

See Me
End mental health
discrimination



Impact Report

2023-2024

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► Drop-in session for pupils at a school in Orkney.



Foreword

As this year takes us beyond the mid-point in our five-year strategy With Fairness in Mind, it seems a good time to pause and reflect on what has been achieved, what we are learning and what we need to prioritise. This report highlights some of the fantastic work taken forward by the See Me team, volunteers, partners and supporters over the past year. Whilst there have been many highlights during this time, I wanted to take a moment to share some that stand out for me.

We have worked with Government colleagues and partners to embed anti stigma work as foundational to mental health, suicide prevention and self-harm strategies and workforce plans. It is great to see addressing stigma as a cross-cutting priority with a clear call for more people to take forward action of stigma and discrimination at individual, structural and societal levels.

Despite facing some challenges, it was a privilege to spend time with members of the Expert Group, to gather their insights into what they felt the issues are, and what needs to be done. Many ideas surfaced, and it is great to see that some group members have already taken forward action on stigma as a result of being involved.

I am struck by the growing evidence of the value of lived experience in tackling stigma, and grateful to all our volunteers who give their time to challenge stigma and discrimination. It is also exciting to see the value and energy that comes from looking at mental health stigma through We are learning a great deal about the importance of creativity and the power of working with groups and communities to understand what the specific needs and issues are and find ways to tackle them.

Like many, funding limitations have encouraged us to work in different ways. We have gained efficiencies of scale including working through the Northern Alliance to engage more authorities and schools in See Me See Change and working with UK anti stigma partners to pool resources and create a UK wide campaign, applying our learning from the UK-wide Time to Talk day. We gained a great deal through partnering with leads in other countries to share learning, develop tools and resources and share approaches.

The Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study (SMISS) continues to guide us to focus more on influencing change in the settings where people report being stigmatised or discriminated. Influencing change in public services when there are pressures from staffing shortages, increasing demand and limitations in funding is particularly challenging. Despite this we have been able to increase our reach in workplaces, schools and health and social care by offering a more flexible approach to engagement and work progression.

I am delighted to be able to share the impact of some of the work taken forward in this year and would like to thank everyone who joins us in our effort to end stigma. It will take all of us to create the conditions where people are treated fairly and respectfully with no fear, shame or judgement and can realise their rights.

Wendy Halliday
See Me, Director



Overview of Impact Report

The purpose of this report is to summarise our progress and impact over 2023/24 (Phase 3, Year 3) for Scottish Government Ministers and the programme funder. The report takes a case study approach, featuring selected projects that demonstrate collaborative working, new approaches, and ultimately progress towards the six medium term programme outcomes as detailed in the See Me theory of change (see [With Fairness in Mind 2021-2026](#)) and listed on page 4 (Outcomes Matrix). It also draws out learning and common themes across projects to highlight what works to tackle stigma and discrimination.

This report highlights where partners and people with lived experience have adopted our tools and resources within systems, settings and communities, to enable us to continue to deliver our ambitious programme in a streamlined and sustainable way.

This report demonstrates progress towards outcomes while building on programmatic knowledge and learning generated by us and partners since 2013, with social contact, education and influencing at the core.

This report has been produced collaboratively by See Me and the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) as programme partners and aims to describe the differences that we have made during 2023/24 and explore the learning produced.

* See Me recognises that terminology and labels used to refer to groups racialised and marginalised by society is ethically and politically complex, can be harmful and is subject to debate and update. Throughout this report we have used the terminology partners themselves have used to refer to the communities they are led by and work with. We have included a glossary at the end of the document to illustrate our own current understandings of key terms. We are committed to continually engaging with this critical debate to understand and mitigate harm.

▼ See Me staff and volunteers at an induction session for new volunteers.



▲ See Me new volunteers attending an induction event.

Outcomes Matrix

KEY

- ✗ Primary outcomes
- ✗ Secondary outcomes identified for each project

PROJECT TITLE

	OUTCOME 1 People in the populations we target feel confident to talk openly about their mental health and their experience of stigma and discrimination.	OUTCOME 2 People in the populations we target feel confident to have conversations with other people who are experiencing poor mental health.	OUTCOME 3 People with experience of mental health problems feel more confident to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination.	OUTCOME 4 People in the settings we work in recognise mental health stigma and discrimination, know how to challenge and take action against it.	OUTCOME 5 Leaders in key settings and organisations create inclusive cultures and take action to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination.	OUTCOME 6 National and local policy and decision makers resource, design and implement policies, systems and services that explicitly reduce mental health stigma and address discrimination.
Intersectional programme shift				✗		
Anti-Stigma Arts Fund	✗	✗	✗			
LGBT+ Health and Wellbeing	✗	✗	✗			
Voices through the lens	✗	✗	✗			
Lived experience	✗	✗	✗			
Youth Champions			✗	✗		
See Me in Work				✗	✗	
Health student curriculums				✗	✗	
See Me See Change				✗		✗
International Collaboration	✗					✗
PHS Stigma Indicators					✗	✗
If It's Okay campaign	✗		✗			
An Expert Group				✗		✗
National policy					✗	✗

This matrix maps the projects showcased in this report against See Me's six medium term programme outcomes.

See Me IN NUMBERS

2023/24

POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

42 Number of MSP/MPs signed up to motions supporting See Me's work to tackle stigma

13 Policy consultation responses



COMMUNICATIONS

77.1m People reached by our media

57,291 Social media engagements

55,286 Total social media followers

37,424 Website visits

18,484 Website downloads
Up 59%

5,008 Total people signed up for See Us movement
Up 7%

528 New people registered for See Us social movement

378 Total media mentions

353 New social media followers

151 Events held in communities across Scotland for Time to Talk Day



YOUNG PEOPLE

45,752 Number of students reached
133 times as many as last year

4,428 Number of staff reached
22 times as many as last year

782 Number of other people we engaged with

172 Number of people trained to deliver See Me See Change in schools
5 times as many as last year

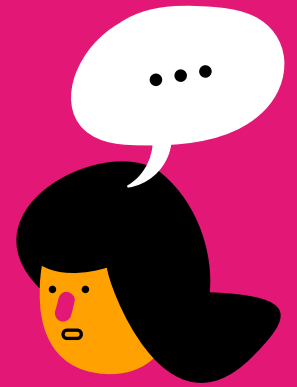


95 Number of partners we worked with

68 Number of schools engaged
Up 55%

24 Number of events we delivered/attended

10 Local authority areas supported to deliver See Me See Change via a Train the Trainer approach
5 times as many as last year



HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

637 Number of people we engaged with

111 Number of partners we worked with
Up 29%

16 Number of strategic/operational partnerships we took part in



16
Number of events we delivered/attended

WORKPLACE

176,122
Number of employees these employers had

1,474
Number of employers we engaged with

268
Number of people completing e-learning
Up 28%

238
Number of partners we worked with

193
Number of employers we directly supported
Up 16%



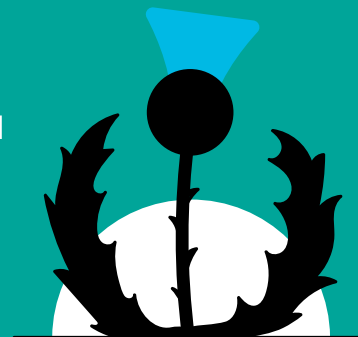
COMMUNITY AND PRIORITY GROUPS

802 Number of participants and volunteers who attended capacity building sessions
3 times as many as last year

107 Number of community partnerships made, sustained or influenced
More than twice as many as last year

56 Number of capacity building sessions delivered
Up 51%

6 Number of arts projects funded
Up 50%

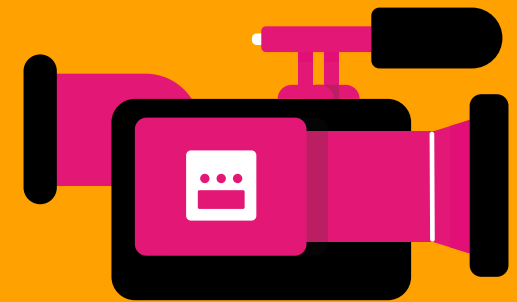


VOLUNTEERS

284 People with lived experience involved in delivery of events and activities
Up 33%

168 Lived experience representations in the media

94 Activities volunteers engaged with (total)



90 Percentage of opportunities offered which were fulfilled

46 Volunteers trained media training, policy training and SMSC TtT
Up 171%

20 Number of See Me volunteers recruited
Up 67%

10 Lived experience volunteers' voices heard in the media

Steps to embed an intersectional approach across the programme

Intersectional stigma related to mental health is experienced disproportionately by those who face wider discrimination such as racism in our society within our 'mainstream' settings (Mental Welfare Commission, 2021). See Me recognises that as a programme we are part of a mainstream system that is structured so that those who do not 'fit in' to a dominant norm (in terms of identities or behaviours) are often disadvantaged, and needs are not met.

Historically our equality-focused work looked at dual or multiple stigma and was limited to isolated projects. This approach did not explore the systemic nature of discrimination and marginalisation, nor did it influence the programme as a whole.

To remove barriers to inclusion, we have been learning about what needs to change in our own practices and in mainstream settings to address historical and current practices and cultures which reinforce dominance, power and privilege.

To understand intersectionality as it relates to mental health stigma, we conducted two reviews into intersectionality and the experiences of adversely racialised and minoritised groups in healthcare settings. We then examined our ways of working and actively challenged the biases and discrimination maintained through our unquestioned norms and assumptions. This relates to how we think about mental health, what evidence we prioritise, and our policies and practices.

CHANGES WE HAVE MADE

Knowledge base/evidence

- Prioritised understanding anti-racism and Black feminism as a team and how stigma is framed through these approaches.
- Sought to understand the perspectives of **New Scots** communities within our existing partnership with **LGBT Health and Wellbeing**.
- Audited equalities data gaps and made a plan to address these as a programme.

Partnerships and Community Engagement

- Commissioned partners carried out focussed community engagement to critically evaluate existing tools and resources in collaboration with community partners (**InRen Network**, **WSREC**, **Pachedu**, **ILFA**, **SCORE**) and **MECOPP**).
- Incorporated this learning into our resources and community engagement approaches.

Workforce (See Me team)

- Spent time and developed resources understanding intersectional stigma and how intersectional and community development approaches can combine to effectively reduce intersectional stigma as it relates to mental health.
- Developed tools to enable our team to apply this approach across See Me from planning to delivery.

Policies/processes

- Developed our small grants Anti-Stigma Arts Fund to focus explicitly on intersectional approaches.

Sharing our learning

Through blogs published on our website, we shared our learning in relation to:

- **Intersectional stigma and approaches.**
- How we are critically reflecting on our own practice and adapting ways of working.
- **Applying intersectional approaches.**
- Learning through partnerships.

IMPACT

As a result of this work, we have a deeper understanding of intersectional stigma and intersectional stigma intervention principles. We have examples of how to put these into practice, as evidenced through the tools and resources developed this year. We also have a greater understanding of the barriers inherent to our programme. This will enable See Me to meet and go beyond the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and to support/influence others to do the same.

Workforce (See Me Team): Our staff survey has shown an overall increase in confidence, skills and competencies in implementing intersectional approaches, as well as commitment to critical self-reflection. We are embedding ongoing EDI learning and development, and addressing psychological safety for the team and volunteers in order to have the necessary 'courageous

conversations' needed for transformative change called for by intersectional approaches.

Internal and External Capacity Building:

We have increased the number and reach of resources and usefulness of these for communities evidenced through feedback from partners. This has led to increased confidence amongst partners and community members to have conversations about mental health.

Policies and Processes: As a result of developing our Anti-Stigma Fund in-line with an intersectional approach, we received a significant increase in applications with direct relevance to the intersections of gender, racism, migration, asylum and mental health this year. Our intersectional approaches work also led to the inclusion of five partners with equalities expertise in the Expert Group, ensuring that EDI recommendations have been central to this report.

Community Engagement: We have a greater understanding of how intersectional stigma is experienced by diverse groups and of the community engagement methods needed to collaboratively address this. See the website for more on: [making space for everyone's mental health](#); and [values-led partnership](#).

Partnerships: Our new approach has enabled us to develop targeted community partnerships, and enhance our focus on intersectionality in existing partnerships through funded community engagement (WSREC, Pachedu,) and funded community-led projects (Feniks, LGBTQ&WB, ILFA). This has meant we are able to better support communities to address stigma at all levels, including structural, as we can incorporate recommendations for action in policy responses and strategic influencing work.

SETTINGS

A specific section highlighting intersectionality has been included in workshops for Strathclyde University pharmacy students and Abertay University mental health nursing students. The Workplace team also delivered a [webinar](#) for employers on what mental health inclusion really means. In addition to this, we have added content to all workplace presentations to prompt employers and employees to consider the whole person, with all their identities, when taking action to address mental health stigma and discrimination as part of a wider mental health / inclusion / wellbeing / EDI improvement agenda(s).

In schools, the approach encourages increasing mental health inclusion for the whole school community, working with a diverse group of young people and school staff to create an action plan to address mental health stigma and discrimination. Our perinatal and infant mental health stigma guidelines include a section on Inclusive service design and provision, highlighting evidence around experiences of minoritised and marginalised groups, and prompt actions to make services more inclusive for these groups.

COMMS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Our latest volunteer recruitment has seen us make small improvements to inclusion. In communications, we have prioritised platforming marginalised voices. More work is needed to create a variety of stories that people can relate to.

The biggest change to this area of the programme has been through our policy work. Our consultation responses now routinely feature more on the impact of intersectional stigma, and how different groups will be impacted by stigma related to government policy or implementation guidelines.

