

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Social Work Committee – 21st August 2006

REPORT ON: Children and Young People at Risk of Self-Harm and Suicide

REPORT BY: Director of Social Work

REPORT NO: 446 - 2006

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report informs members of the contents of the Multi-Agency Guidance on Children and Young People at Risk of Self Harm and Suicide. A copy of the Guidance is available in the Members' Lounge.

1.2 This guidance aims to ensure that, in Dundee, the City Council, in partnership with Tayside Police, NHS Tayside and relevant voluntary agencies, provides a caring and appropriate response to children and young people who have been, or are, at risk of self harm and suicide.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Social Work Committee:-

2.1 Note and approve the contents of the Report.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 None. The guidance will be published with funds from Choose Life and will also be placed on relevant websites such as Dundee City Council and NHS Tayside.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Health is protected by creating safe, clean, pleasant environments and health services which emphasise prevention of illness as well as care for the sick.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Anti-poverty

Meeting Needs:

Indirect provision: directing people towards resources and services available from other agencies

- Enabling people to meet their own needs.
- Providing information and advice.

Social Inclusion:

Developing Participation in Society.

Equal Opportunities

Action is taken to improve awareness of diversity and of equality issues amongst City Council staff and the citizens of Dundee.

Action is taken to improve access to information and services for target groups.

6.0 MAIN TEXT

6.1 Recent research suggests, in the UK, 1 in 15 young people have self-harmed. This equates to approximately two young people in every secondary school classroom. The average age of onset is 12 years old. The reasons for their behaviour can be very complex. Also, more young people die from suicide than road accidents and it is one of the main causes of death of people under 35.

Truth Hurts: Report of the National Inquiry into Self-harm among young people, (2006) reported: 'Over and over again, the young people we heard from told us that the experience of asking for help often made their situation worse. Many of them have met with ridicule or hostility from the professionals they have turned to.'

Chair of the Inquiry, Catherine McLoughlin CBE, said; "It is vital that everyone who comes into contact with young people has a basic understanding of what self-harm is, why people do it, and how to respond appropriately. At the very least they should avoid being judgemental towards young people who disclose self-harm, should treat them with care and respect and should acknowledge the emotional distress they are clearly experiencing.'

This multi-agency guidance was developed to ensure all services who work with children and young people who have been, or are at risk of self harm and suicide are well informed and able to offer a positive and caring response.

The guidance gives information to workers on:

- Factors which can impact negatively on mental health;
- Types of self harm;
- Why young people might self harm;
- Who is most at risk of suicide;
- Methods of possible suicide;
- Some of the signs and symptoms which may precede suicide;
- Some advice on what to do in terms of seeking advice, training and taking action;
- Information Sharing and Confidentiality;
- The role of relevant agencies;
- Useful Contact Numbers.

Thus, workers across a variety of services and organisations will be more informed and more confident in dealing with self-harm or attempted suicide within their current work. They will also have useful information about where to seek appropriate advice and support which will assist them in this area of work.

It is hoped that the guidance will be launched in September in International Suicide Prevention Awareness Week. A multi-agency Choose Life conference with a children and young people's theme is being planned for February 2007.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The guidance has been developed and agreed between representatives of Tayside Police, Dundee City Council (including Social Work and Education), NHS Tayside and the Voluntary Sector, acting together as the Choose Life Children's Sub Group under the auspices of the Dundee Choose Life Steering Group. The guidance has been consulted on across all the agencies involved and it has also gone to the National Implementation Support Team (Choose Life nationally), The Child Health Strategy Group, The Children and Young People's Protection Committee, Dundee Drug and Alcohol Action Team and Healthy Dundee. The feedback has been wholly favourable.

The Chief Executive, the Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and the other authorities within the Tayside Grouping have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Truth Hurts: Report of the National Inquiry into Self-harm among young people, (2006) Mental Health Foundation.
- 8.2 Choose Life: a National Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent Suicide in Scotland: Scottish Executive (2002)

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Date: 11/8/06