

# Training programme for 2007

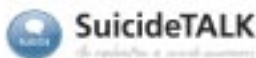
30th & 31st January - Self-Harm T4T in Inveraray  
15th & 16th February - ASIST in Campbeltown  
22nd February - Dealing with Self-harm in Lochgilphead  
13th March - Dealing with Self-harm in Helensburgh  
26th & 27th March - ASIST in Dunoon  
19th April - Dealing with Self-harm in Dunoon  
8th & 9th May - ASIST in Lochgilphead  
23rd May - Dealing with Self-harm in Campbeltown  
21st & 22nd June - ASIST in Helensburgh  
10 July - Dealing with Self-harm in Oban  
24th & 25th July - ASIST in Oban



ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) is a two-day intensive course giving suicide first-aid skills to recognise when someone may have thoughts of suicide. The one day **Dealing with Self-harm** course is suitable for anyone working or living with someone who self-harms. Participants gain more understanding into the reasons for self-harm and some helping strategies.

We are also running a shorter self-harm awareness raising session which lasts from one to three hours.

SuicideTALK is a one-and-a-half to three hour session on suicide prevention and safeTALK helps you to become a suicide alert helper - which can be done in two to three hours. If you would like us to come to your group - please contact us - see below.



Working to reduce suicide and self-harm

# chooselife

in Argyll  
and Bute

# We need you...

**Y**OU may have heard us say more than once that suicide prevention is everyone's business, but it is more than just a catchphrase.

The name Choose Life has become known throughout Argyll & Bute and indeed the whole of Scotland as the name for suicide prevention. Great, but that is not the end of the story. Choose Life was only ever meant to kick start our



New faces: p3

communities becoming involved in suicide prevention activities. A vehicle to make that happen - to

inspire and focus people. And as we begin a new year, we want to thank you for engaging with us - for inspiring us and for being inspired.

But although Choose Life will not be around forever, we really hope and believe that Argyll & Bute will continue to be a community that cares about preventing deaths by suicide.

Our community has seen the pain of loss in this past year - we know we have to do more, but we certainly can't do it on our own - nor should we.

Mainstream or sustainability are the official terms - but that means you caring enough as a boss, employee, mother,

cont. on p2

safeTALK: p4&5



SIREN conference: p6

Argyll and Bute Choose Life Initiative, 25 West King Street, Helensburgh,  
G84 8UW. Phone: 01436 658824. Fax: 01436 672531.  
tracy.preece@nhs.net 07748 740939/marie.park@nhs.net 07748 740975  
ninadambrosio@nhs.net www.chooselifeinargyllandbute.org.uk

Newsletter Winter/Spring 2007

# Safe talking to help our communities

**L**AST year I told you all about the privilege of becoming a trainer for Livingworks new short programme safeTALK, writes **Marie Park**.

I thought you would like to hear how the pilot has gone in Argyll and Bute and to remind you what safeTALK is all about.

For the past two and a half years people throughout the area have been enjoying the chance to learn ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training). This is an intense two day interactive workshop on how to intervene when someone is at risk of suicide.

Many people have also taken part in suicideTALK - a short



safeTALK for everyone

session which asks the question, should we talk about suicide? But we realise that

perhaps there was a gap in the middle of these two programmes. safeTALK seems to fill this gap. It is a short programme, which takes around three hours. It helps participants understand when



suicide could be on someone's mind; how to ask that person clearly and directly about suicide; then how to help that person get further assistance.

Three sessions were held as part of our pilot in Argyll & Bute. The first one in Inveraray was more of a demonstration for those people who had already attended ASIST. The second in Lochgilphead was hosted by the Mid-Argyll Public

4 Health Network and had a



very varied group of participants. The third talk, held in Helensburgh was open to the public - again with a wide variety of people - some had come through work, others for personal reasons.

I think every participant got something out of their time at safeTALK - for many

people it was exactly what they were looking for. Some, though were left a little frustrated and would probably appreciate the chance to do ASIST. All the feedback from the three talks was extremely positive and we will use that feedback to decide how to take safeTALK forward in Argyll & Bute.

The Scottish Executive has commissioned an evaluation of safeTALK and we will keep you posted on this and any future dates for safeTALK Training for Trainers.

Please get in touch if you would like to organise a safeTALK for your area or your organisation. The only costs are for refreshments or room hire - if it's your own building there would be no costs. At the moment, the trainer's time is free. Keep an eye on the website for any future open safeTALK events.



5

Participants in Lochgilphead

# Spotlight on research

ONE of the most common questions we are asked is "why?". Why do people die by suicide? Often these questions will never be answered, but at least Scotland is taking the idea of research very seriously.

The forum for this to happen is SIREN (Suicide Information Research and Evidence Network), which is growing daily here in Scotland.

SIREN held its inaugural conference in October bringing together a wide range of delegates.

The keynote speaker was Professor Keith Hawton, Director of the Centre for Suicide Research at Oxford University. Presentations were also given by Professor Stephen Platt of Edinburgh University and Dr Rory O'Connor of Stirling University.