Anti Stigma Arts Fund

OUTCOME
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OUTCOME
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OUTCOME
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Now in its third year the Anti-Stigma Arts Fund continues to create a safe space for people experiencing multiple forms of stigma to talk about their mental health more confidently, using creative methods, and created tools and resources that can be used to better understand and tackle public and self-stigma in different audiences. This year, the Fund has helped develop our understanding of how creative approaches can be used to understand and address intersectional stigma.

WHY IS TAKING A CREATIVE APPROACH IMPORTANT?

Creative projects offer unique opportunities for people to engage more safely with difficult or painful subject matter, and this space becomes even more valuable for people who are marginalised in multiple ways.

See Me's 2020 research paper 'Tackling Mental Health Stigma through the Arts' recommended that to tackle stigma, creative work should be driven by lived experience, avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes around mental health, and should take the creative work into community spaces.

► *'Stigma Monster' poster created as part of the SAY Women project displayed at 'Who Creates the Story' in 2023.*



THE ANTI-STIGMA ARTS FUND

The Anti-Stigma Arts Fund provides an important way for See Me to build new relationships with grassroots organisations led by and working with diverse communities. The community-led nature of this work enables authentic, sustained and transformative change.

The Arts Fund prioritises creating safe, creative spaces for people impacted by multiple forms of stigma to explore and communicate what is important to them in terms of understanding and tackling stigma.

This year we saw significant development in where our fund was being shared and by who. Targeted partnership working enabled access to new networks (primarily those reaching organisations representing racialised groups). Internal development around intersectionality enabled us to explain the approach and ethos we wanted projects to embody more clearly.

As a result, 2024 saw an increase in applications to the Arts Fund from groups led by or working with racialised groups and with experience of the asylum system.

This year the fund is supporting projects working with:

- Black and Minority Ethnic women* with experience of mental health stigma
- People with experience of the asylum system
- People bereaved by suicide
- People living in remote rural communities
- People with experience of homelessness, addictions and alcohol related brain injury
- Survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

- **114 participants engaged in 10 projects**
- **271 attendees at 7 live performances / launch events**
- **5 learning set sessions created and delivered**
- **7 resources created and shared**

IMPACT

To date, the Arts Fund has received 191 applications and funded 16 different projects.

Feedback from people involved in projects funded by the Anti-Stigma Arts fund demonstrates the broad impact that this approach can have for example on establishing positive feelings of community, improving people's confidence to talk about mental health and increasing understanding of the experiences of others.

The impact of the funded projects is evidenced at both the individual and community level:

"Being involved has improved my mental health and my confidence, there is no way even a couple of months ago, I could've talked in front of as many people, I would have been scared that people would judge me." Young Person involved in the Bee Kind project 2021

"More than one participant reported that people who had never talked to them about mental health had been in touch and said what an impact the animation had on them." Project Lead, Mindwaves 2021

"With this project dealing with contentious issues like transgender culture, the lack of open opposition and the overwhelmingly positive feedback was very encouraging." Icebreaker project reporting 2023

KEY INSIGHTS

The Fund is central to building relationships with diverse communities, developing our understandings of intersectional stigma and embedding this across our work. Establishing a mutually supportive, trusting and flexible relationship with those leading the projects is key, and giving space to share learning and experiences is incredibly valuable and appreciated.

The project learning and outputs have significantly improved our understanding of the ways in which intersectional stigma impacts on communities, enabling us to refine our role as a funder year on year to better reach, shortlist and support organisations embedded within communities.

Taking time to respond individually to all applicants, offer feedback to any unsuccessful applicants and hold information sessions are important ways to build our reputation as a transparent, supportive funder, as reflected in this message from an unsuccessful fund applicant: *"Thank you so much for the really kind and generous feedback and for copying over the comment from the member of the panel. It feels very validating that the intention, reasoning and need behind the proposal was recognised...Thanks also for the note on safeguarding. That's really useful to know and we'll definitely take that forward."* (Unsuccessful fund applicant feedback).

Lead practitioners from funded projects have played key roles in See Me events, for example joining a panel discussion on the role of funders as part of the 2023 event 'Who Creates the Story'. Our Creative Learning Event panel discussion on funding was particularly influential in developing our communications around the Anti-Stigma Arts Fund, our award and evaluation criteria and critically our shortlisting approach.

Former arts fund recipient Nat Walpole and Director Mariem Omari, joined the shortlisting panel for the fund in 2024. Inviting external panel members to join the shortlisting panel proved a valuable way to bring a wealth of experience to the decision-making process. As we look towards a 4th year of the fund there is opportunity to develop our processes further in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Project outputs include:

- Animations
- Films
- Graphic novels
- A wellbeing handbook for students
- A play
- A live performance
- A short film.

◀ Image of Fever Peach performing at 'Prism' a spoken word night hosted by Icebreaker Dundee which explored themes around gender and mental health.



Working with LGBT+ New Scots

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This project is an example of best practice in community engagement. It builds on years of work by our partners at LGBT Health and Wellbeing enabling See Me Proud workers and champions to create the conditions where marginalised communities feel supported to share their experiences safely.

Through this work, we now have a deeper understanding of the intersecting stigmas experienced by LGBT+ New Scots, Refugees and Asylum Seekers, which will inform See Me's work and influence partners, policy and decision makers.

BACKGROUND

LGBT+ asylum seekers, refugees and New Scots face particular challenges around mental health, often experiencing multiple forms of overlapping stigmas and discrimination from systems designed to disbelieve and impede them. For example, LGBT+ people face persecution in some countries, leading in some cases to torture, trauma and having to flee and seek refuge or asylum.

Many are forced to disclose and evidence their sexuality to "convince" decision makers of their right to seek asylum. These compounding stigmas and experiences can lead to poor mental health outcomes, as well as barriers to seeking support.

PROCESS

Funded and supported by See Me, the LGBT Health and Wellbeing Development Worker used her established relationship with the LGBT Health and Wellbeing LGBT+ New Scots and See Me Proud Champions to work together to develop and deliver a tailored session.

The session was designed around identified needs of the group to provide LGBT+ New Scots with access to support and information about mental health, as well as a discussion about mental health stigma and the way it particularly impacts LGBT+ asylum seekers. It was carried out in partnership between the LGBT Health and Wellbeing Development Worker and a sessional worker from the New Scots support service.

46 participants attended from the LGBT Health and Wellbeing's New Scots support service. The session focused on stigma around mental health specific to refugee and asylum seeker communities.

Discussions included myths around mental health, what mental health means in individual cultural contexts, how to access LGBT+ affirmative mental health support and supporting mental health when navigating the asylum system.



See Me
End mental health
discrimination
Proud

IMPACT

Impact on participants

100% of session participants who completed feedback forms, or gave verbal feedback said that the event made them feel more confident talking about mental health and more aware of their support options. The success of the participation during the session demonstrates the meaningful community engagement approach of LGBT Health and Wellbeing.

