

This week the Government set out plans for a new deal on student mental health. This is a very welcome move and I know will be appreciated by the many parents and grandparents locally who worry about their nearest and dearest at University. Mental health problems among students are a significant issue for young people today. More UK students than ever before are presenting with mental health conditions with recent statistics showing that in 2015/16, 15,395 UK-domiciled first year students in the UK disclosed a mental health condition, almost five times the number in 2006/07. In the same year, a record number of students with mental health problems dropped out of university and tragically, in 2016/17, there were 95 recorded university student suicides in England and Wales.

As a result, Government has announced four important measures including the launch of a university Mental Health Charter, backed by the Government and led by the sector, which will drive up standards in promoting student and staff mental health and wellbeing; a Department for Education led review into issues students face when going to university and will particularly review the support needed for students in the transition into university; the development of an opt-in requirement for universities, so they have permission to share information on student mental health with parents or a trusted person which the rules current prohibit; and finally addressing how universities work with local mental health services to ensure proper joined up provision.

Going to University should be a life and career enhancing experience and so student mental health should be a top priority to support them. It is a time in a young adult's life that should be a fun learning experience but for too long the support required for student wellbeing has been overlooked and so this is long overdue but very welcome step forward in the battle to prevent or support poor mental health.