

# NUACHTLITIR / NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 1 Autumn 2011

## Mental Health Promotion & Suicide Prevention in Mayo

*Welcome to the first edition of our Newsletter!*

This newsletter has been put together by the Mayo Suicide Prevention Working Group. You may recall that this group was set up last year in the County. Each person on this Working Group was nominated so that we could broadly represent all the different agencies and community groups involved in mental health promotion and suicide prevention in Co. Mayo. Part of our role is to report back and inform you our wider audience. The Working Group is made up of the following people:

- Thelma Birrane, Health Promotion Department, HSE West, linking with health promoting groups and other HSE services;
- Laurence Gaughan, Primary Care, HSE, linking with primary care services;
- Liz McHale, Addiction Counsellor, HSE West & Choose Life Reach Out, linking with adult mental health services and suicide prevention groups;
- PJ Murphy, Mayo Mental Health Association & Myra Walsh, Development Office, Mental Health Ireland, representing community mental health supports;
- Brenda McNicholas, Clann Family Resource Centre, working with Family Resource Centres in Mayo and Galway;
- Maire Ni Dhomhnaill, Counsellor, Family Centre, Castlebar, linking with counselling services;
- Dolores O'Boyle, Employability Service Mayo & Choose Life Reach Out, linking with disability services and suicide prevention groups;
- Mary O'Sullivan, Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention, HSE West, (Chair), linking with other State agencies;
- Breda Ruane, Youth Officer, VEC, linking with organisations working with young people;
- Therese Ruane, Mayo Intercultural Action & Mayo Community Platform (Community and Voluntary Sector).

Our group aims to:

- Heighten and raise awareness of suicide support services within the County;
- Co-ordinate information sharing;
- Improve and increase communication through our own networks; and
- Support the implementation of best practice guidelines within the County in accordance with national and international guidelines.

As part of these aims, we have put together this Newsletter. It is one way in which to keep you up-to-date with work that has been going on over the last year. You will recall, an opportunity was given to detail many other ongoing initiatives at our two previous meetings held in December 2009 and March 2010. We are also delighted to report that a number of new mental health promotion, suicide prevention and suicide postvention projects have begun in the County.

We hope to publish this newsletter on a six monthly basis. If you would like to send in any information for the next edition, please contact: Mary O'Sullivan, 091 548360, [mary.osullivan@hse.ie](mailto:mary.osullivan@hse.ie). We may not be able to include all projects, however we would welcome your feedback and comments.

Best wishes,

## MAYO SUICIDE PREVENTION WORKING GROUP



**Photo: Back, Left to Right, Laurence Gaughan, Breda Ruane, Therese Ruane, Brenda McNicholas. Front, Left to Right, Mary O'Sullivan, Máire Ní Dhomhnaill, Liz McHale. Missing from photo: Thelma Birrane, Dolores O'Boyle, Myra Walsh and PJ Murphy**

# NEW INITIATIVES

## Mayo Living Links, Voluntary Service

Living Links Mayo provides support and outreach to those bereaved by suicide.

*Patron: Daniel O' Donnell*

Trained volunteers are now available in County Mayo to offer confidential, practical support and information to families who have experienced a death by suicide. Training was kindly sponsored by Mayo Mental Health Association.

At the **request** of the family, the Suicide Outreach Support Person can call to the home or meet at a location appointed by the family.

The outreach worker can provide information and practical support concerning the following areas:

- The funeral,
- The inquest,
- What to say to children,
- Help the person to clarify their personal grief,
- Connect the person to other support services in their area,
- Provide information on suicide and attempted suicide,
- Be there, as a friend, for the person.

The Living Links listening/support is a non-professional service which is free of charge and available to any person in the community including emergency personnel, gardai and clergy etc., who have in any way been affected by suicide. Contact the Co-ordinator Fiona on 086 0406666 to speak with a volunteer or leave a message and contact number and Fiona will promptly return your call.

