

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE	Subject: CHOOSE LIFE: A NATIONAL STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN TO PREVENT SUICIDE IN SCOTLAND: PROGRESS REPORT
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK	
Date: 28 OCTOBER 2004	Ref: ST/MW

1. Purpose of Report/Introduction

To advise Committee of progress in relation to the implementation of the North Lanarkshire Local Action Plan for Choose Life: A National Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent Suicide in Scotland.

2. Background

- 2.1 Choose Life : A National Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent Suicide in Scotland was published by the Scottish Executive in December 2002. The Strategy is a key component of the National Programme to improve mental health and well being, which aims to promote health improvement and social justice. Choose Life requires action at both national and local level. At a national level, the Scottish Executive has set up a National Implementation Team to take forward the key national issues eg change across agencies, training, etc. At a local level, action plans were required which would set out how Choose Life will be addressed.
- 2.2 In guidance issued to local authorities in July 2003, the Scottish Executive encourage Choose Life action plans to be developed in the context of community planning partnerships and to be incorporated into Joint Health Improvement Plans.
- 2.3 The Scottish Executive has made funding available over a three year period to assist with the implementation of action plans and encourage investment in the community and voluntary sector. The North Lanarkshire allocation for 2003/04 was £116,000. In 2004/05 and 2005/06 is £128,000 and £141,000 respectively.

3. Proposals / Considerations

- 3.1 North Lanarkshire's Local Action Plan was approved by Committee in January 2004. The original Steering Group for Choose Life has since developed into an Implementation Group, which sets the strategic direction for the implementation of Choose Life in North Lanarkshire. The Group is comprised of representatives from the community, the independent sector, Health and Council Departments.
- 3.2 The Action Plan identified a number of key areas for action as follows:
 - The development of a Local Co-ordinator post for Choose Life in North Lanarkshire. This two year post has been created and was appointed to in May 2004. The post is funded by North Lanarkshire Council and managed by the Scottish Association for Mental Health.

- A training plan has been developed to assist both professionals and members of communities to increase their confidence and competence in supporting people at risk of suicide. Training materials which were developed locally through the Education Department will be delivered to a varied group of staff for young people (11-18) from a variety of settings and sectors. There has been investment in ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training), with four people soon to be trained as trainers. Thereafter a programme of ASIST will be delivered to staff in the independent and local authority sectors, the prison service, community volunteers, families and carers.
- A Communication and Information Strategy has been developed. Work has been undertaken to raise awareness of the issues surrounding suicide and suicide prevention, and to combat the stigma attached. A series of Suicide Talk events have commenced. A North Lanarkshire Council Choose Life newsletter has been produced. The latest edition was published to coincide with International Suicide Prevention Week (5 –11 September 2004) (copy attached).

3.3 Work has commenced on the updated local Action Plan for Choose Life which is due with the Scottish Executive in December 2004. This action plan will be informed by a range of events and discussions which have taken place across North Lanarkshire, facilitated by the Choose Life Co-ordinator. In particular, the work has enabled greater clarity about the priority groups and the targeting of resources. Information is currently being analysed and will assist the Implementation Group in developing initiatives for priority action.

3.4 The information gathered highlights that in North Lanarkshire, most suicides are committed by young adults and men under 35 years old. For this reason the following priority groups for action have been identified:

- Young adults (15-24)
- Men (25-34)
- General Public

Further priority will be given within the first two groups to those:

- who are or have been looked after and accommodated
- who are homeless
- who misuse substances
- who have a mental health problem
- who are lesbian, gay or bisexual

4. Financial / Personnel / Legal / Policy Implications

- 4.1 The work undertaken to date reflects national policy in tackling suicide prevention and there are no specific legal issues which require to be addressed.
- 4.2 Over the next few months, the Implementation Group will develop the local plan for the ongoing implementation of Choose Life in North Lanarkshire. This will set out the findings of local research and information gathering. It will also highlight gaps in services and opportunities and proposed action. This action plan will be presented at the next Committee for approval of both the actions and spending plans.

5. Recommendations

Committee is asked to

- (i) note the contents of this report
- (ii) request that the Director of Social Work make further progress reports available to Committee.



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Director of Social Work
13 September 2004

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