The session gave good insight into various intersecting issues faced by participants. These included:

- NHS services not being accessible, difficulties with language barriers, as well as long waitlists and lack of information about medications.
- Mental health difficulties only being associated with people who may have long term and enduring mental health conditions and are secluded from society.
- Fear that discussing mental health will be detrimental to their asylum claim.
- Fear of discussing sexuality with professionals due to negative and dangerous past experiences.

Impact on wider See Me programme

An infographic was created following the session and shared with the wider See Me team. This stimulated conversations and meetings across the team. Consequently, the data was embedded into a variety of workshops within Higher Education and Community settings.

KEY INSIGHTS

This work is testament to the way in which relationships are grown, nurtured and conducted in collaboration with the communities they work alongside. The project has successfully demonstrated how using a culturally appropriate, peer led approach can result in a deeper understanding of the intersectional stigmas impacting the group.

This in turn has resulted in closer partnership working and greater accessibility and shared understanding within sessions. We would love to expand on this work in order to foster further understanding of intersectional stigma, perhaps developing further sessions in partnership with the group.



***“The community members enjoyed the session and left satisfied with what they had received. They are eager to engage in future sessions and put what they have received into practice.**”*

“Because mental health is taboo in ethnic communities, they were happy to receive first-hand information on how to look after themselves and peer support their relatives and friends.”

Staff Member from support service.

Voices Through the Lens

OUTCOME
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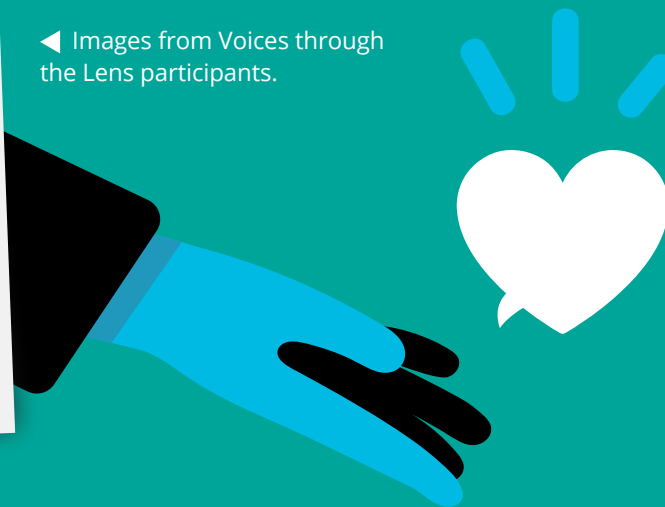
OUTCOME
2



Voices Through the Lens provided a safe space for young people from minoritised ethnic communities to talk about their mental health more confidently, using creative methods. The project equipped young people with the knowledge and skills to articulate their lived experience of mental health stigma and discrimination through photography.

It provided the young people with a platform to amplify their voices, contribute as co-researchers to a research project (filling a necessary gap in evidence) and bring their own expertise to the project. This case study is written from an interview with Judy Wasige, ILFA founder and project lead.

◀ Images from Voices through the Lens participants.



BACKGROUND

Voices Through the Lens is a collaborative community research project between researchers from Glasgow Caledonian University and community organisation ILFA.

See Me funded the pilot phase in response to previous work by ILFA during the Covid-19 pandemic. This work identified how young people from minoritised ethnic communities in Glasgow experience intersectional stigma and discrimination within the systems and structures designed to support them, including mainstream services, schools and communities.

It evidenced pressures of parental culture, gaps in knowledge about mental health including where and how to seek help and the lack of tailored support available to them.

The project prioritised creating a safe, peer-support space for young people using PhotoVoice, as such spaces were identified by ILFA's previous work as a huge gap, necessary to create the conditions to meet the outcomes.

PROCESS

Voices Through the Lens used PhotoVoice to create a safe, peer support space and increase understanding of young minoritised ethnic people's experiences of mental health stigma and discrimination in Glasgow.

By empowering participants to explore their experiences as co-researchers, and collate and share their stories, they raised their awareness of the impact of stigma and discrimination in their communities and beyond. The project included a literature review of PhotoVoice methodology to inform design and included four free, incentivised photography workshops with eight young minoritised ethnic people aged 16-30, living in Glasgow.



▲ Voices Through the Lens PhotoVoice workshop participants.

IMPACT

Through workshop activities, participants developed photography, critical thinking, reflection, presentation, leadership, relationship building, networking and advocacy skills. They increased their understanding of the nature and impact of stigma and discrimination and how to challenge them.

Participants fed back that they felt in control of their work, that their voices were heard, and their feedback was acted upon. The Project Coordinator described the impact of using See Me Volunteer, Bridget's '6 Wee Wordies' anti-stigma resource:

“Six [Wee] Wordies was a valuable tool for promoting constructive dialogue and promoting understanding among participants. It has been very helpful in addressing challenging issues within the group and encouraged many of our participants to willingly share their stories... 6 Little Wordies has become an integral part of our workshops”

Project Coordinator

Project staff and researchers developed skills in facilitating community-based participatory research and community engagement. The Project Coordinator undertook Mental Health First Aid training and developed networking skills. The student researchers also developed skills in participatory research, meta-analyses and using systematic review software.

KEY INSIGHTS

Flexible, collaborative working between See Me and the project team has facilitated project successes and enhanced the experiences of staff and co-researchers. See Me's investment enabled project set up and supported ILFA to successfully leverage additional funding from the National Lottery to continue the work. Placing young people at the heart of the project made them feel valued as partners and their lived experience guided project design and development.

Sustaining participant engagement in the project over time proved challenging and limited funding resulted in less staff capacity and equipment than was required for delivery. Learning from the pilot will inform the next phase of the work, for example through clearer planning of project outputs and their dissemination at the outset and engaging earlier with policy makers.

The next phase of the project also seeks a broader range of perspectives:

- To strengthen project sustainability, enhanced support for project staff is in place to ensure effective delivery and an impactful participant experience.
- To maximise funding availability and secure sustainability of the project model, it now consists of smaller, manageable milestones aligned with more realistic outputs and outcomes. Research activities will continue, with plans to produce a qualitative journal paper for peer review.

Centring Lived Experience within See Me

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A literature review conducted by the MHF evaluation and learning team this year highlighted widespread recognition of the value of lived experience in anti-stigma work. Internationally, engagement and empowerment of people with lived experience has been steadily growing.

A **2022 Lancet Review** gathered evidence from national level anti-stigma programmes across the world (Thornicroft, et al., 2022), concluding that lived experience engagement is critical to the success of anti-stigma activity. Nationally, lived experience involvement is becoming increasingly central to emerging mental health and social care policy, as evidenced in the new **suicide prevention strategy**, **mental health law review** and **national care service consultation**.

See Me has a long history of engaging people with lived experience. From inception of the **Fairer Future** campaign in 2007, founding partners recognised the essential nature of lived experience contribution. The Rights for life agenda progressed by See Me (SRN and VOX) encouraged adoption of the **human rights based approaches** and application of the panel principles to ensure engagement of both rights holders and duty bearers.

