

Training & events programme

29th August - Dealing with Self-Harm in Bute
5th & 6th September - ASIST in Inveraray
8th September - Life Promotion days in Oban and Helensburgh
10th September - suicideTALK in Dunoon 6pm-10pm
12th September - safeTALK in Helensburgh
12th September - suicideTALK in Rothesay 6pm-10pm
14th September - suicideTALK in Campbeltown 6pm-10pm
27th September - Dealing with Self-harm in Inveraray



ASIST

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training

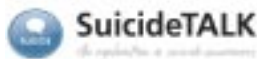
ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) is a two-day intensive course giving suicide first-aid skills to recognise when someone may have thoughts of suicide.

There is also a half-day **ASIST tune-up**, where previous participants can get a refresher and re-connect with other suicide first-aiders in the community.

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.

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

Working to reduce suicide and self-harm

chooselife

in Argyll
and Bute

Life to the full

SUICIDE Awareness Week is September 10th to 17th this year.

Here at Choose Life we are keen to carry on promoting the message that 'suicide prevention is everyone's business' and would like to use Awareness week to show that there is more to suicide prevention than people think.

Some of you may already have received your invites to support the events we are planning.



Trainer's diary: p3

Choose Life are organising two events during Suicide Awareness

Week, one in Helensburgh and one in Oban on Saturday 8th September around the theme of Life Promotion.

Suicide prevention isn't just about one-to-one intervention, it's about supporting our communities in the activities and services that make life worth holding onto.

The open days are very much about 'life promotion' so if you feel you have something to offer, get in touch. We are seeking involvement from groups and individuals that support and nurture their local community and are willing to promote a suicide awareness message.

If you can't get to one of

cont. on p2

Get involved: p4&5



Catch the vision: p7

Newsletter Summer 2007

Why suicide prevention does matter

WHEN we talk about Suicide prevention and sustainability, it's useful to remind ourselves of why this work is so important, writes Tracy Preece.

In Scotland, on average 2 people die by suicide every day. It is estimated that for every suicide there are as many as 100 suicidal behaviours that, fortunately, don't end in death. Every year, one in every 17 people thinks about completing suicide.

For every completed suicide, at least 5 people are directly affected but it is more likely to be around 20; think of the number of people in your life - your family, friends, and colleagues.

What does that mean for Argyll? For the past three years the number of suicides has reduced across Argyll, but it doesn't



mean that we can become complacent about suicide awareness.

Argyll has a population of around 93,000. If one in every 17 has thoughts of suicide then nearly 5500 people a year need to know that it's ok to talk about feelings of suicide and to have access to someone willing to have that conversation with them.

The people of Argyll and Bute have shown great willingness to engage in this task and our community now has some wonderful resources.

We have 288 people have trained in ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) who are willing, ready

and able to talk to and support someone at risk of suicide. They could also present Suicide Talk.

Another 151 people have been to a

safetalk or suicidetalk, and answered yes to the question 'is it ok to talk about suicide?'. Another 1000 have been to suicide awareness-raising sessions.

We have 37 people trained

as self-harm trainers and nearly 200 people have come to the 'Dealing with Self-Harm' course, developed by Choose Life in Argyll and Bute. So what's next and how you can help take this work forward...

What can you do to get involved?

THERE are barriers to mainstreaming suicide prevention: workloads, limited training budgets, funding. This work can feel a little heavy and daunting - it's easy to confuse offering a chance to talk with therapy and long-term support. So we want people to get involved in whatever ways feel safe and comfortable for them.

So - Since March all Choose Life training in Argyll has been free. We want it to be easy to come along to training and if you can put together a group of eight people or more we can come to you. If you are one of the 50% of front-line mental health staff, or a manager of front line staff, that require suicide awareness or intervention training to meet the requirements of the Mental Health Delivery Plan then we particularly want to support you to meet this target.

If you are interested in incorporating Suicide and Self-Harm Awareness into your organisation's policy and procedure, then again we would be happy to help and support you.

We are also looking for people within either the NHS or Council who have the interest and scope to incorporate Suicide Awareness and Intervention training into their role. Choose Life may be able to support you to become an ASIST trainer.

Fond Farewell Maureen

BEHIND the direct work of the Choose Life team is a group of people who give time to steer, guide and support the project, *writes Dave Bertin*.

That steering group has now a significant gap as Maureen Beaton has now retired from her job as the lead social worker for mental health with Argyll & Bute Council.

Maureen has helped guide the project since its inception and her wide experience, compassion and wise words will be missed.

