

## **CHOOSE LIFE – OBJECTIVES**

### Early intervention and prevention

This is a voluntary organisation which uses the services of volunteers and, as part of their initial training, we look at prevention of suicide and mental health promotion. In order to raise awareness we also encourage our volunteers to do the ASSIST training where available. The service provided by Advocacy Western Isles is generic but mental health and learning disabilities are of high priority as required by the new Mental Health Care & Treatment Act (2003).

### Responding to immediate crisis

Our project has had to respond to people who are in immediate crisis. As we offer a drop-in service in the afternoons people do drop-in who are in crisis and we have to respond. We have responded by offering a listening ear to those who talk about suicide openly and we also make people aware of other services that are available on the Island and we have also referred people on to other services.

### Longer term work to provide hope and support recovery

As part of advocacy, we as a team try to promote peoples independence, although as advocates we can speak on behalf of people, our aim is to enable and support people to eventually speak for themselves. Through doing this we build peoples confidence to where they can make informed choices and speak for themselves in their own community, therefore feeling included and promoting well-being.

### Coping with suicidal behaviour and completed suicide

As this is a drop-in service and in the developmental stages, it is difficult to give an exact figure of people who come in and use this service who feel suicidal or have been bereaved by suicide.

### Promoting greater public awareness and encouraging people to seek help early

As I am fairly new to this post, I have not as yet had much involvement in the increased public awareness of suicide. As co-ordinator for the Western Isles I have been promoting the ASSIST training and ensuring that staff and volunteers are trained. I also hope to be involved during the Suicide Prevention Awareness Week.

### Supporting the media

At present, we as an organisation are not fully staffed. However, when all three posts are covered, a major advocacy campaign will begin in the press and on radio. This will cover all the work that we do, and we will have the opportunity to promote Choose Life.

### Knowing what works

I have been involved with the Mental Health Partnership since starting this post, I am hoping to become involved with the Learning Disability Partnership and I also attend the Lewis Community Care Forum. Examples of good practice can be disseminated in discussion during and after those meetings and also at one-to-one meetings with various group members.

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