at groups and day centre.
- **Healthy Living**: lost 8st in weight; healthy eating; improvement in mental health.
- **Managing my behaviour**: reduction in substance misuse; reduction in levels of sexual pre-occupation.
• **Well-being and Self-esteem**: regular attendance at counselling sessions; reduction in anxiety levels; ability to interact with others during the course of daily life.

• **Managing Life’s Problems**: much less likely to lose his temper; less impulsive; able to listen and remain calm in stressful situations; able to ask for help.

• **Making Plans**: moving home; planning trips to see friends; voluntary work and paid employment.

• **Time and Activities**: fishing, painting, photography, table tennis, day centre.

• **Personal Achievements**: all of the above.
Questions........

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