The event covered a

- number of topics including:
- ❑ Current insights, research and evidence
  - ❑ Practice in Scotland
  - ❑ Future research

Dave Bertin, who attended the conference, said: "It was really useful to hear that we are now beginning to know what works to reduce the numbers of suicides in our areas. What struck me was that is that action is needed in all sorts of areas - upskilling the communities we live in, getting people to talk

about suicide more openly as well as very practical

help for people such as debt advice.

The good news is that the number of suicides has reduced since Choose Life projects across Scotland started. Let's hope that's a trend that continues. With our collective efforts I am hopeful it will."

You can read more about SIREN at [www.chooselife.net](http://www.chooselife.net)



# Working together

ALTHOUGH the Choose Life team in Argyll & Bute is very small, there have been a number of changes over the past few months and we wanted to update you.

There are a couple of new faces and we wanted to give you a chance to get to know the reformed team.

Our main base is still in Helensburgh where project worker Marie Park is based with admin worker Nina D'Ambrosio.

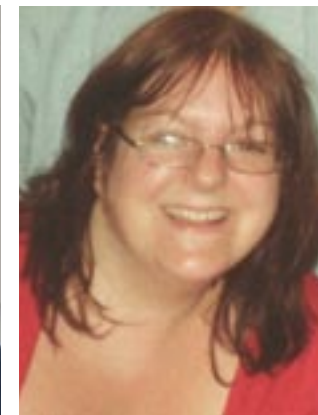
David Bertin is still our co-ordinator, based in Lochgilphead where he has

many other titles. Our newest team member is project worker Tracy Preece, pictured right, who will have an office base in Aros, Lochgilphead, but both project workers will be covering the whole of Argyll & Bute together.

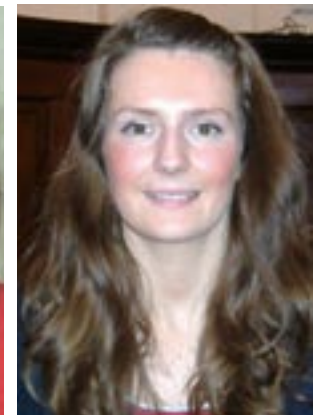
Tracy is hoping to make contact with many of you over the coming months.



Dave Bertin



Marie Park



Nina D'Ambrosio

ONE of the things you could do to raise awareness is host or run suicideTALK in your area. Anyone who has done ASIST can present this in 1-3 hours. Please get in touch with Tracy Preece on 07748 740939 if you would like to run a suicideTALK to discuss how we can support you. If it is some time since you completed ASIST, look out for details of refresher courses this year. *by Tracy Preece*

## Turn pain into passion

**Cont. from page one**

daughter, friend, co-worker, teacher, father, son, neighbour...

What can you do to be more aware of the possibility of suicide, what can you do to raise awareness, what can your company, ward, medical centre, hospital, council office do to protect against suicide?

If you think you are doing enough to protect the people you care about or work with from suicide, then pay no attention, take no further action.

But we suspect, deep down, we could all do more.

Here at Choose Life, we have kick-started many different activities with a heavy focus on training.

But what will happen when we are gone? Do you have a

suicide awareness trainer in your organisation? Do you have a policy in place? Perhaps in your voluntary organisation you are bursting with ideas on how to raise awareness - how can we help YOU do that? How can we help you maintain and sustain that?

Argyll & Bute is full of individuals and organisations who are committed and passionate about suicide prevention - mostly because we have felt the pain of loss.

Let's not allow that pain to be futile - let's harness our passion and our pain to help make our community a suicide-safer place.

Let 2007 be the year that you let Choose Life help you to make suicide prevention a priority in Argyll & Bute and in your life.

## Hopes for the New Year

**N**EW Years start with all of us, in our own ways, having hopes and plans for the year ahead. At this time of year I am always reminded of many around us who struggle to have hope for their own futures and, ultimately, that is one of the reasons for having the Choose Life project.

My hopes are that the work of the project becomes so essential in helping us all deal with this challenging area that the work continues in some way for a long time yet, as I believe the need for the work will not just disappear. However we need to be mindful that the funding of projects across Scotland will end in April 2008. Sometime away yet - but you know how fast last year went!

So we all need to be thinking about how we keep the work and actions going in the longer term. What is pleasing is that the Scottish Executive still sees suicide reduction as a major and important target. In the

newly launched Delivery Plan for Mental Health (see <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/11/30/164829/0> for details) there is a reaffirmed target to see suicides rates reduce.

Also the report sets other targets around mental health services which will affect the work of Choose Life in a useful way.

So in the next year I guess the project must endeavour to do two things: keep up the training effort to see skills expanded and attitudes challenged, but also look to see how we integrate this work into the day-to-day actions of all sorts of organisations and community groups as it continues.

As always, to do this we need the involvement of so many people from all walks of life and I want to thank all the Choose Life team (old and new!) for their commitment but also to everyone who has involved themselves in any way in the task we all share.

*by Dave Bertin*

*Choose Life Co-ordinator*