## Accreditation Model for Voluntary and Community Groups

In November 2010, with funding from the National Office for Suicide Prevention, the Irish Association of Suicidology began developing an accreditation model for voluntary and community organisations working in suicide prevention. They initially consulted with:

- the American Association of Suicidology (who have had a system in place since 1976);
- the Mental Health Commission ;
- the Irish Cancer Society (on their best practice guidelines); and
- a number of voluntary organisations to seek their views.

All parties agreed that such a model would be of benefit. The model must set minimum standards with regard to good governance, training, education and client service, as well as the continued development of good practice.

It was decided to invite organisations to become involved in the development of the model through an expression of interest. This led to the hosting of the nine regional consultations which were held on the week of 24th May 2011. At these meetings, the views of attendees from voluntary and community groups were sought about how best to approach the task of developing an accreditation model. They were also asked to nominate one attendee to represent the region at a National Steering Committee. This Committee will be established to oversee the development of the model. Shaun Smyth from Galway Simon put his name forward at the Galway regional meeting.

For further information contact the Irish Association of Suicidology: [www.ias.ie](http://www.ias.ie), tel: 01 667 4900

## **FUNDED PROJECTS**

Three projects were successful in their application for funding to the National Office for Suicide Prevention, HSE earlier this year. They were submitted by the:

- Galway/Mayo Alliance of Family Resource Centres
- Family Centre Castlebar, in partnership with Belmullet Primary Care Team & Community Development Project and the HSE
- Westport/Ballinrobe Adult Mental Health Service

### **Galway & Mayo Family Resource Centres**

Family Resource Centres provide a wide variety of supports and services to people within their own community, including information and advice, education and training. There are 13 Family Resource Centres in Counties Galway and Mayo. They have teamed up to carry out the following work over the next year:

- Map out the work going on in suicide prevention and self-harm in Counties Galway and Mayo. This work will be done in partnership with organisations already developing directories of services.
- Develop a code of practice for suicide prevention that can be adopted by all Family Resource Centres
- Organise a suicide prevention awareness campaign next year to coincide with World Mental Health week.

A part-time project worker, Brenda McNicholas has been employed for a year long period by the Family Resource Centres, based in Clann Family Resource Centre, Oughterard, to carry out this work. The Family Resource Centres will collaborate with all organisations already working in these areas.

If you have any information that would assist with the initial mapping exercise of this project, or for further information contact: Brenda McNicholas, [brenda.clann@gmail.com](mailto:brenda.clann@gmail.com).

### **The Family Centre, Castlebar**

The Family Centre, Castlebar were successful in getting funding for a 3 year period to carry out a project with 2 key goals:

1. To do a “Social Prescribing” Project in Belmullet, in partnership with the Primary Care team, the HSE and other organisations. Social prescribing can be described as “a means of enabling primary care services to refer patients with social, emotional or practical needs to a range of local, non-clinical services, often provided by the voluntary and community sector, such as, for example, joining a walking club or becoming involved in some other community and social activity on prescription”. A part-time worker is currently being recruited to work with organisations in the area to develop this service. This is the first project of its type

in Ireland and it will be interesting to see how it progresses. The project worker should be starting work at about the end of November 2011.

For further information contact: Cathal Kearney at 094 9025900 or [cathalkearney@thefamilycentre.com](mailto:cathalkearney@thefamilycentre.com)

2. **Mayo Suicide Liaison Project:** This project is funded for two days a week for a three year period. It has two main aims 1.To liaise with service providers who are supporting families bereaved by suicide in Co. Mayo and explore ways in which to develop these supports in a co-ordinated way. To have an interagency protocol within the county for supporting families following a suicide.  
2. To meet with families who are affected by a suicide death to respond to their needs and support and guide to different services. To set up meetings with families or individuals to get their views, opinions and experiences so as to inform the project. Máire Ní Dhomhnaill, a Counsellor working in the Family Centre in Castlebar will carry out this work and can be contacted on 094 9025900 or [mairenidh@thefamilycentre.com](mailto:mairenidh@thefamilycentre.com).

