



See Me in Work employer learning programme.

Masterclass 1: How managers can make a difference

Delivered in partnership with the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Scotland.

About this report

See Me hosted the first online masterclass of an ongoing See Me in Work (SMiW) [learning programme](#) for employers on 24 August 2023 via MS Teams. The three-hour masterclass focused on 'how managers can make a difference to promote and support mental health at work', and was delivered in partnership with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Scotland Compliance team.

The masterclass was chaired by Dr Patty Lozano-Casal, See Me Programme Manager (Settings); co-delivered by Rachel Bottomley, See Me Project Officer (Workplace), Bill Stevenson, EHRC Scotland Compliance Senior Associate, and Katharine Weatherhead, EHRC Scotland Compliance Senior Associate, with lived experience input from See Me Volunteer, Nikki Furnivall.

Places for the session were capped at 50 to allow enough space for everybody to talk during the break out groups. 49 people signed up to attend and 21 participants joined the session on the day.

The outcomes for the sessions were:

1. Increased understanding of the role and responsibilities that all line managers hold in relation to mental health at work.
2. Increased understanding of reasonable adjustments for mental health related conditions.
3. Increased knowledge of what works in discussing and implementing reasonable adjustments.
4. Increased awareness of tools and resources available to support line managers in their role.

Presentations

The chair opened the session by welcoming attendees, introducing the purpose of the master class, and outlining the learning outcomes and timings for the session. A series of presentations were then delivered by See Me and EHRC:

- Rachel Bottomley set out See Me's learning about 'how managers can make a difference by creating the conditions for employees to speak about their mental health needs at work without fear from stigma and discrimination'.
- Bill Stevenson and Katharine Weatherhead provided an overview of 'the Equality Act and reasonable adjustments for poor mental health'.

Rachel Bottomley also presented key learning from two employers engaged in the See Me in Work programme: [HM Passport Office](#) on 'the role of line managers' and [Burness Paul LLP](#) on 'understanding and implementing reasonable adjustments'.

The final presentation came from See Me volunteer, Nikki Furnivall, who shared her experiences of both being supported in the work place and now as a line manager,

supporting others struggling with poor mental health. Nikki's talk will be available on the [Personal Stories](#) section of the See Me website in the very near future. Nikki was asked some questions that time constraints on the day prevented her from answering during the session. These can be found in Annex A.

Detail about presentations can be found in the full agenda in the Annex B. All presentation slides were shared with participants alongside this report.

Group discussions: putting theory into practice

The last part of the session focused on group discussions around putting the theory into practice. Participants were divided into three break out groups, each with a facilitator from See Me or EHRC. During the break out session, the groups were given three scenarios to consider and discuss.

Scenario 1. A worker who deals with customers by phone at a call centre has depression which sometimes causes her to cry at work. She has difficulty dealing with customer enquiries when the symptoms of her depression are severe, and consequently she is not meeting her key performance indicators. She is part of a large team undertaking similar tasks and the workspace is set up largely in an open-plan format.

Scenario 2. A disabled man who has depression has been working at a small organisation for two years. He has a good attendance and performance record. In recent weeks, however, he has become emotional and upset at work for no apparent reason. Some colleagues have voiced concern about his unpredictable behaviours. He currently works in a hybrid format, with one day each week at home and four days in the office.

Scenario 3. An external candidate applying for a role in a customer-facing position has disclosed a diagnosis of Generalised Anxiety Disorder. They have requested an alternative interview format to the group interviews that have been arranged. The role will involve in-person and online interaction with customers to test the organisation's products.

Key points were captured from the discussions in each break out-group:

- A good starting point is always to have a supportive conversation with the individual. These can help open this space: 'I've noticed that...', 'how are you feeling?', 'what has been going on for you?'; the important thing is to let the person speak and to actively listen, without judgement.
- The workplace might not be the right place for the conversation; try to take them away to a more neutral private space.
- It's important to ensure there's enough time for the conversation and avoid distractions (e.g. away from e-mails, mobile phone calls).

