**Mental Health Strategy for Scotland**

**Heriot-Watt University Student Union Response**

**January 2012**

**Question 1:**

**In these situations [when services are not good enough], we are keen to understand whether there is any additional action that could be taken at a national level to support local areas to implement the required changes.**

We believe that the support of carers of Dementia suffers is very important. Some of our students have had to become carers in their families, often at a young age. If the implementation of homecare for more patients continues, as seems likely, then the adequate support of these caring at home is paramount. We believe that otherwise the knock-on effect of care in the home will bring a hidden cost to society.

**Question 3**

**Are there other actions we should be taking nationally to reduce self harm and suicide rates?**

We believe it is vitally important to raise awareness of suicide and self-harm and to encourage acknowledgement of it without shame. While we are aware it is difficult to completely eradicate ignorance and fear, we believe that early education to encourage children and young adults to talk and deal with their issues, will help to bring more openness to mental health issues.

**Question 4**

**What further action can we take to continue to reduce the stigma of mental illness and ill health and to reduce discrimination?**

We believe that positive role models are a good way to reduce discrimination and stigma. By a more widespread and visible campaign using nationally recognized figures discussing their experiences of life, perhaps the ‘perfect’ life can be demystified. The suicide last year of football manager Gary Speed was tragic and emphasised that figures in the public eye who appear to be living the ideal life, are susceptible to mental health issues. The public response at the time was sympathetic, showing that perhaps we are ready to listen to ways to improve mental health

**Question 5**

**How do we build on the progress that *see me* has made in addressing stigma to address the challenges in engaging services to address discrimination?**

We believe that when services acknowledge the figures which demonstrate that a happy workforce is a productive workforce, then the benefits of positive mental health would speak for themselves.

**Question 6**

**What other actions should we be taking to support promotion of mental wellbeing for individuals and within communities?**

We believe that when individuals and the community will not come you to, then you go to them. We have found that by us reaching out to difficult-to-engage members of the student body who are affected by mental health issues, yet reluctant to acknowledge due to cultural differences, by being a presence in a common safe ground, that the effort is appreciated and welcomed. We believe that subsequent approaches to us and other services for advice and support stemmed from our outreach.

**Question 10**

**What approaches do we need to encourage people to seek help when they need to?**

We believe that the only way to improve the view of mental health needs to be seen as vital to wellbeing as physical health, then we can reduce the fear and stigma associated.

**Question 11**

**What changes are needed to the way in which we design services so we can identify mental illness and disorder as early as possible and ensure quick access to treatment?**

WE believe that 18 -26 weeks are still far too long to refer, diagnose and help a person with a mental health issue. The earlier help is given, the more effective that help is. We believe that a much greater effort must be made to ensure that lives are not lost because the mental health issue was not seen as important as a physical injury.

**Question 33**

**Is there any other action that should be prioritised for attention in the next 4 years that would support services to meet this challenge?**

*Think Positive* research[[1]](#footnote-1) has shown that colleges and universities need to prioritise funding for mental health support. This action must be prioritised on a national level by the Scottish Government, to support and ensure adequate funding is targeted effectively.

1. *Silently Stressed*, 2010: <http://bit.ly/oUGRH9> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)