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| <b>Organisation Name</b> | <b>Reference</b> | 2019-10-R008 |
| Circles South West       |                  |              |

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| <b>Visit Date</b> | <b>Visited By</b> |
| 9 November 2021   | Jim Marshall      |

#### **Grant Summary**

Circles South West was established in 2010 providing specialist support and accountability in the community to people who have sexually offended. This unique model uses highly trained volunteers who meet as a group with the offender to provide vital weekly support to help them take responsibility for their actions and prevent reoffending.

The grant will fund a part-time Training Coordinator to lead the development and delivery of paid for training and consultancy to enhance the skills, knowledge and understanding of other professionals, organisations and local communities around working with those who sexually offend. This will enable these stakeholders to effectively engage with people with this offending history, or who have harmful sexual behaviour, and contribute to the prevention of sexual abuse. The ongoing training fees generated through this will provide a crucial new sustainable income stream for Circles South West which will support their long-term development.

[circles-southwest.org.uk](http://circles-southwest.org.uk)

#### **Visit Details (People met, premises visited etc.)**

Zoom call with  
Jo Burden CEO  
Pauline Rousseau Operations Manager

For second half of call joined by 3 volunteers, Peter, Alan and Jackie

#### **Information about the Organisation**

Organisation has continued to operate as much as possible during pandemic. Was not able to do prison visits as prisons locked down during pandemic. Also tended not to take on new cases. Number of circles and volunteers fell from 55 and 200 to 35 and 150 respectively. Now starting to climb back to pre pandemic levels.

Core work of charity continues providing support to those convicted of sexual offences or where social services have identified harmful sexual behaviour. Jo shared on call a separate presentation showing feedback obtained by independent Research In Practice showing very positive feedback from core members and volunteers. (60 page report and updated every 6 months). Also demonstrates a significant drop in recidivism (88%) – albeit sexual offenders less likely to reoffend than general prison population.

As noted above TT grant was to fund a new training co-ordinator. This appointment was delayed until November 2020. Training programmes since then have started and been working with other charity groups eg Catch 22, Together Through

Childhood (NSPCC sponsored group), Police Public Protection Team, Salvation Army. Income from training courses ahead of budget. ( Budget £10k, Actual £16k)

Feedback very positive and developing more advanced courses for existing customer base.

Potential new customers identified including school courses teaching students about appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Training co-ordinator recently left to take up new role with another charity. Circles having difficulty in hiring replacement and Pauline has increased her hours to lead on this until April 2022, by which time hope to have new permanent hire

### **Issues and Comments**

The first year of the new programme seems to be a success with income ahead of budget and new courses being developed and new potential customers identified.

It is a slight concern that the training coordinator has left and, at time of meeting, has not been replaced. Jo put this down to the current employment market where it is proving very difficult to hire. But they have implemented a plan B with Pauline to cover them for the next few months while they try to hire. (Pauline is a very experienced and knowledgeable manager having been involved with Circles since 2010- originally as a trustee and employee since 2013)

### **Other Feedback**

Circles SW appears to be a very well run charity. Jo comes across as extremely competent individual and runs what appears to be a successful and well regarded organisation. Although not directly relevant to the TT grant funded work, Jo arranged for 3 volunteers to come to talk about their work and all demonstrated enthusiasm for their work and that of the charity.

The charity also appears to be in a robust financial situation with income having increase from 2020 to 2021.