- The timing for this kind of conversation is important too; just before lunch or at the end of the day can be helpful times so that people have a break before returning to work.
- Don't assume you know what's best for somebody without having a conversation first.
- Don't assume that any behaviours you see are automatically a result of a person's condition.
- Don't assume the individual will open up right away; that's okay. Make sure to signpost to available support and resources.
- Try not to get caught up on the technicalities and legal definitions, just focus on supporting the individual.
- It's important to set out roles and responsibilities (after a disclosure).
- Explore reasonable adjustments together; make sure you really understand what is being asked for and why.
- Poor relationships with line managers can be a big barrier.
- Set out information about interview/recruitment tasks at the application stage.
- Consider whether the interview task is fair and appropriate for the recruitment. Don't assume that if a person requests having individual interviews instead of group interviews, they are not able to take part in groups. Job interviews are unique in that candidates compete for a position, which might bring extra pressure and create anxiety that employees might not feel when they're carrying out their daily job.
- Consider how equipped how people involved in recruitment are to create safe and supportive environments for applicants to disclose their mental health needs, and request reasonable adjustments throughout the whole process.

Resources and other support

Throughout the session participants were able to ask questions using the Q&A function and several supporting resources were shared in addition to those highlighted in the main presentations. These are detailed below.

Q. Wondering if you have resources to support line managers to support employees with developing emotional intelligence - I'm thinking about things like self-regulation, empathy, social skills, that could help support peers to open up and feel safe around the topic of mental health.

Resources shared:

Spotlight on: Safe, Effective and pertinent disclosure of mental health problems at work.

<https://www.seemescotland.org/media/11193/see-me-spotlight-on-resource-2.pdf>

Online platform, Supporting a mentally healthy workplace.

<https://www.healthyworkinglives.scot/workplace-guidance/mentally-healthy-workplace/Pages/Default.aspx>

Q. You mentioned conversation guides - any chance you could post a link to those as I can't see them on the See Me website?

Resources shared:

Let's Chat – Guidance for managers

<https://www.seemescotland.org/workplace/resources-and-e-learning/tools-and-packs>

Other relevant resources:

Walk a Mile campaign, conversation card

<https://www.seemescotland.org/seeus/campaigns/walk-a-mile/conversation-card>

Time to Talk Day 2022, conversation starters

<https://www.seemescotland.org/media/10704/see-me-employers-pack-2022-2.pdf>

Q. Are there any tools that you could signpost us to that we can use in our usual management processes to help create that positive space? e.g. in our line manager one to one meetings etc
For example, my line manager has showed me a wellness action plan that I plan to complete and discuss with them to put things in place. Are there any other tools that could be helpful?

Resources shared:

SAMH well-being assessment tool for use by individuals -

<https://www.samh.org.uk/about-mental-health/self-help-and-wellbeing/lets-talk-wellbeing-assessment-tool>

Time to Talk Day is a national annual campaign with activity packs available for employers that want to run activities -

<https://www.seemescotland.org/seeus/campaigns/time-to-talk/time-to-talk-day-2023>

The See Me in Work self-assessment tool can highlight actions that organisations or individuals can take in the workplace -

<https://www.seemescotland.org/workplace/resources-and-e-learning/tools-and-packs>

The HSE stress risk assessment can be used as an individual exercise to help managers understand how their team experience work-related stress -

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/>

Resources highlighted in presentations:

See Me e-Learning

See Me's free online e-Learning modules are designed to help employees and managers understand mental health, rights and how to speak openly about mental health at work.

<https://www.seemescotland.org/workplace/resources-and-e-learning>

Let's Chat – Guidance for managers

“Let’s Chat” is a practical tool with guidance, tips and scenarios for line managers and supervisors to start open and honest conversations about mental health in the workplace, without fear of stigma and discrimination.

<https://www.seemescotland.org/workplace/resources-and-e-learning/tools-and-packs>

Spotlight On guides

Spotlight On is a series of practical guides that shine a spotlight on the 7 key building blocks for creating mentally health workplaces. Topics include Reasonable Adjustments, Line Management and Effective Mental Health Training and all guides include signposting to further reading and sources of support and advice.