### **The Middle Path Programme, Adult Mental Health Services, Westport/Ballinrobe**

The Middle Path Programme is the Westport Ballinrobe Adult Mental Health Service treatment for persons with a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder.

Borderline Personality Disorder is recognised as one of the most distressing disorders for clients and most difficult for clinicians to treat. A Vision for Change – Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy (Department of Health & Children, 2006, p.162) states that people with this disorder “can present with histories of abusive relationships, repeated self harm behaviour, and emotional instability”). This reports notes that it is not recommended to use a brief psychological intervention (of less than 3 months duration) specifically for Borderline Personality Disorder or for individual symptoms of that disorder. The document recommends Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) as an effective treatment for people who engage in self harm behaviours as a means of coping with emotional distress.

The Middle Path Programme bases its treatment model on Dialectical Behaviour Therapy. DBT was originally developed by Dr. Marsha Linehan, Clinical Psychologist, in the United States. It was initially formulated as a treatment for people with interpersonal problems associated with emotion self regulation skills and impulsive behaviours. It is a combination of cognitive based therapy, enhanced with the addition of mindfulness practice and acceptance based philosophy and practice. The therapy aims to help participants “create a life worth living” by not only accepting themselves and those around them as they are, but also helps support them learn new skills that they can practice with the therapy teams’ support.

The Westport/Ballinrobe Adult Mental Health Team were successful in their application for funding to the National Office for Suicide Prevention to train members of their team in Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT).



For further information please contact: Dr. Rachael O'Reilly, Senior Clinical Psychologist, The Middle Path Team Leader, The White House, St. Mary's Complex, Mayo General Hospital, Castlebar, Co. Mayo. Tel: 0949042002  
Email: [rachael.oreilly@hse.ie](mailto:rachael.oreilly@hse.ie)

### **Adolescent Counselling Service, Westport**

In the coming months, The Cove Youth Café in Westport, in partnership with the Westport Family & Community Resource Centre plan to provide an affordable counselling service to young people of secondary school-going age living in the greater Westport area, including Louisburgh & Newport. It aims to support young people who are experiencing emotional difficulties such as stress, anxiety, bereavement, depression and relationship issues.

This counselling service will be available, by appointment, one day per week, on Monday afternoons, in The Cove Youth Café. It will cost €20 per session. However, this can be reduced on the ability to pay.

Young people can self-refer to this service or through their links with The Cove Youth Café. Referrals will also be taken from parents and other services. Referrals can be made through the Westport Family & Community Resource Centre.

This initiative has been funded by Dormant Accounts. A working group has been set up to support the development of the project, comprising representatives from The Cove Youth Café, Westport Family Resource Centre and HSE West, including Community Psychology, Drugs Service and Suicide Prevention.

For further information please contact the Westport Family & Community Resource Centre, Tel. 098 24419

## **PROJECTS CURRENTLY BEING DEVELOPED**

### **Mayo Youth Mental Health Initiative**

In the last two years, a Mayo Youth Mental Health Initiative Group was set up to explore how best to develop a youth mental health service for young people in County Mayo. Using an interagency and partnership approach, the Group has representatives from: Mayo Mental Health Association, Mental Health Ireland, HSE – Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service, Drugs Service, Adult Mental Health, & Community Care Psychology, Co Mayo VEC, ISPCC, Mayo Travellers Support Group, Mayo Intercultural Action, South West Mayo Development Co, Mayo North East Local Partnership, Foroige, Schools Completion Project, and the community sector including Community Development Projects and Family Resource Centres. The first stage of their work involves carrying out a feasibility and planning study. This report will be available in the coming months.