Panel Principles included: Participation, Accountability, Non-Discrimination, Empowerment and Legality. See Me has continued to facilitate lived experience contribution, facilitating social contact, as core to the programme's work.

See Me has developed a range of tools, checklists, processes and ways of working for effectively involving volunteers with lived experience.

The team is working to embed this across all aspects of the programme and to support partners to apply emerging learning from best practice. See Me wants to ensure that whilst engaging with people with lived experience, the complexities involved in this are carefully considered to make sure that people working with See Me are fully, respectfully and individually supported.



Lived experience desktop review

During 2023, the evaluation and learning team conducted a desktop review of lived experience engagement.

The aim of the review was to collate and review guidance to support authentic, effective and safe engagement of people with experience of mental ill health, to identify any gaps in available resources. A working group was established to embed the findings within the programme - with particular emphasis on stigma, intersectionality and safeguarding.

52 resources were identified and reviewed, resulting in a list of 10 key themes for effective engagement:

- Reciprocal relationships
- Wrap-around support
- Meaningful opportunities
- Clear communication
- Equality and diversity
- Valued involvement
- Commitment/accountability
- Supportive culture
- Evaluation and research
- Safety

Investing in the power of lived experience

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This project has improved the levels of engagement of our lived experience volunteers and has increased the number of opportunities they took part in where they used their lived experience to influence change.

This demonstrates our commitment to continuous improvement around lived experience participation and shows that by strengthening our internal infrastructure and approach to lived experience involvement, we are better informed to support and engage with our volunteers so that they feel empowered to take anti-stigma action in the areas that are most important to them.

BACKGROUND

Although See Me centres the views and expertise of people with lived experience across programme, we have seen a decline in the levels of engagement from volunteers over the last couple of years. Volunteer engagement across the third sector has dipped since Covid and feedback from our own volunteers told us that changing staff within the team and fewer in person opportunities has contributed to them feeling disconnected.

To improve volunteer engagement, this year we aimed to address three key areas for improvement:

- Increasing volunteer engagement and participation
- Improving data capture, reporting and visibility of volunteers' status and their involvement in events and activities
- Developing clear and consistent processes for volunteer safeguarding and involvement

PROCESS

To meet these objectives, we began by identifying inconsistencies with how we safeguarded our volunteers and how we engaged with them around opportunities. Following this, we:

- Created new standard operating procedures
- Developed our database
- Supported staff learning and development through training for working with volunteers
- Increased interaction with volunteers
- Created more opportunities to connect online and to develop volunteer skills and confidence
- Reviewed recruitment and induction of new volunteers

"I feel like I'm helping to make a difference and do some good and also everyone at See Me is so friendly, welcoming and helpful that it makes it easy and a good place to volunteer."

IMPACT

- Improved safeguarding has ensured we are consistent across the team so our volunteers are safer when working with us.
- We successfully **recruited** the target number of volunteers for 2023/24 and 55% of new volunteers were involved in an event/activity within the first 3 months of joining us.
- New **data capture** processes have provided us with greater visibility of volunteer status and preferences.
- **Engagement** has improved by 20% from Q2 to the end of Q4 and 69% of volunteers have taken part in activity within the last 6 months. 90% of opportunities offered to volunteers were taken up and 82% of volunteers said they had a chance to take part in opportunities that interest them. 91% of volunteers also said they feel empowered by the opportunities they took part in.
- More **development** opportunities were created for volunteers across a wider range of topics than before – 46 volunteers took part across 8 different sessions and 100% of volunteers felt they had gained skills or knowledge.

KEY INSIGHTS

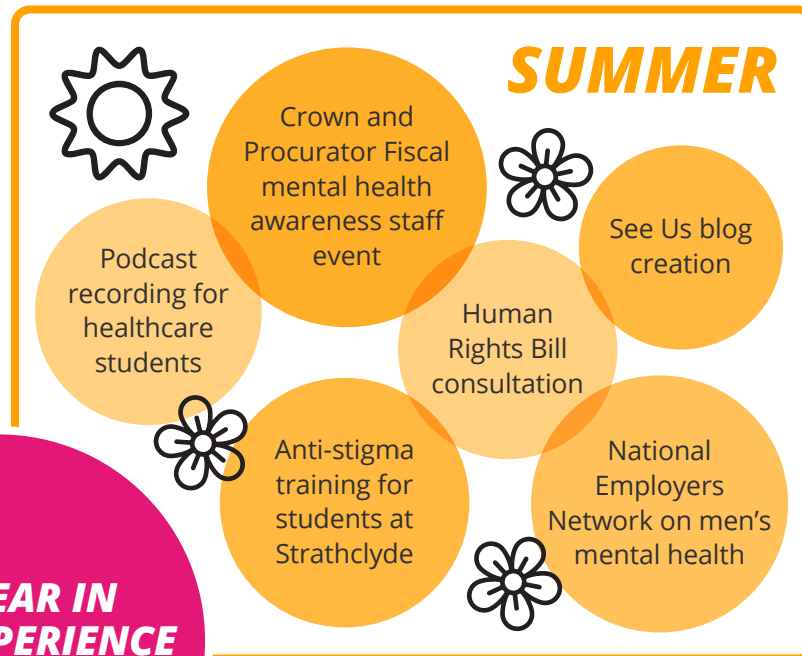
Increased engagement levels show that by focusing on connection, communication and having strong processes and practices in place, volunteers feel more able to take part in opportunities, empowered to take action in their own communities and the areas that are most important to them.

One reflection on the initial stages of this project is that our volunteers could have been involved in more of the improvement work undertaken to ensure that people with lived experience are meaningfully involved in full lifecycle of See Me's work.

SPRING



SUMMER



THE YEAR IN LIVED EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT

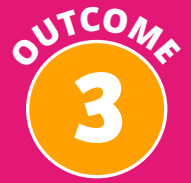
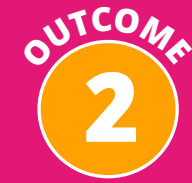
AUTUMN



WINTER



Young people leading the way



This project has enabled former lived experience See Me volunteers to gain experience and lead on work across the programme, ensuring that a young person's perspective in tackling mental health stigma and discrimination is embedded across See Me's work.

BACKGROUND

Following the restructuring of the Education and Young People programme, it was recognised that the former youth workers within the programme had played a key role in ensuring peer-to-peer approaches and social contact was embedded in See Me's offer. We know that these approaches are two key ingredients of impactful anti-stigma interventions or actions.

With a limited capacity within the See Me team, the introduction of the Youth Consultant role gives us the opportunity to co-produce work with young people, offer peer support to other young people to take part in projects at various stages and to add to the diversity of the team.

For the Youth Consultants, they develop skills in areas such as leadership, networking and consultancy in a supportive environment.

PROCESS

We recruited three new Youth Consultants to join existing the existing Youth Consultant. We developed a role description and planned how the consultants would work across the whole See Me programme and support volunteers.

