

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chair of the Community Planning Partnership Board

Subject: **Choose Life in West Dunbartonshire: Progress 2003-2006**

1. Purpose of Report:
 - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to demonstrate the extent of progress made in implementing the West Dunbartonshire Choose Life Action Plan.
2. Background
 - 2.1 Choose Life is a National Strategy and Action Plan aimed at addressing the rising rate of suicide in Scotland. Over 600 people in Scotland commit suicide every year (with a further 200 deaths of undetermined cause). This is one of the highest rates in Western Europe.
 - 2.2 The strategy and action plan form a key part of the work of the National Programme to Improve Mental Health and Well-Being. The Scottish Executive allocated £12 million nationally over the three years from 2003-2006 to complement and support national and local actions. This is to ensure that Choose Life is implemented effectively through a coordinated programme of activity involving national and local agencies, local community based initiatives, voluntary organizations and self-help groups. West Dunbartonshire received £76K in 2003/04, 80K in 2004/05 and £84K in 2005/06 to support implementation of the local action plan. Grant has been extended for the next two years and West Dunbartonshire will receive £84K in 2006/07 and £84K in 2007/08 to continue its work on suicide prevention.
 - 2.3 This is the first phase of a comprehensive 10-year plan with the ultimate goal of reducing the suicide rate in Scotland by 20% by 2013. The next phase, from 2006 to 2012, will be determined following evaluation, review and assessment of the results from the initial phase of activity.
 - 2.4 Clear objectives have been set for implementation at both a national and local level these include:
 - raising awareness of the provision of services;
 - removing the stigma that people can feel about seeking help for emotional and mental health problems so that people get help when they need it most;

- providing effective and sympathetic support to family members, friends and loved ones affected by suicidal behaviour and completed suicide;
 - supporting the media to ensure that the depiction and reporting of suicide and suicidal behaviour is done in a sensitive and appropriate way; and
 - improving the quality, collection, availability and dissemination of relevant information to ensure better design and implementation of services.
- 2.5 Taking action to prevent suicide involves a combination of efforts across many aspects of Scottish life: eradicating poverty, addressing social exclusion, tackling inequalities, improving educational opportunities and improving health. Action must involve people from a range of organizations, professions and groups, with a sustained effort over a long period of time. These aims are central to West Dunbartonshire's Joint Health Improvement Plan, the CHP Health Improvement Plan and the Regeneration Outcome Agreement.
- 2.6 The over-riding theme of the strategy is collaboration; a collective, concerted effort is required from all groups in society – health, social care and other professionals, communities, voluntary and statutory agencies and organizations, parents, friends and neighbours, combined with an integrated and coordinated approach across all Scottish Executive departments.

3. West Dunbartonshire Local Action Plan

- 3.1 Early in the process, West Dunbartonshire established a Choose Life coordinating group to develop its local action plan. Three community planning events were held to take this forward, and as a result three of the national priority groups were identified as local priorities:
- People with mental health difficulties;
 - People who misuse substances and
 - Young people.

These priorities do not exclude other vulnerable people who may be at risk of suicide. Older people were identified locally in West Dunbartonshire as an additional priority group

- 3.2 The plan encompasses three main areas for implementation:
1. Supporting the improved coordination of efforts by local agencies to develop and implement local suicide prevention action plans;
 2. Encouraging and supporting innovative local voluntary services and community-based and self-help initiatives and
 3. Developing and implementing a local training programme.

3.3 Supporting the improved coordination of efforts by local agencies to develop and implement local suicide prevention action plans

3.3.1 Accountability

Accountability for the development and oversight of a local strategy and action plan was devolved by the Community Planning Partners to the Health Improvement & Social Justice Partnership (HI&SJP). Members who attend both groups provide linkage. The HISJP provides political accountability, receives regular progress reports and authorizes key actions and associated expenditure. The Health Improvement Strategy Group (HISG) is a key component of the Community Planning Partnership's family of themed working groups and encompasses front line officers, practitioners and community members. The HISG receives progress reports on the Choose Life Action Plan at each meeting.

