

## ***SHAPING THE FUTURE***

2019 ATSA Conference | Friday November 8 | POSTER

### **An Evaluation of Young People's Circles of Support and Accountability**

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The number of sexual crimes reported against children has increased over recent years (NSPCC, 2018), and it is reported a large proportion of this is committed by other young people (Hackett & Smith, 2018). Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) displayed by young people is a growing issue. Despite this, there is limited research into effective interventions for young people who have committed a sexual offence.

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) have proven effective in reducing risk factors of sexual recidivism in adults (McCartan et al., 2014; Wilson, Cortoni & McWhinnie, 2009). This volunteer-based initiative provides support to individuals who have sexually offended as they reintegrate into the community, whilst holding them accountable for their behaviour. CoSA exist as an alternative to contemporary services available to those who have sexually offended, the majority of which are based on the RNR model (Wilson, Cortoni & McWhinnie, 2009).

A new Young People's CoSA model (YPCoSA) has been designed for those aged between 10-21 who have committed a sexual offence. This adaptation builds upon the young person's strengths, whilst monitoring their risk, to provide them with the skills to lead a pro-social life and build a positive future.

This research study aims to fill the gap in evidence of effective interventions for young people, by evaluating the Safer Living Foundation charity's YPCoSA project. This poster presents the mixed-methods process and outcome evaluation of the project to date. Psychometric changes in the young people on measures associated with dynamic risk factors of recidivism, such as mental wellbeing and social isolation (Gobbels, Ward & Willis, 2012), will be presented. Emerging themes from semi-structured interviews conducted with individuals involved in the project will be unpacked.

The findings will be applied to policy, procedure and best practise, regarding evidence-based interventions for young people at risk of sexually reoffending. Conclusions will be drawn on the effectiveness of the adapted CoSA model and how this learning can be applied to shape safer communities in the future. Impact will be discussed in terms of how a longitudinal, individual-focussed and multi-disciplinary intervention can inform a structured plan to support and manage a young person who has displayed HSB, in order to prevent future victims of sexual abuse.

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