The new Youth Consultants then completed a bespoke induction and training programme. This supported them to build the knowledge and skills required for the role and to understand and plan for the areas they would like to support and lead on within See Me. Their role also included supporting the engagement of See Me volunteers, with a focus on 16–25 year olds, in a peer-to-peer capacity.

The Youth Consultants have been involved in a range of projects including:

- Development, delivery and facilitation of See Me See Change
- Leading volunteer sessions
- Developing Education and Young People resources
- Networking with partners via external workshops
- Facilitating workshops and sessions with schools, partners and community organisations

IMPACT

To showcase the impact that being a Youth Consultant has had on them, our current Youth Consultants have recorded clips where they talk about their experiences.

"The Youth Consultants offer a unique perspective and offer a whole new level of enthusiasm and hype that has brought so much positive energy, change and enjoyment to tackling mental health stigma and discrimination across Scotland." Kirsty



"I have immensely enjoyed collaborating with the other Youth Consultants to tackle stigma and discrimination throughout different sectors, and I have always said that working with See Me is one of my favourite things that I do." Orla



"I feel more empowered to tackle stigma and discrimination and I've been able to do the same for other young people. This has greatly impacted my purpose and drive in life by contributing to a common cause and making a difference." Jess



KEY INSIGHTS

Young People's voices are becoming more widely embedded across the See Me programme and this is helping to improve peer support and social contact within our approaches, including SMSC and Time to Talk Day. We have tested an approach to contracting youth consultants which has provided us with learning for future recruitment.

The benefits to the Youth Consultants of this role are wide ranging. These include:

- Better knowledge and experience of working in an organisation to mental health stigma and discrimination
- Increased communication skills
- More confident collaborators

The Youth Consultant involvement in the delivery and facilitation of many of the See Me See Change training sessions has had a positive impact on participants, as highlighted here:

"The variety of information presented, excellent examples of real life, lived experiences and the voice of the young people coming through very strongly across all aspects. "

SMSC Northern Alliance TTT Participant

"[Youth Consultant] input was very enlightening due to her experience. Her ability to make some of the material more relatable was very beneficial."

Staff Member from SMSC Pilot



▲ Youth Consultant Jess helping facilitate SMSC training.



▲ Youth Consultant Kirsty engaging with See Me School Partners.



▲ Youth Consultant Kirsty Supporting at Volunteer Led Event in Peebles.

Increasing employer engagement in See Me in Work

OUTCOME
4

OUTCOME
5

Tackling mental health stigma and discrimination in the workplace has been a core part of See Me's work for over a decade. The Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study showed that stigma in the workplace continues to be a huge barrier for many Scots, with three quarters (77%) of people with experience of severe and enduring mental illness saying that they had been treated unfairly at work – and 50% said that they expected to be asked to leave employment as a result of their mental illness.

See Me in Work strives to provide evidence-based, practical advice and support for employers to help them create stigma-free, mentally healthy working environments. In 2022 we digitalised the programme, creating a flexible, adaptable and self-service online See Me in Work Portal, which offers organisations accessible guidance and support to take ownership of improvement work and move through the programme at a pace that suits them, without relying on See Me staff.

This year we aimed to increase communications activity to expand our reach and engagement with employers. To do this, we:

Redesigned our webpages

A review of the workplace webpages on our website found that user navigation needed to be improved.

In October 2023, we published a new structure for the Workplace webpages that simplifies the user journey, with clearer links to relevant sections of the website and resources. This led to an increase in resource downloads.

Reviewed our existing contacts

A review of internal data found that the largest proportion of See Me contacts (27%) that are registered as taking part in or interested in 'Workplace' have a job title that relates to Human Resources functions.

We trialled promotion of tools and events through the HR NETWORK Scotland Magazine and after attending their Leaders Dinner and National Conference in May 2023, web traffic to our website increased by 26% compared with the same period in 2022 and sign-ups for See Me in Work Discovery sessions increased.

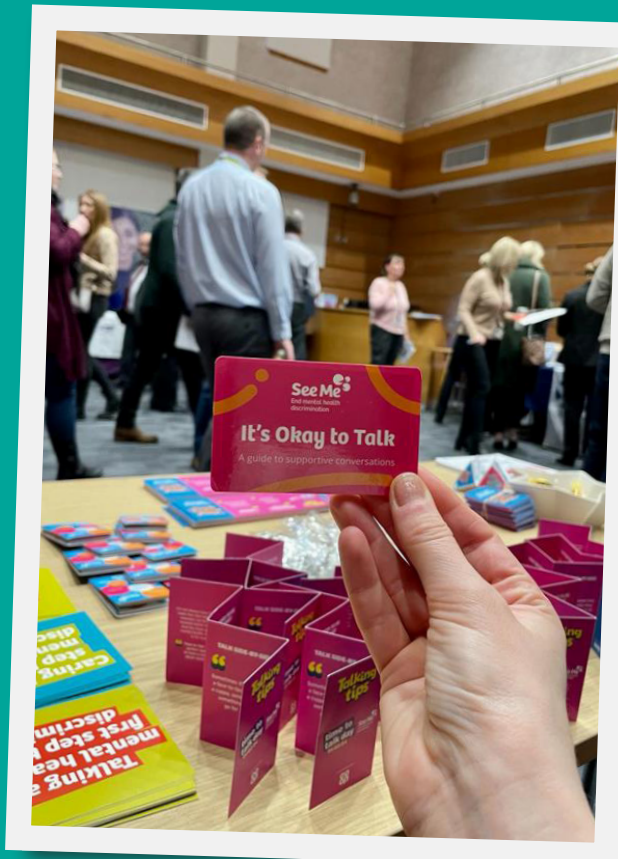
Mental health at work

Stigma and discrimination in the workplace is a key issue for many employers and employees, for those trying to get a job and for people returning to work following a period of poor mental health. Find out more about creating a mentally healthy work environment.



Co-facilitated sessions

We co-facilitated with the Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland three sessions for the Supporting Mentally Healthy Workplaces where we presented our own learning, including SMISS, promoted good practice examples, tools and resources.



Developed our online learning programme for employers

We delivered two online masterclasses and three webinars to help employers and employees create stigma free, mentally healthy cultures. Masterclasses were co-facilitated with partners Equalities and Human Rights Commission and Health and Safety Executive. Both webinars and masterclasses had inputs from our volunteers and employers already engaged in the See Me in Work programme. We promoted information about these events widely to reach and engage with new audiences.

In total 342 people registered for the sessions and 158 attended. Recordings of these can be found on the See Me website. Feedback from attendees shows the positive impact that taking part had on them across the key topics covered. For example:

- Understanding and implementing reasonable adjustments and the role of line managers in relation to these.

"After attending your masterclass, I've recently enrolled in a MH First Aid Training course, which I think will strongly reinforce everything that I learned on your course. Thank you!"

- Creating the conditions for employees to speak about their mental health at work and work-related stress, without fear from stigma and discrimination.