She always gave the

project time in her busy schedule and her feeling for the issues was always evident. We all wish her well in her retirement where she plans to spend more time in her garden and thank her for all her time and energy.

Joining the team however is another Maureen! Maureen Hepple has started helping us with the office admin in Lochgilphead which was beginning to swamp us.

Her organisational skills are welcome and although Maureen will just be doing a few hours for us it is already very welcome.

SIREN will hold its annual conference, "Preventing Suicides: Using our Knowledge to strengthen action in Scotland", on the 25th September 2007 at the Glasgow Science Centre.



Opened by Shona Robison, Minister for Public Health, speakers include Professor Brian Mishara, the President of the International Association of Suicide Prevention, and Professor Louis Appleby.

The conference will bring together researchers, practitioners and policy planners with an interest in suicide and its prevention. To reserve a place now download a booking form at www.chooselife.net

Diary of a trainer

BEFORE taking part in the Dealing with Self-harm Training for Trainers course, I think I had a naive view of what actually being a trainer involved, *writes Nina D'Ambrosio*.

In many ways I saw it as acting out a role rather than teaching, but that said, I was very excited at the prospect of taking part in the T4T.

When I had attended the one day course as a participant many months before, it far exceeded my expectations - in so many ways.

I think I went along expecting to be taught a "cure" for self-harm. Instead I left with a much deeper understanding of why many people use self-harm as a coping mechanism.

I also realised that many of us use "accepted" forms

of self-harm to cope. Also, although I thought I had very little experience of self-harm - I began to realise that I know more people who

self-harm and I was naturally dealing with them in an appropriate way.

Our T4T trainers Marie Park and Dave Bertin (you may have heard of them) and my fellow participants were fantastic.

Having such a wide range of people from Helensburgh to Oban with such

different experiences helped me to learn so much.

I probably got so much out of the course because the trainers really helped us to connect with each other very early on in the training - we felt safe to learn together.

The only thing was - Dave and Marie made the training look effortless. I realise now just how much work they put in to make it a success.



WE are pleased to let you know that Marie Park is now a LivingWorks Consultant Trainer, but primarily to offer support to her fellow ASIST trainers allowing them to develop and hone their training skills. This is a wonderful resource for ASIST trainers - well done Marie.



Regular meetings have been set up for our ASIST trainers and our Dealing with Self-Harm Trainers. Meeting quarterly, this is a forum for trainers to practice delivering, offer feedback on improving the course and get support for events. The first Self-harm trainers meeting in April was a great success with 10 trainers attending. The next meeting will be on Monday August 20th in Inveraray. Contact Tracy Preece if you would like to come.

If you are currently presenting suicideTALK or are thinking of doing so, contact Tracy as we may be able to start a suicideTALK trainers group. The aim of the trainer support groups is to develop a strong network of trainers that will hopefully continue beyond Choose Life.

Get on board with us

Cont. from page one
our events, maybe you could hand out our literature or display items that show your support for Choose Life and Suicide Awareness week. Contact us with your ideas.

There will also be evening events in Dunoon (10th September), Rothesay (12th

September) and Campbeltown (14th September). Each event will offer an opportunity to find out more about Choose Life and to experience a Suicide Talk. A light supper will be provided.

We look forward to seeing you there!

By Tracy Preece

A vision for the future

AT the end of last year the Scottish Executive produced a key document setting out a vision for the future of mental health services. For the first time mental health issues have formal targets (known as HEAT targets) on which senior NHS managers have to report to the health minister.

The targets are around reducing the prescribing of anti-depressants and having alternative help for people with depression, reducing the number of people re-admitted to mental health acute wards and continuing the drive to reduce suicides.

So does such a document and target setting make any difference to how services work or what the Choose Life project has to address?

Such a question is hard to answer. It would be easy to dismiss the document and targets as political - "just making it look like the parliament is doing something". To me it is more than that. Perhaps it shows that politicians and

civil servants now are seeing mental health issues as something that the public (and therefore voters!) are concerned about. In the Choose Life project we know the public are interested and involved and want to see a marked shift in attitudes and services.

And yet as you will be aware the current funding for Choose Life projects ceases in April 2008. Perhaps more funding will come - we will not know that for several months. What we do know is that the work must continue even if not through special funding.

All of us have to work to ensure that the NHS, local authorities and others keep the issue and related actions active. The targets in the delivery plan will be part of that, but our individual actions and collective voice must back them up. Maybe now is the time to start asking these organisations not if, but how the work of Choose Life will be sustained.

by Dave Bertin

Choose Life Co-ordinator