

Handout 4A

The LIFE Communications Project

This handout provides a brief summary of the LIFE Communications Project. It is a summary only, with an overview of current aims and objectives. For more information, or to view the project resources, students can visit www.livingisforeveryone.com.au.

Brief description of the project

LIFE Communications is a national project, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) as part of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy (NSPS). The project is managed by Crisis Support Services Inc, a leading professional telephone counselling and training provider. LIFE Communications aims to improve communication between suicide and self-harm prevention stakeholders in Australia. The project achieves this by providing access to a range of resources and research, including the latest information from national and community based projects in prevention, intervention and postvention. These projects are informed by the *Living Is For Everyone (LIFE)* Framework to shape and guide suicide prevention activity in Australia.

LIFE Communications builds networks in suicide prevention between key stakeholders through a range of strategic and targeted communication activities. The LIFE website is the primary medium of communication. It provides the latest research on suicide, news on developments, as well as opportunities to discuss issues and share knowledge, resources and information. The project team also promotes stakeholder use of the LIFE Framework and its accompanying research and evidence document, and a set of fact sheets, making it easy for them to access relevant information and apply it to their self-harm and suicide prevention work.

Project aims

The aims of the LIFE Communications Project are to:

1. Provide stakeholders with access to the Living Is For Everyone suite of resources;
2. Provide stakeholders with access to the latest information, activities and resources in suicide prevention;
3. Provide stakeholders with a vehicle to contribute their learnings and draw on each other's expertise;
4. Facilitate clear and effective communication channels across a broad range of suicide prevention stakeholders in Australia.

Key publics

The PRIMARY audience for LIFE Communications are professionals and volunteers who are in a position to help people who are at risk of suicide or self-harm, including:



- People who undertake community-based and national suicide prevention activities. This includes health and mental health professionals, non-government organisations, suicide prevention project officers, policy makers, researchers, Indigenous community/health workers, people affected by suicide and government agencies;
- GPs;
- Allied health professionals (counsellors, nurses, pharmacists, social workers);
- Indigenous service providers;
- Health professionals in regional areas;
- Blue collar networks such as trade unions.

The SECONDARY audience for LIFE Communications are:

- Media developing stories about suicide, self-harm or bereavement;
- Suicide prevention academics and researchers;
- Coroners;
- Funeral directors;
- Families bereaved by suicide;
- Emergency services.

Preliminary research

An evaluation of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy (NSPS) in 2006 indicated a need for improved channels of communication with key stakeholders. In particular an extensive review of the of the LIFE Framework (2000) edition revealed a significant proportion of the suicide and self-harm prevention sector were not aware of the LIFE Framework's existence or its accompanying resources, such as the LIFE website. The sector also suggested a more 'user-friendly' document would improve LIFE's access to a larger cross-section of people.

Initial research indicated that red would be an inappropriate colour to use because of its association with blood.

A recent evaluation and stakeholder survey completed at the end of the first phase of the project strongly informs the planning of the activities as outlined in the funding agreement with the Department of Health and Ageing.

The evaluation showed that LIFE Communications needs to:

- Maintain promotional effectiveness, specifically through targeted promotions to identified stakeholders;
- Establish a mechanism for accessing advice on relevant content for the LIFE website;

- Analyse stakeholder access to materials held in the LIFE library;
- Proactively encourage contributions by stakeholders in research and practice.

Communication techniques

The LIFE Framework and other key NSPS projects will be communicated to audience members through the following channels:

1. Website – the Living Is For Everyone website will become the main vehicle for communication with the audience and stakeholders;
2. Events and promotions – the LIFE Communications team attends events and undertaking other promotional activities at conferences;
3. Media – Media releases and informative resources are made available for use by members of the media;
4. Direct Mail – LIFE News is a bimonthly Direct Mail piece that is sent out to subscribers.

Key messages

- Download or order a hard copy of the LIFE Framework through www.livingisforeveryone.com.au;
- Sign up to receive LIFE News to keep up-to-date with suicide prevention in Australia;
- Find information, discuss issues and engage with people at www.livingisforeveryone.com.au;
- It's important to base your suicide prevention activities on evidence. Visit the LIFE library to access the latest research.

Project objectives and tactics

Aim 1: Provide stakeholders with access to the Living Is For Everyone suite of resources.

The project understands this to mean that stakeholders are aware of LIFE resources and have multiple ways of accessing them.

Objectives:

- Disseminate at least 1000 copies of the suite of LIFE resources from the second print run to target audience;
- Achieve 1000 downloads of the LIFE Framework from www.livingisforeveryone.com.au;
- Have a presence at 4 relevant stakeholder conferences.

Tactics:

- Promote LIFE resources through the LIFE website and LIFE News;



- Promote LIFE resources through strategic campaigns that focus on stakeholder networks and established communication channels. Themes for campaigns include Indigenous and men;
- Develop marketing materials to promote the LIFE resources;
- Dispatch hard copies of LIFE resources within one week of stakeholder's request;
- Maintain comprehensive records of orders for LIFE resources;

- Approach training providers in suicide prevention to incorporate the LIFE resources (or promotion of them) in training sessions;
- Create additional imagery through a photo shoot;
- Proactively increase the number of weblinks from stakeholder websites to www.livingisforeveryone.com.au;
- Submit abstracts about the LIFE resources to relevant conferences;
- Present or facilitate a workshop with expert co-presenter and host trade displays at relevant conferences.

Aim 2: Provide stakeholders with access to the latest information, activities and resources in suicide prevention.