"[The action I plan to take after today is to] Encourage senior leaders in my team to start conversations about work-related stress and mental wellbeing. I wish my team managers were more active in this area and remove the stigma in speaking up about it."

- Understanding what mental health inclusion actually means and the impact it can have in improving the workplace.

"My organisation has things in place, but I think part of the reason why people are not accessing fully is we need to do more to tackle the stigma. So, this is something I am hoping to take forward with leadership."

- Getting senior leadership buy-in for mental health for tackling stigma and discrimination as part of improvement initiatives in the workplace.

"Thank you – that has been really inspiring with useful and practical help and ideas."

- Normalising mental health conversations in the workplace through campaigns like Time to Talk Day 2023.

▲▼ Police College Time to Talk Day.

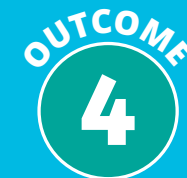


Masterclass 1: How managers can make difference

Masterclass 2: Supporting conversations

Webinar 1: Mental health inclusion

Employer Case Studies: Glasgow City Council



Glasgow City Council is the largest local authority in Scotland, serving a population of 636,000, and employing over 28,000 people. In 2017 the Council passed a motion to *“take forward participation in the See Me in Work Programme as a first step in incorporating the principles of the Scotland-wide See Me campaign into Council-wide service planning and delivery, to combat stigma against mental ill health.”*

Since late 2021, the Council has been implementing a new workplace initiative – initially focused in the Council’s Neighbourhood and Regenerations Services (NRS) as part of their ‘NRS People’ project to enhance employee experience, support employee health and wellbeing, maximise attendance and performance, and to actively encourage and facilitate meaningful employee engagement in opportunities designed to strengthen their resilience through and beyond the pandemic.

Led by senior management and corporate HR, the NRS People project was delivered by a select working group of experienced professionals from corporate and strategic service HR, communications, organisational development, and frontline operations. This collaborative approach, reinforced by regular engagement and support from leadership and trade unions, provided an ideal opportunity for NRS to effectively mainstream mental health and wellbeing support activities to become a positive and fundamental part of *“the way we do things here”*.

NEXT STEPS

As the Council evaluates the existing 2021–2024 Health and Wellbeing Strategy and considers its next steps, it is already starting to incorporate the good practice and key learnings from the NRS People project through similar activities introduced across other service areas – embedding a focus on the reduction of stigma and discrimination and implementing meaningful supports that make a difference to employees and to the citizens they serve.



Impact on Engagement

Staff surveys conducted in 2022 and 2023 showed a positive shift in employee perceptions of working at NRS and an equivalent reduction in negative views. More staff felt they could engage with their managers on performance, career development and policy. For example, 63% reported that they could engage with managers on personal and wellness matters (an increase of 9%).

The greatest impact was in relation to employee access and engagement in health and wellbeing policies, supports and practices – with an increase of 13% of employees reporting a significant improvement in being kept up to date with important service communications. Providing frontline service, non pc facing employees with quick fingertip access to immediate help has been the greatest aim of the work.

Impact on Absence

The programme developed an improved approach to maximising attendance and the Council has seen some encouraging early results from attendance rates.

Compared to other Scottish Local Authorities, this service area within Glasgow City Council showed the smallest increase in absences in the last period – having consistently compared less favourably in the past.

NRS is also one of only two departments in Glasgow City Council to show a reduction in employee sickness absence in 22/3, suggesting that there has been a slowing down of the upward trend in NRS.

Snapshots from other employers

OUTCOME
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OUTCOME
5

Calmac Ferries Limited has been working towards a wellbeing strategy. Employee data indicated the need to focus on improving line management capability to have conversations about mental health.

Continuing over the last few years, the organisation invested in Mental Health First Aid and mental health awareness training for line managers and scheduled regular meetings. Managers have reported feeling more comfortable with having conversations and trying to remove the stigma.

Although progress has been made in lessening the stigma, the organisation appreciates there is still a long way to go.

CALMAC
FERRIES

Operators of



Caledonian MacBrayne
Hebridean & Clyde Ferries

This year **Scottish Power** has prioritised improving the knowledge base and skills of line managers in relation to mental health in the workplace.



One of the key drivers of this was participating in the See Me in Work Programme and employees highlighting training for line managers was a priority. In response to this, a training programme for all line managers was developed in conjunction with SAMH and implemented.

Attendees provided positive feedback, with line managers reporting feeling more confident and capable on mental health and less fearful. Although it's too early to have tangible data, the organisation hopes that by improving confidence of line managers, this will be vital in supporting the wellbeing of staff and creating a positive culture around mental health.

The **Crown Office and Prosecutor Fiscal Office** has been working to change their culture, to allow colleagues to feel that they can be more open about mental health. Organisational culture was something that the See Me in Work needs assessment identified as an area for improvement.



**CROWN OFFICE
& PROCURATOR
FISCAL SERVICE**

SCOTLAND'S PROSECUTION SERVICE

This year, the organisation has published communications on mental health, held events/webinars, added a wellbeing section to their quarterly conversation forms, promoted their Employee Assistance Programme service, promoted their Mental Health Network/Ambassadors/First Aiders and launched their Carers Policy, which included a Carers Passport and paid Carers Leave.

As a result, the organisation has seen an increase in conversations about mental health within team meetings and within discussions between colleagues and with managers. More colleagues are now looking to become Mental Health First Aiders and join the Mental Health Network.

Embedding a focus on mental health stigma in Health Student Curriculums

OUTCOME
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OUTCOME
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This project has enabled nine university partners to take ownership over mental health stigma education for trainee healthcare providers, helping make stigma education more sustainable and allowing us to reach increasing numbers of future healthcare providers.

Experiences of stigma and discrimination in healthcare settings are common for people with mental illness; findings from SMISS showed that over 80% of respondents had experienced unfair treatment when accessing or receiving healthcare services. Such experiences can have an immediate negative impact on a person's access to and experience of services. This can lead to people not seeking help when they need it. Amongst SMISS respondents who reported feeling significantly affected by stigma and discrimination within healthcare settings the majority (> 80%) had stopped themselves from asking for help and over half had avoided calling an ambulance or attending A&E in an emergency.

In recent years See Me has delivered workshops on stigma to university students training to become healthcare practitioners in order to embed anti-stigma principles as early as possible. Every year, more universities are expressing interest in these workshops. With limited capacity, we have sought to

find solutions to meet the demand. We have worked with the university lecturers to look at how best to support them to deliver the workshops so that stigma can become embedded in the healthcare curriculums.

Building on our learning from previous years, alongside the findings of a desktop review (see next page), in 2023/24, we worked with university teaching teams to develop and trial new ways to:

- Build capacity among lecturers to lead workshops on mental health stigma and discrimination
- Ensure that students can access learning about stigma and discrimination in various formats, at multiple points during their pre-registration training
- Find new ways for See Me volunteers to share their lived experiences of stigma, without having to repeatedly attend workshops

This project has taught us that sustainable, university-led delivery of education on stigma and discrimination is achievable when resources and lesson plans are tailored to suit the students' needs and context and capacity is available from See Me to support this. Lecturers fed back that detailed guidance would be helpful and this is currently being developed and trialled.

