ABSTRACT

This report informs committee of the launch of the Choose Life Angus Joint Multi-agency Guidance for Children and Young People at Risk of Self Harm and Suicide in Angus. This document provides information for workers in Angus regarding suicide, self harm, signposting to agencies and guidance on best practice. Copies for the new guidelines will be made available for elected members at committee.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Social Work and Health Committee:

i. notes the content of the Joint multi-agency guidance for children and young people at risk of self harm and suicide in Angus;

ii. instructs the Director of Social Work and Health to promote the use of the guidance document throughout the Social Work and Health Department and partner agencies.

2 BACKGROUND

On 2 December 2002 as part of its aims to improve the overall health of the people of Scotland and achieve greater social justice, the Scottish Executive launched 'Choose Life': a National Strategy and Action Plan aimed at addressing the rising rate of suicides in Scotland. This strategy forms a key part of the work of the National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-Being in Scotland which was itself launched in October 2001. The above strategy and action plan represented the first phase of a 10 year plan with the goal of reducing the suicide rate in Scotland by 20% by 2013.

3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHOOSE LIFE ANGUS JOINT MULTI-AGENCY GUIDANCE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The National Strategy identified three main local priorities:

i. Supporting the improved co-ordination of efforts by local agencies to develop and implement local suicide prevention action plans.

ii. Encouraging and supporting more innovative local voluntary services, community-based and self-help initiatives that contribute to the prevention of suicide in local neighbourhoods and communities.

iii. Developing and implementing local training programmes.

In order to help progress the local Angus Choose Life Strategy aimed at protecting and promoting the well being of children/young people who are at risk of self harm or
suicide specific guidelines for professionals working with Children and Young People at Risk of Self-harm and Suicide have been developed

This multi-agency guidance aims to ensure that, in Angus, the Council, in partnership with Tayside Police, NHS Tayside and the voluntary agencies, provide a caring and appropriate response to children and young people who have been, or are at risk of self-harm and suicide. It has been designed to improve and increase local capacity to deal with the issues of suicide and self-harm and aims to empower individuals and agencies to be aware of self-harm and suicide and be able to act appropriately when dealing with children and young people who may be at risk. The guidance is based on a successful model initially implemented in Dundee that has since been rolled out to other areas across Scotland.

The guidance document has been produced in response to an increasing awareness that many people working with children and young people do not know how to work effectively with young people involved in harming behaviour and ‘what works’ is not common knowledge.

The guidance document is targeted at those working with or likely to be involved with those young people at risk of self-harm and/or suicide, and provides information about local services, care pathways, useful resources and guidance relating to appropriate action. The target audience ranges from youth workers to teachers, child protection officers to community group staff and volunteers through to foster carers and GP’s.

The guidance document has been structured so that each section can be looked at in isolation and sections relating to taking action provide clear concise guidance in a simple format.

Key elements underpinning this multi-agency guidance are that -

- The young person must be involved wherever possible and consulted on his/her views;
- Workers must familiarise themselves with Angus CPC Interagency Guidelines for Professional Staff and their own agency’s child protection procedures and other relevant procedures/guidelines;
- Early intervention is needed to ensure a proactive service;
- Inter-agency working and planning is essential in providing positive outcomes for children and young people at risk of self-harm and suicide;
- Commitment to sharing information and developing clear lines of communication across agencies is needed to protect children at risk and;
- Planning is a necessary component of any intervention. This must be constituted at the earliest opportunity and reviewed regularly throughout.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of producing this guidance has been met from Choose Life funding in the 2007/08 revenue budget.

5 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no Human Rights implications arising as a result of the recommendations contained in this report.
6 CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services, the Head of Finance and the Head of Law and Administration have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

7 CONCLUSION

This report informs elected members of the development of local Joint Multi-agency Guidance for professionals working with Children and Young People at Risk of Self Harm and Suicide in Angus. This is a comprehensive document that will support individual professionals to manage self harm and suicide in a positive manner. The document is based on an already successful model and sets out guidance and information relating to best practice in self harm and suicide interventions.

R Peat
Director of Social Work and Health

NOTE: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.