The project understands this to mean that LIFE Communications provides a variety of information relevant to suicide prevention via the LIFE website, LIFE News, e-alerts and conference presentations.

Objectives:

- Commission and publish five editions of LIFE News on various themes;
- Publish 15 additional profiles of current NSPS projects on the LIFE website;
- Add 5 items of research, resources or information to the LIFE library each month;
- Add relevant conferences to the events calendar;
- Send 4 email alerts highlighting the latest relevant peer-reviewed research;
- Have a presence at 4 relevant stakeholder conferences;

Tactics:

- Research, write, publish and email LIFE News that includes stakeholder input and contributions;
- Research and write NSPS project profiles;
- Access research database weekly to identify suitable articles for LIFE's online library;
- Publish ministerial media releases on the LIFE website in a timely manner;
- Research and identify relevant events and conferences for events calendar;
- Submit abstracts about the LIFE resources to relevant conferences;

- Present a paper or facilitate a workshop and host trade displays at relevant conferences;
- Promote LIFE resources through conferences, the LIFE website, LIFE News, and strategic campaigns;
- Develop marketing materials to promote the LIFE website and resources.
- Proactively increase the number of weblinks from stakeholder websites to www.livingisforeveryone.com.au

Aim 3: Provide stakeholders with a vehicle to contribute their learnings and draw on each other's expertise

The project understands this to mean that people with knowledge and experience in suicide prevention are interacting through LIFE activities.

Objectives:

- Host 2 live chats with experts in suicide prevention on the LIFE website;
- Achieve a total of 200 members of the LIFE Professional Development Network;
- Publish 5 library reviews written by stakeholders on the LIFE website;
- Publish 20 discussion forum posts by stakeholders on the LIFE website;
- Secure at least one stakeholder-written article for each edition of LIFE News;
- Publish 15 web pages profiling current NSPS projects.

Tactics:

- Improve the useability of the LIFE discussion forum and live chat function;
- Promotion of live chats to Professional Development Network members and wider stakeholder base through relevant networks, LIFE News and LIFE website;
- Identify and invite suitable experts in suicide prevention to participate as guests in live chats and to contribute lead articles in LIFE News;
- Promotion of the LIFE Professional Development Network to identified audience;
- Proactively encourage stakeholder contributions to the LIFE library;
- Proactively encourage stakeholder contributions to LIFE News;
- Actively seek stakeholder contributions to the LIFE discussion forum;
- Highlight relevant media coverage in the News section of the LIFE website for stakeholder debate in the discussion forum;
- Maintain an online area for people in suicide prevention to communicate;
- Maintain a facility for stakeholders to contribute documents for public use.



Aim 4: Facilitate clear and effective communication channels across a broad range of suicide prevention stakeholders in Australia

The project understands this to mean that the broader network of stakeholders is using LIFE activities to communicate.

Objectives:

- Redevelop the website, with improvements to the live chat area and the addition of a secure area for Australian Suicide Prevention Advisory Council members;
- Increase the number of LIFE News subscribers from 2,000 to 2,500;
- Publish 20 discussion forum posts by stakeholders on the LIFE website;
- Commission and publish five editions of LIFE News on various themes;
- Publish all relevant DoHA and ASPAC papers on the LIFE website and disseminate via e-alerts.

Tactics:

- Improve the useability of the LIFE discussion forum and live chat function;
- Proactively contact the suicide prevention branch of all State and Territory government departments;
- Proactively add stakeholders to LIFE News email distribution list, especially NSPS project officers;
- Actively seek stakeholder contributions to the LIFE discussion forum;
- Promotion of the LIFE Professional Development Network to identified audience;
- Promotion of 2 live chats to Professional Development Network and stakeholder base;
- Proactively encourage stakeholder contributions to LIFE News;
- Disseminate ASPAC communiqués via email and publish on LIFE website;
- Add section to the LIFE website about the ASPAC members;
- Add information about how LIFE, the NSPS, DoHA and ASPAC function and relate to each other.

Project evaluation

An evaluation was conducted by an external consultant to determine whether the project had achieved its four objectives based on collected evidence, and interviews with the project team and stakeholders. The evaluation was based on the first phase of the project. A summary of conclusions from that evaluation report are provided below.

LIFE Communications has made considerable advances in the implementation of each of the objectives of the project. This is in no small way a direct outcome of the developmental work undertaken during the initial months of the project to put in place the essential systems, to build relationships and to create the fundamental infrastructure that would enable the effective launch of LIFE resources when they became

available. The contribution **Handout 4A** of LIFE Communications to the development of the images, branding and overall design of the LIFE products needs also to be acknowledged. It is important then to ensure that appropriate recognition is given in this evaluation, and more widely, to the often poorly appreciated 'back room' effort that precedes a successful project generally and effective communication strategies in particular.

LIFE Communications has been successful in:

- Its initial awareness raising and promotional efforts by adopting a multi-faceted approach, not least of which is the effort to directly build relationships with key stakeholders;
- Using a combination of proactive mail out of hard copies, promotion through the LIFE website, through LIFE News and through its presence at relevant events, to disseminate thousands of copies of the LIFE Framework and Resources to stakeholders at a local, state and national level. This has been accomplished during a ten week period;
- Establishing a virtual library with up to date national and international resources complemented by profiles of projects which demonstrate achievements in suicide prevention at the local, state and national levels;
- Creating a website which has the capacity to enable stakeholders to interact in a variety of ways. Although the potential of these functions have yet to become fully operational, there are plans in place to ensure that this potential is able to be realised over coming months. An evaluation plan has been developed, outlining key deliverables, criteria and performance indicators attached to each objective.