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00:01HRS 18 JUNE 2008***

Depression Alliance Scotland
Press Release
17 June 2008

National Depression Week: 18-24 June 2008

NEW WEBSITE LAUNCHED TO SUPPORT YOUNG ADULTS WITH DEPRESSION & REDUCE SUICIDE IN SCOTLAND

A new website will be launched today (Wednesday 18 June 2008) which is aimed at raising awareness of depression, low mood and anxiety amongst young adults in Scotland and which it is hoped will provide a vital means of reaching those young adults who might otherwise commit suicide.

The website, www.lookokfeelcrap.org, builds on 12 months of campaigning by Depression Alliance Scotland (DAS) to raise awareness of depression amongst young adults (aged 18-35) and is launched at a time when suicide in young adults has been brought into sharp focus throughout the UK following a number of tragic deaths in Bridgend, Wales. Suicide is currently the leading cause of death in young adults under the age of 35 in Scotland and while depression is a treatable illness, from which most people can and do recover, 70% of recorded suicides are completed by people who have had some form of depression.

Responding to research which has shown that young adults are often unaware of the symptoms of depression and are also more likely to access online information instead of more traditional forms of health support, DAS has developed the new website as part of its 'Look ok... feel crap?' campaign. The 'Look ok... feel crap?' campaign, which has been piloted in Lothian during the last year, has been informed by young adults' experiences of depression, and the new website offers -

- practical support and information on depression;
- advice on how to manage anxiety and low mood; and
- an opportunity for young adults to share feelings and experiences on an anonymous basis.

Most importantly, the new website aims to reach young adults who may be in despair and to reduce their feelings of isolation.

Ilena Day, Chief Executive of DAS, said,

"Depression in young adults is common, but often goes unreported or untreated as many young adults are too ashamed to seek information or help for fear of being judged by their friends or families or anyone they come into contact with. In particular, young adults with depression are often frightened that they will be viewed as being inadequate, weak or a failure. The most

important thing to recognise is that depression is treatable, often involving a variety of self-help techniques, and that people with depression can and do recover. Unfortunately severe depression, if left untreated, can all too often result in such intense feelings of isolation that a young adult chooses to take his or her life. Suicide is currently the leading cause of death in young adults in Scotland, with depression being a contributory factor in 70% of cases. This is why it is so vital to raise awareness of the symptoms of depression with young adults.”

“The success of the pilot project in Lothian during the last year has surpassed our expectations and has more than doubled the numbers of people seeking information. While we will continue to campaign vigorously throughout Lothian to raise awareness of depression young adults, in line with the original intent of the project, we have recognised that there is a major demand for this type of information from young people throughout the whole of Scotland. The development of the new website will, therefore, enable young adults and their families across Scotland to access the information which has been developed and piloted locally.

“The key message which we have received from young adults time and again is that while they may appear to be coping externally and believe they need to be seen to coping, they are not coping within. The “Look ok...feel crap?” campaign recognises this and seeks to offer practical support and advice, whilst reducing the feelings of isolation experienced by young adults”

Lothian: continued concentrated activity

In parallel to launching the new website at a national level, specific local activity will continue in Lothian during the next year, in line with the original nature of the two-year funded project (courtesy of the Barcapel Foundation). During this period a series of posters and promotional material will appear on Lothian buses, in taxis and in areas accessed by young adults. A series of life skills courses, specifically targeted at young adults, will also be arranged, with the next course commencing in Edinburgh on Tuesday 19 August 2008. Anyone interested in attending should contact DAS on 0845 123 23 20 or email ask@lookokfeelcrap.org.

Scottish Parliament

The “Look ok...feel crap?” campaign has attracted the attention of MSPs, leading to two motions relating to the campaign being tabled in the Scottish Parliament. The first motion, tabled by George Foulkes MSP, Lothian, Labour (S3M-01659) commended the campaign and has attracted support from over 40 MSPs on a cross-party basis. The most recent motion, tabled by Mary Scanlon MSP, Highland, Conservative, Highlands & Islands, acknowledges the success of the campaign during its first year and calls on the Scottish Government to fund and roll out all aspects of the campaign throughout Scotland.

Quotes from people with depression:

“On ‘Look ok...feel crap?’ - It is difficult to know what’s going on in other people’s lives and whether they have a mental health problem just by looking at them. There is nothing visible on the outside that says I suffer from depression. So unless we are asked how we feel depression goes unnoticed by most people.” (S)

“Although I’d known for ages there was something wrong, it was one of my close friends who first encouraged me to speak to my GP. It was the hardest thing I’ve ever done, but also one of the best steps I’ve taken. My GP listened to me, and understood – how I was feeling wasn’t my fault, I was suffering from depression. From that first appointment I went on to receive additional support and treatment. Two years on I may still be suffering from depression, but at least I’ve got fantastic support in place when I need it, and know that there are people out there who can give me the help I need, and actually care what happens to me” (R)

“I attended a DAS course and was given some sound information on ways to deal with my low mood. The course was well put together and I always felt at ease within the group. When I first decided to go along to the group I was nervous thinking I’d be the only person to turn up. It was a relief to see other people there, people like me needing some help.” (K)

ENDS

Contact Ilena Day or Kirsten Thomlinson on 0131 623 7113
Mobile – 0791 717 7627

Notes for Editors

Depression: Depression is a common medical condition which often leads to intense feelings of sadness or despair, and which affects 1 in every 5 people at some stage of their lives. Symptoms may include –

- feelings of hopelessness
- inadequacy
- self-hatred
- negativity
- an inability to enjoy things which were once pleasurable in life
- guilt
- agitation
- weight loss
- loss of energy or motivation
- loss of sex drive
- disturbed sleep
- poor concentration

In severe, untreated, cases depression can lead to self-harm or suicide.

Photographic requests: High resolution colour images of the new campaign materials can be obtained for reproduction in news items and articles by contacting Ilena Day on the above number.

Depression Alliance Scotland (DAS) is an independent charity and is the only Scottish charity dedicated to improving the diagnosis and treatment of depression, challenging the stigma associated with this misunderstood illness and offering information and support to those affected by, and working with, depression. DAS receives financial support from the Scottish Executive, health board funding and charitable trusts.