
Making Safeguarding Personal Toolkit

Practice Tool 3: Circles of support



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Read the resource “Circles of Support and Personalisation” by Max Niall and Helen Sanderson (2012) www.tiny.cc/circles-of-support

This practice tool draws from excerpts from the above resource.

It's likely that the more isolated, disempowered, underestimated and excluded the person has been, the more work it will take to build a circle of committed allies around that person, but also the more valuable to the person and to the community every new connection will be.

Consider these different ways of establishing and sustaining circles of support:

- > The person and their allies build a circle and sustain it without any outside intervention.
- > The person and their allies are given information and support to set up and sustain their own circle.
- > The person and their allies are helped by someone who facilitates their first circle meeting, offers facilitation training to someone within the circle, then leaves them to get on with it.
- > The person and their allies are helped by someone who facilitates several circles meetings, offers facilitation training to someone within the circle then leaves them to get on with it, sometimes offering advice and support from outside when requested.
- > The person and their allies are helped to build a circle, then helped to sustain it over the long term by a 'permanent' facilitator (an 'enduring circle').

Key: building enough flexibility into the model so that people can move up and down the levels of facilitator engagement in a way that suits their approach to planning.



Reflective questions

Q. Would any of these ways of providing a Circle of Support be helpful to the person at the centre of the safeguarding situation you are reflecting on?

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Q. What would the benefits be?

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Q. What would the barriers be?

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Q. What enablers might help to overcome barriers?

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Q. What alternative peer network or community approaches could you use?

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