Over the summer months, this group also submitted an application to Headstrong for funding to develop a youth mental health service in Mayo. Headstrong – The National Centre for Youth Mental Health has developed the *Jigsaw* Programme in Ireland, an evidence based

approach to youth mental health (aged 12-25 years). Headstrong plan to fund 5 new Jigsaw sites, in addition to the 5 sites already in operation. While their submission was short-listed, unfortunately the Mayo Youth Mental Health Group was not successful on this occasion. They are currently exploring all other options on how best to continue to develop this service for youth people in the County.

For further information contact: Breda Ruane, 094 9250730 / [bredaruane@mayovec.com](mailto:bredaruane@mayovec.com)

## EDUCATION & TRAINING

### Mind Your Mind Seminar

The *Mind Your Mind* initiative, which was successfully launched on Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> September, was started by 21-year-old June Devaney from Ballina. June received support from *Think Big*, an initiative created by O2 and Headstrong (the National Centre for Youth Mental Health) and worked with the Neighbourhood Youth Project in Ballina in organising a seminar called 'Mind Your Mind'.

The launch of this campaign was addressed by Mr. Declan Behan, the CEO of the Irish Association of Suicidology, as well Mary Nolan a Clinical Psychologist in HSE West and members of Choose Life Reach Out and Living Links (two local suicide prevention and bereavement support groups). The evening event invited members of the community to explore information stands, before hearing and taking part in open floor discussions with the panel members. At the end of the night June launched an "Essential Poster" which highlighted the things to look out for in loved ones, as well as helpline contacts.

The campaign launch took place over a whole day, with a number of local secondary schools attending a youth conference earlier in the day. The students took part in workshops and discussions to represent the views of young people and put questions to a panel of speakers including Caitriona Whelan, National Educational Psychological Service, Dawn Glynn, Community Psychology, HSE West, Breda Ruane, Mayo VEC Youth Office and Aislinn Amory from Headstrong.

For further information on the *Mind Your Mind* initiative contact the Mind Your Mind team at 0862015265 / [mym.ballina@hotmail.com](mailto:mym.ballina@hotmail.com)

### ***"Choose Life-Reach Out"***

[www.chooselifereachout.com](http://www.chooselifereachout.com)



"Choose life-Reach Out" was set up in Ballina in 2007. It is a voluntary multidisciplinary group comprising: Gardaí, GAA, Clergy, Mayo Co Council, HSE health professionals, HSE

Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention, community representatives and members of the public. The group's primary focus is to build capacity in Ballina and surrounding areas by supporting communities including young people in encouraging resilience in difficult times. This is achieved by promoting awareness, training and education on mental health and suicide prevention at local level within the community.

“Choose Life-Reach Out” three main initiatives are:

- **Awareness:** of emergency and helpline services within the locality. Design and dissemination of helpline cards, flyers, beer mats and stickers with 24hr and additional services contact details. Poster presentation and information sessions at conferences & community events.
- **Education:** to the public about positive mental health and mental health conditions through talks and workshops. Provision of a school based education programme.
- **Training:** “*Choose Life – Reach Out*” in consultation with the Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention, HSE West have arranged ongoing training in ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) for members of the public and STORM (Skills Training On Risk Management) for frontline staff.

#### **Ongoing Initiatives:**

- Continuous updating and circulation of helpline cards, beermats and stickers (with helpline numbers) to the general public
- Art competition to re-design support card.
- Training of groups in suicide intervention first aid
- Information Evenings.
- Launch of new website [www.chooselifereachout.com](http://www.chooselifereachout.com)

“*Choose life Reach out*” held their 2<sup>nd</sup> seminar in Hotel Ballina, on Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> October. 2011 The keynote speakers were John Lonergan, Former Governor of Mountjoy prison, Colm O'Connor, a Clinical Psychologist and author of the book “The Courage to be Happy” and Michael Shannon, Services Director, Nursing and Midwifery, HSE.

There were also many voluntary support services with information stands represented on the night.