Progress 03-06

Reports have been submitted to the Health Improvement & Social Justice Partnership and routine monitoring of the strategy's implementation is provided by the Community Planning Partnership's Health Improvement Strategy Group.

3.3.2 Choose Life Coordinators

West Dunbartonshire appointed two coordinators to provide direction, coordinate efforts and oversee the day to day implementation of the action plan.

Progress 03-06

The two coordinators remain in place providing linkage to senior officers and Community Planning Partners and ensuring that Choose life activity is embedded in community and joint planning.

3.3.3 Choose Life Development Officer

A key initiative in the first year of the local action plan was the appointment of a Choose Life Development Officer to provide capacity and focus for the implementation of the local action plan.

Progress 03-06

The Choose Life Development Officer (CLDO) has been in post for 2 years. The CLDO is the lead trainer and coordinator for suicide prevention programmes locally. She is a member of local planning groups, national working groups and has built up a substantial network across West Dunbartonshire and the West of Scotland. This post has been key to the development of the local action plan and awareness of the issues locally, providing a focus for local action. Contributions to national policy developments and national and regional working groups include:

- National Choose Life Resource Database Steering Group
- National Choose Life Communications Working Group
- National ASIST and SMHFA Training networks
- Development of awareness raising resources locally, that have been utilised in other local areas and nationally

- West of Scotland Coordinators Group

3.3.4 **Choose Life Alliance E-Network**

The E-Network was set up to share information about suicide prevention, best practice, training opportunities and to raise awareness of issues relating to suicide.

Progress 03-06

The E-Network has a mailing list of 95 key contacts in the public, voluntary and community sector across West Dunbartonshire. The key contacts act as local champions and information points for colleagues in their agency, department or community group providing and promoting a wider dissemination of information and literature about suicide prevention.

3.3.5 **West Dunbartonshire Choose Life Directory**

The Directory provides a useful contacts list of local and national organisations, help-lines, resources and services.

Progress 03-06

The Directory is updated regularly and it is issued at training and public awareness raising events.

3.3.6 **West Dunbartonshire Choose Life Webpage**

The web page was designed and developed for sharing information about Choose Life and well being issues on the West Dunbartonshire Community Website.

Progress 03-06

The web page provides information about suicide prevention, services including bereavement, training opportunities and news. It has links to the local action plan, national plan and other services. Updated regularly it is a well used information resource with 2280 hits from January – June 2006.

3.3.7 **Integration of Choose Life with Local Strategies and Action Plans**

A key aim of the local plan is to integrate Choose Life objectives and actions into local action plans and strategies.

Progress 03-06

Choose Life objectives and actions are now integrated into the following local plans:

- Joint Health Improvement Plan
- Joint Community Care Plan
- Regeneration Outcome Agreement
- Integrated Childrens' Services Plan
- Health Development Plan for Schools
- Corporate Action Plan (Alcohol)
- Social Work Services Strategic Plan
- CHP Health Improvement Plan

3.3.8 **Referral Pathways and Protocols**

The need to improve referral and service pathways with a mind to suicide prevention is acknowledged across all partners.

Progress 03-06

A joint working group has been established to review issues around self harm and suicide issues in young people. NHS Greater Glasgow has absorbed NHS Argyll & Clyde and the West Dunbartonshire Community Health Partnership is in place. It will now prove easier to take forward the work of agreeing referral and service protocols.

3.4 **Encouraging and supporting innovative local voluntary services and community-based and self-help initiatives**

3.4.1 **Youth Counselling**

Choose Life Priority Groups

- children
- young people

Choose Life objectives

- early prevention and intervention
- responding to immediate crisis
- longer term work to provide hope and support recovery
- coping with suicidal behaviour and completed suicide

Links with key National policies

- Working Together for a Healthier Scotland
- Social Justice Strategy
- National Programme for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Need identified

Person-centred counselling, in a safe and confidential place for young people to talk and feel understood whatever the issue.

How identified

Through consultation with schools and agencies working with young people including Youth2Youth (Y2Y), and research undertaken by young people through Y2Y. Y2Y is linked to both West Dunbartonshire CHP and the West Dunbartonshire Healthy Living Initiative. A relatively high incidence of suicidal and self harm ideation was revealed in consultations with Drop-In health workers at Y2Y.