<https://www.seemescotland.org/workplace/see-me-in-work/spotlight-on>

Feature Case Studies

A series of case studies written by organisations that have worked with See Me. Each case study focuses on one of the 7 building blocks and is designed to compliment both the Spotlight On guides and See Me’s Self-Assessment Tool.

<https://www.seemescotland.org/workplace/learning-from-others/>

See Me in Work Self-Assessment Tool

The Self Assessment Tool is used by organisations as they go through the See Me in Work process, but it can be used by other organisations that want to take steps to tackle stigma and discrimination on their own.

<https://www.seemescotland.org/workplace/resources-and-e-learning/tools-and-packs>

Key websites:

Equality and Human Rights Commission (Scotland).

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/commission-scotland>

Healthy Working Lives, Supporting a mentally healthy workplace.

<https://www.healthyworkinglives.scot/workplace-guidance/mentally-healthy-workplace/Pages/Default.aspx>

See Me.

<https://www.seemescotland.org/>

For further information about this report or series of events please contact See Me’s Workplace Programme team via info@seemescotland.org

Annex A: Q&A for Nikki Furnivall, See Me Volunteer

Q: Thinking back to that first experience with the manager that you didn't feel you could talk to, can you pick out 1 or 2 quite simple things that could have made a difference for you? Things that any organisation could put in place easily without any training or costs?

A: The easiest thing that any organisation can do is create a space that staff can easily go to for information. We have a Wellbeing hub on our intranet which has a wealth of information that staff can access whenever they need to. Some of it is aimed at staff themselves, some of it is specifically for managers. If I'd had that available at the time of the bad manager, I could have used that information to help myself or to give me the confidence to talk to that manager. Also, it really comes down to the culture within the workplace. That's not something you can change overnight but it can start anywhere. You can start by changing the culture within your own team.

Q: You spoke about your first role as a people manager and that you did receive training to help you in that role. Do you think the training you had went into enough detail about some of the information we've heard from EHRC today?

A: The training was good for how to get the best out of your staff from a performance perspective but it didn't cover how to consider their wellbeing or mental health. If I went through similar training today, I suspect I'd see a massive difference in the content covered. Having the right information and knowledge is key to being able to properly support your staff.

Q: What do you say to any line managers out there that say they don't want to open up those conversations in case somebody tells them they're thinking about suicide, and they wouldn't know what to do or say?

A: That's a completely understandable fear and something I felt myself before I trained to become a Mental Health First Aider. However, I think it's important to inform yourself beforehand. Find out where you can signpost someone to for proper professional help. Also know when it's ok to get help for them (i.e. if they pose an immediate threat to themselves or others) and remember that it's not your job to diagnose or treat anyone. The most important thing you can do is listen and help them find the right sources of support. Finally, something that is really important is to get help and support for yourself as well as for them. This can be a very emotive and possibly triggering conversation and you might need to talk to someone to help you through it.

The Samaritans helpline is available 24/7 for both people in crisis AND those supporting somebody in crisis. If somebody has told you they are thinking about suicide and you don't know what to do: **Call 116 123**

Annex B: See Me masterclass agenda

Time	Activity
09:25 – 09:30	Attendees start to join
09:30 – 09:35	Welcome & introductions Dr Patty Lozano Casal
09:35 – 09:45	See Me: How managers can make a difference. Rachel Bottomley
09:45 – 10:30	EHRC: The Equality Act & Reasonable Adjustments for mental ill health. Bill Stevenson and Katharine Weatherhead
10:30 – 10:40	Comfort Break
10:40 – 10:50	Q&A with EHRC Bill Stevenson and Katharine Weatherhead
10:50 – 11:05	Shared learning from other organisations. The Passport Office and Burness Paul LLP
11:05 – 11:20	Shared learning from a lived experience perspective. Nikki Furnivall
11:20 – 11:30	Conform Break
11:30 – 12:15	Break out groups - Putting theory into practice
12:15 – 12:25	Discussion feedback
12:25 – 12:30	Final remarks and close Dr Patty Lozano Casal