The purpose of this conference was to raise awareness of the importance of maintaining good mental health in the same way as we take care of our physical health. In times of need people turn to family, loved ones and friends for support and help. Our role is to help people become better informed as to how best to look after themselves and others during difficult times.

Despite the current difficult situations we are all experiencing we are keen to acknowledge the sense of hope and resilience created by the good work done within communities.

For further information and updates visit [www.chooselifereachout.com](http://www.chooselifereachout.com)

#### **Irish Association of Suicidology Conference**

The 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Irish Association of Suicidology (IAS) Conference was held in Cavan on 5 & 6 October, 2011. The theme of this year's conference was “Supporting Families in Crisis”. The aim of



the conference was to provide delegates with practical advice and support when dealing with people who are experiencing a crisis situation.

One of the workshops in the afternoon focussed on “How Voluntary Organisations can support Families in the Community”. Brenda McNicholas from Clann Family Resource Centre and Mary O’Sullivan, HSE West, spoke about the Family Resource Centres project described earlier in this Newsletter.

Presentations from this conference are now available to view on the IAS website.



### **Mindout Training**

This training is based on the Mindout Mental Health Promotion resource. MindOut is a twelve session mental health programme which takes a positive approach to the promotion of emotional and mental health among young people. The emphasis is on giving time to young people to explore what challenges their mental health and looking at the ways they cope ranging from personal coping skills to informal networks of support to professional or voluntary support services.

Training is delivered over three days by Health Promotion Services, HSE West in association with Mayo VEC Youth Office. Training days are spread over approximately a 9 month period so participants get to implement the programme during that time and continue to get support and review also. A fourth round of training has just started in Mayo. The first day’s training took place in Castlebar on 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2011. Seventeen teachers/youth workers/development workers participated in the training and will be working with a group of young people over this nine month period.

For further information contact: Breda Ruane, 094 9250730 / [bredaruane@mayovec.com](mailto:bredaruane@mayovec.com) and Edel O’Donnell 091-548419 / [edel.odonnell@hse.ie](mailto:edel.odonnell@hse.ie)

### **SafeTALK**

SafeTALK is a training that prepares anyone over the age of 18 to identify persons with thoughts of suicide and connect them to suicide first aid resources. These specific sets of skills are called suicide alertness and are taught with the expectation that the person learning them will use them to help save lives.

For further information on this training please contact: Mary O’Sullivan, Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention, HSE West, 091 548360, [mary.osullivan@hse.ie](mailto:mary.osullivan@hse.ie).

## **Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)**

This is a 2-day skills building workshop on suicide intervention first aid. Anyone over 18 years of age, open to learning and personally ready to attend (i.e. not affected by a loss in the last year) can take part in this workshop. This is the training scheme to year end:

29 & 30 September, Belmullet, in partnership with Erris le Cheile

24 & 25 October, Ballina, in partnership with Choose Life, Reach Out

4 & 5 November, Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon, in partnership with Roscommon Living Links and North West Roscommon CDP

28 & 29 November, Claremorris, in partnership with Curam.

For further information contact: Mary O'Sullivan, Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention, HSE West, 091 548360, [mary.osullivan@hse.ie](mailto:mary.osullivan@hse.ie).

## **Skills Training on Risk Management (STORM)**

This is a 2-day evidence-based programme focusing on the assessment and management of suicide risk. The target audience for this training is, for example, front-line mental health, primary care and A&E staff. The Centre for Nurse Education, Castlebar have supported this training in the last number of years, by promoting and recruiting participants for this programme.

For those who have completed the STORM workshop, a further 2-day programme on Understanding Self Injury is also available.

For further information contact: Mary O'Sullivan, Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention, HSE West, 091 548360 / [mary.osullivan@hse.ie](mailto:mary.osullivan@hse.ie).

***Reminder: If you would like to submit information for our next edition of this Newsletter please contact Mary O'Sullivan at 091 548360 / [mary.osullivan@hse.ie](mailto:mary.osullivan@hse.ie)***