Progress 03-06

Funding provided for the provision of 6 sessions per week by a trained person-centred counsellor to support young people using Y2Y in both the Dumbarton and Vale of Leven areas. Fifteen young people received counselling between January 2005 and March 2006.

Sustainability

- to be determined subject to evaluation and resources.

3.4.2 Stepping Stones

Choose Life Priority Groups

- people with mental health problems
- people who attempt suicide

Choose Life Objectives

- early prevention and intervention
- longer term work to provide hope and support recovery

Links with Key National Policies

- A Framework for Mental Health Services in Scotland
- Mental Health (Care & Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003
- National Programme for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Need identified

Support services for people with mental health problems across West Dunbartonshire promoting self help, social development and mental well-being.

How identified

Discussions with voluntary organisations, views of service users (Stepping Stones' members, SAMH, Dumbarton and Clydebank Mental Health Forums).

Progress 03-06

- Additional MISG funding to employ 2 Social Development and Mental Well Being Support Workers and to extend service to cover across West Dunbartonshire.
- Provision of services that are proactive in delivering supports which prevent mental health deterioration, and support people at risk of suicide.
- Provision services which remove barriers faced by people such as social isolation.
- Partnership work with local voluntary organisations and community groups.
- Support group (Connections) established in Dumbarton with ASIST trained staff supporting members. An initial evaluation has taken place with members and the results are very positive.

Sustainability

- MISG funding increased from £93k to £150k to employ Social Development & Wellbeing workers and to extend services from Clydebank to Dumbarton and Alexandria
- Stepping Stones have written in suicide prevention as a key role and remit within operational documents

3.4.3 Support Group for people bereaved by suicide

Choose Life Priority Group

- people affected by the aftermath of suicidal behaviour or a completed suicide

Choose Life Objectives

- coping with suicidal behaviour and completed suicide.

Links with Key National Policies

- A Framework for Mental Health Services in Scotland
- National Programme for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Need identified

To provide support to family, friends or carers bereaved by suicide. Support development of a support group for people bereaved by suicide.

How identified

Discussions with national support organisations, local statistics.

Progress 03-06

- Proposal for structure and plan for group agreed
- Publicity and referral information distributed widely
- Links made with other survivor organisations.
- 5 referrals received - each person visited individually by the group facilitator
- Group established.

Sustainability

The group is sustainable through utilising a community development approach to develop skills in facilitation, organisation and fund raising, supported by affiliation to a national organisation.

3.4.4 Befriending Project for Isolated Older People

Choose Life Priority Groups

- people with mental health problems
- people who have recently been bereaved

Choose Life Objectives

- early prevention and intervention
- promoting greater public awareness and encouraging people to seek help early

Links with key national policies

- Mental Health Improvement: What Works? A Briefing for the Scottish Executive HEBS 2002
- National Programme for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Need identified

Many older people in Clydebank are socially isolated for a variety of reasons including ill health and lack of confidence.

How identified

The Clydebank Community Older Peoples Team, a joint health and social work team which provides services to support older people living in the community and their carers with the aim of promoting independence recognized that there was a need to provide a befriending service for the most vulnerable older people to complement existing services.

Progress 03-06

- Coordinator in post (Nov 2005) overseen by an advisory group
- 9 volunteer Befrienders trained
- 30 older people matched with a Befriender

Sustainability

- to be determined subject to evaluation and resources
- integration with an existing voluntary sector provider may be possible.

3.4.5 **Community Awareness Raising**

Choose Life priority groups

- children
- young people
- people with mental health problems
- people who attempt suicide
- people affected by the aftermath of suicidal behaviour or a completed suicide
- people who abuse substances
- people in prison
- people who are recently bereaved
- people who are homeless
- people who have recently lost employment, and
- people who have been unemployed for a period of time

Choose Life objectives

- early prevention and intervention
- promoting greater public awareness and encouraging people to seek help early

Links with key national policies

- Better Communities in Scotland : Closing the Gap
- National Programme for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Need identified

To raise awareness of suicide in the wider community.

