



**12 November 2010**

**FAO: Political Correspondents/Newsdesks**

### **Mental ill-health rates soar among Scottish students**

NUS Scotland has called for increased investment in support services for students following new research into student mental health in Scotland.

The NUS Scotland research, *Silently Stressed*, shows that demand for mental health services has increased over the last year and that services are struggling to cope. 75% of student mental services reported increased from last year, with 40% of university services reporting they could not meet demand.

Eighty per cent of students responding to the research stated that they felt the stigma around the issue of mental ill-health would act as a barrier in coming forward for help. As we know through the SeeMe Scotland mental health campaign, one in four Scots will experience mental ill health. Given there are over 500,000 students at college and university in Scotland, it means there are hundreds of thousands of students in Scotland who will experience mental ill-health.

The report also found that few students would feel able to approach university or college staff about a mental health problem. Only 29% of students would feel able to approach their academic mentor if they were experiencing mental health problems, 17.3% would feel able to approach support services, 11.3% would feel able to approach their student association, and 6.8% would feel able to approach external organisations.

NUS Scotland is calling for greater investment in student support services to tackle mental health stigma among students and to ensure sufficient support

services are available. Greater work is also required to ensure institution staff are able to spot mental health problems and deal with them effectively.

Jennifer Cadiz, Depute President of NUS Scotland, said:

"These figures show that mental ill-health among students in Scotland is an increasing problem, affecting potentially hundreds of thousands of students, and that support services are struggling to cope. Three quarters of services reported an increase in students using their services due to mental illness or stress and almost half said they couldn't meet demand. At the same time less than a third of students felt able to go to their lecturer or institution for help. This is incredibly worrying.

"Going to college or university is meant to be the time of your life, but what if it's not? Without the right support, stress and isolation can lead to far deeper problems like depression and even drop out.

"Far too many students in Scotland are living everyday with mental health problems and without the support they need to get the most out of college or university. This is a personal tragedy for thousands and a huge waste of talent and government resources.

"Ahead of next week's Scottish budget it's absolutely crucial that politicians, as well as college and university principals, prioritise funding for these vital student support services. If we are to tackle the growing problem around student mental health then we must be clear that student mental health services are a necessity for thousands not a luxury we can afford to see damaged by cuts."

**...ends**

**For more information contact Russell Gunson, NUS Scotland's Head of Policy and Public Affairs, on 07811 370 623.**