

10 October 2008

**Teenagers and psychiatrists dance to the beat of
World Mental Health Day**

Teenagers from around Northern Ireland celebrated World Mental Health Day with the Royal College of Psychiatrists and Sunday Surgery presenter Dr Stuart Flanagan today, learning to look after their mental wellbeing with salsa dancing and African drumming, as well as making presentations on mental health issues that affect them most.

Almost 200 students joined Stuart Flanagan, a presenter on Radio 1's popular Sunday Surgery with Kelly Osbourne, a Belfast boy who flew home to host the event. After the fun, students from five schools made presentations on mental health issues, with many choosing to discuss the pain and futility of suicide.

As the world faces a global credit crunch, they were also able to talk about debt and mental health with a representative from the NICCEA.

World Mental Health Day is celebrated around the world every 10th October to raise awareness of mental health issues. Each year the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Northern Ireland marks the day with a public speaking event for secondary schools.

"One of the messages we try to get across on Sunday Surgery is that mental health issues can affect about a quarter of us," Stuart Flanagan said.

"It's very exciting to me that the young people of Northern Ireland are getting involved in World Mental Health Day to raise awareness of issues and learn how to be supportive of peers. We often see on Sunday Surgery that it's the peers who can often provide the support that professionals can't," he said.

"Today has been great fun, but more importantly it has got teenagers thinking about protecting their own mental health, as well as some very serious issues that even adults don't talk about," said Dr Jim Anderson from the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

"It's important to learn how to look after your mental health and break down stigma early," Dr Anderson said.

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The event was held in partnership with five Health and Social Care Trusts, which each nominated a school to showcase a presentation on a Mental Health topic.

Sunday Surgery with Kelly Osbourne will focus on the subject of suicide on 19 October.

For further information, please contact Liz Main on 07711 558 296, email lmain@nirelanddiv.rcpsych.ac.uk

Notes to Editors:

The five participating schools are:

Ulidia Integrated College, Carrickfergus (Northern Health and Social Services Trust).

St. Patrick's Academy, Dungannon (Southern Health and Social Services Trust).

St. Gemma's High School, Belfast (Belfast Health and Social Services Trust).

Wallace High School, Lisburn (South Eastern Health and Social Services Trust).

Oakgrove Integrated College, Londonderry, (Western Health and Social Services Trust).