How identified

Through discussion with local services, businesses and community groups. Ideas sessions.

Progress 03-06

- Dumbarton Football Club Choose Life postcard distributed to 2000 fans at games in February and March 2005
- Clydebank Football postcard Choose Life postcard distributed to 1000 fans at games in Sept 2005 (design and model commended and adopted nationally)
- Local Services Calendar distributed to 40,000 households in Aug 2005
- Young Persons Choose Life postcard designed by young people January March 2005 (design and model adopted nationally and internationally)
- Young Persons Choose Life postcard distributed to 15,000 young people
- Wellbeing Card distributed in pay slips to 6,500 WDC staff during Sept 2005
- Choose Life / See Me bookmark designed and issued through libraries (design and model commended and adopted nationally)
- Local press cover achieved for all events

Sustainability

- integration of suicide prevention awareness in existing programme of community events
- continue and extend awareness raising through payslips
- access grant support for imaginative methods

3.4.6 Raising Awareness among young people

Choose life Priority Groups

- Young people

Choose Life Objectives

- Early Prevention and Intervention
- Promoting Greater Public Awareness and Encouraging People to Seek Help Early

Links with key national policies

- Improving Health in Scotland :The Challenge – an important role for schools in securing improvements in health and education
- WDC's Health Promoting Schools/ Integrated Community Schools Development Plan 04-07 – focus on schools and wider school community

Need identified

To raise awareness of mental health, low self esteem, and depression issues amongst young people.

How identified

Through discussions at school cluster meetings and contact with various groups and organisations working with young people (e.g. attending Y2Y health drop-ins)

Progress 03-06

- PACE Theatre Company presented “I’m Still Here” to S3 pupils in 7 secondary schools during October 2005
- Drama presentations were followed by interactive workshops
- Production of “I’m Still Here” performed for parents in advance of school performances

Note: “I’m Still Here” is a production for young people originally commissioned by Argyll & Bute Choose Life Initiative which deals with issues such as low self esteem, depression, prejudice, and mental illness.

3.5 Developing and implementing a local training programme

3.5.1 Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)

Choose Life priority groups

- children
- young people
- people with mental health problems
- people who attempt suicide
- people affected by the aftermath of suicidal behaviour or a completed suicide
- people who abuse substances
- people in prison
- people who are recently bereaved
- people who are homeless
- people who have recently lost employment, and
- people who have been unemployed for a period of time

Choose Life Objectives

- early prevention and intervention
- Longer-term work to provide hope and support recovery
- Promoting greater public awareness and encouraging people to seek help early

Links with Key National Policies

- Health Promoting Schools
- Better Communities in Scotland : Closing the Gap
- National Programme for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Need identified

Training for staff and community in suicide intervention skills.

How identified

Consultation with local service organisations and groups. Identified nationally as a training need (a national strategy on suicide prevention training is currently being developed). ASIST has been evaluated and validated at national level.

Progress 03-06

- 7 trainers trained (social work, NHS, voluntary organizations)
- 178 staff and volunteers in public and voluntary sector trained in ASIST (2 day course)
- independent evaluation of benefits shows that a majority of staff and volunteers use the skills and knowledge gained in their work
- the evaluation has been commended by the Choose Life National Team and an abstract has been submitted to the European Symposium on Suicide (Slovenia) 2006.
- positive feedback on extent of networking during and after training
- improved capacity across West Dunbartonshire in staff and volunteers trained in suicide intervention skills

Sustainability

- training has been funded through the Choose Life Fund and this has promoted and enabled such a wide and extensive coverage of staff and volunteers. Trainers 'contract' to deliver gratis up to three courses annually and employers waive replacement costs as a contribution to local implementation
- training costs may be sustainable through charging though it is likely that the take up would be rather less and depend on competing demands on training budgets
- lasting effects of training used in day to day work

3.5.2 **Scottish Mental Health First Aid**

Choose Life Priority Groups

- people with mental health problems
- people who attempt suicide
- people who abuse substances
- children
- young people

Choose Life Objectives

- early prevention and intervention
- promoting greater public awareness and encouraging people to
- seek help early

Links with key national policies

- National Programme for Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Mental Health Care and Treatment Act 2003

Need identified

Training for staff and community in suicide intervention skills.

How identified

Consultation with local service organisations and groups. Identified nationally as a training need (a national strategy on suicide prevention training is currently being developed). SMHFA has been evaluated and validated at national level.

Progress 03-06

- 4 trainers, trained
- 53 staff and volunteers in public and voluntary sector trained in SMHFA (2 day course)

Sustainability

- training for trainers has been funded through the Choose Life Fund. Trainers 'contract' to deliver gratis up to three courses annually and employers waive replacement costs as a contribution to local implementation.
- training costs are sustainable through charging. The Healthy Living Initiative coordinate SMHFA training.
- sustainability will depend on competing demands on training budgets.
- lasting effects of training used in day to day work

3.5.3 Self Harm Awareness Training

Choose life Priority Group

- children
- young people

Choose Life Objectives

- early prevention and intervention
- promoting greater public awareness and encouraging people to seek help early

Links with key national policies

- National Programme for Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Truth Hurts – National Enquiry into Self Harm

Need Identified

Self harm awareness raising training.

How identified

Contact from agencies who are working with young people e.g. Y2Y, Y Sort It, Prep for Life and schools.

Progress 03-06

- pilot workshops in September and October 2005 delivered to 23 staff in West Dunbartonshire involved with young people in association with Choose Life Renfrewshire
- multi-agency working group established to take forward self harm issues, look at training needs and develop a suicide/self harm policy for young people.

Sustainability

- lasting effects of training used in day to day work
- financial sustainability to be considered by working group.

3.5.4 **Seasons for Growth**

Seasons for Growth is a peer support programme for children and young people aged 6-18 years giving them the skills to cope with loss and change through death, parental separation and divorce.

Choose Life Priority groups

- children (especially looked after children)
- young people (especially young men) - people affected by the aftermath of suicidal behaviour
- people who are recently bereaved

Choose Life objectives

- early prevention and intervention
- promoting greater public awareness and encouraging people to seek help early

Links with Key national & local policies

- Improving Health in Scotland: The Challenge – an important role for schools in securing improvements in health and education.
- Additional Support for Learning Act – cites children who are bereaved as a group who may have additional support needs.
- WDC's Health Promoting Schools and Integrated Community Schools Development Plan 04-07 – focus on pupils and wider school community.

Need identified

Programme to cater for young people who have experienced significant loss e.g. death, parental separation and divorce. Also support for teaching staff in dealing with bereavement issues.

How identified

Through discussion with the Quality Improvement Officer for Education, attendance at the 7 school cluster meetings across West Dunbartonshire, discussion with staff from the educational unit working with children excluded from mainstream school (Choices) and staff from residential units for young people.

Progress 03-06

- 50 staff in primary and secondary schools trained as companions (teachers, pupil support workers, school nurses and social work group workers) by the Notre Dame Centre (2 day courses)
- 2 reconnector sessions have been held and 1 support group for the 50 trained companions.
- 2 groups have already taken place in schools with positive feedback on the benefits for young people and school staff.
- 60 foster carers and LAAC staff trained in dealing with loss (½ day modules) (£3K costs provided by Health Improvement Strategy Group / Community Planning Partnership)

Sustainability

- 50 trained Companions in schools will provide ongoing programme of Seasons for Growth

4. **Conclusion**

- 4.1 Choose Life partners have planned and progressed innovative action on suicide prevention across West Dunbartonshire. It is a working example of best practice in relation to Joint Health Improvement Planning.

The project has taken an inclusive approach to a sensitive topic, working closely with all departments and all partners, including meaningful community representation.

Choose Life has delivered some of the most innovative approaches and methodologies in Scotland. This has resulted in the adoption, by the Scottish Football Association, of our pilot project with local football clubs.

We look forward to continued working with the National Team and the collaborative alliances that we have developed during phase one as we progress phase two of Choose Life in West Dunbartonshire.



Councillor Andy White
Leader of West Dunbartonshire Council
Chair of Community Planning Partnership Board