363

students received education on stigma



9

university lecturers were actively involved

6

universities engaged



6



5

sessions were hosted

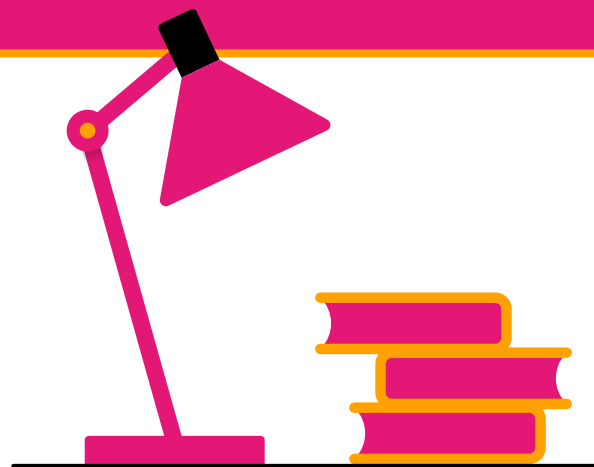
Education-based anti-stigma interventions

A 2023 scoping review by the evaluation and learning team explored how education-based anti-stigma interventions impact mental health stigma and discrimination among qualified and pre-qualifying healthcare professionals.

Five broad types of interventions were identified within the literature: video based, educational, education-based work experience, presentation-focused and lived experience designed interventions. While the impact of the interventions that we looked at varied, many reported impact in relation to improving attitudes and behaviours, skills and knowledge enhancement and improving care.

Evidence from across the different types of interventions reviewed suggests that education-based interventions can effectively improve attitudes towards mental health, knowledge and understanding of mental health and lead to improved care from health professionals towards people with a mental illness. Across the different types of intervention, one key factor for success was an embedded social contact. Studies suggested social contact can make interventions more memorable and powerful for those who took part. Having a contact-based element can bring stories and facts to life in a way that a simple knowledge exchange may not.

Two further key elements of successful interventions were identified as lived-experience involvement in design and delivery and diagnosis-specific educational content.



University of
Strathclyde
Glasgow

Lecturer-led workshops at the University of Strathclyde

Following our work last year with pharmacy lecturers at the University of Strathclyde to deliver a workshop, this year we supported them to lead this workshop themselves. See Me updated teaching resources, prepared notes and offered light-touch support on the day.

Lecturers shared that they felt confident and comfortable leading the workshop. This new style of delivery made the workshop more engaging for students. Lecturers used their clinical experience to explain how to put theory into practice, sharing how they might start conversations about mental health during a consultation or how to support someone experiencing stigma while balancing other priorities in a busy pharmacy. This additional clinical insight increased students' confidence to put learning into action.

After the workshop, 92% of participants said they understood what actions to take to ensure patient care and pharmacy settings are free from mental health stigma and discrimination, compared to 28% before the session.

This jump in knowledge is similar to what we saw in last year's workshop, indicating that university lecturers have a similar level of competency in delivering the workshops as See Me staff.

"Being able to share our own stories from practice with students was really good... students felt more comfortable sharing as they were more familiar with us."

Lecturer

Snapshots from other universities

OUTCOME
4

OUTCOME
5

Stigma Podcast, University of Stirling

The University of Stirling were keen to get their first-year nursing and paramedic students learning about stigma in their first few months of university. We tested a new way of delivering stigma education, developing a **podcast** for students. This project gave us a great chance to work with a See Me volunteer to explore how to capture their lived-experience in a recording. Students listened to the podcast and answered a series of accompanying reflective questions during independent study time. This was then followed-up on during group tutorials.

Feedback gathered after this process showed that students engaged strongly with the podcast and questions. Many wrote detailed answers that captured how they understood stigma and their role in reducing it. This base-level understanding of stigma can be built on throughout the students' degrees and the podcast can be re-used in future years, making this a sustainable way to deliver teaching and lived-experience insight into stigma.

"As a student nurse I would make sure to spend time with individuals... actively listen... ensure that I am honest... [and] create a safe space where they know they can voice their concerns without judgement."



Introductory and Advanced Workshops, Abertay University

We worked with mental health nursing lecturers at Abertay University to explore how we could adapt stigma workshops for different students at different stages of their training. We hosted introductory workshops for first-year students, examining the fundamentals of stigma-free care.

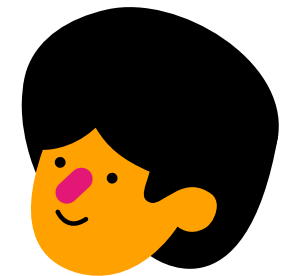
We adapted this into an advanced workshops for final-year students, where they reflected on the stigma they witnessed on placements and explored how to advocate for patients and question stigmatising cultures.

Both workshops received great engagement from students and **over 80% rated the workshops 5/5 for relevance to their future career.**

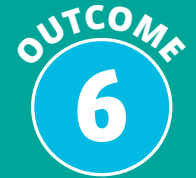
The success of the final-year workshop proved that these workshops can be adapted to suit more advanced student groups, giving us a clear roadmap for how to incorporate stigma education at different stages of students' university journey.

"I have learned new ways to advocate and support those I will be supporting throughout and after my degree."

Student



Building See Me See Change Sustainability with the Northern Alliance



During 2023–2024, See Me worked closely with schools and practitioners in seven local authority areas to deliver See Me See Change training and support roll-out the programme across these school communities.

By working in partnership with the Northern Alliance we were able to reach local authorities that we had not worked with before and support more schools to create mental health inclusive environments, free from stigma and discrimination, for their staff and pupils.



▲ First Northern Alliance Train the Trainers session in Shetland.

BACKGROUND

See Me research has shown that over two thirds of young people report having struggled with their mental health, but only 39% of young people think teachers take them seriously when they say they are struggling. Mental health stigma and discrimination can prevent young people from talking about mental health and seeking the help that they may need.

See Me has successfully implemented anti-stigma education within schools for several years. Building on the success of the See Me See Change pilot and the positive feedback received during piloting of the newly developed See Me See Change (SMSC) Train the Trainer (TTT) approach last year, this year we aimed to further test and roll this out, building sustainability through a strategic partnership with the Northern Alliance Improvement Collaborative.

It was hoped that through taking part, school leads would have the knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver and embed SMSC in their schools.

PROCESS

After establishing a partnership with the Northern Alliance Improvement Collaborative in March 2023, it was decided that SMSC TTT sessions would be rolled out in 82 secondary schools in the eight northern local authorities.

Training was designed to be delivered over two sessions with the first online and the second in person, delivered by See Me and Youth Consultants. Two cohorts completed the training between May and June 2023 (Cohort 1) and between August and September 2023 (Cohort 2).

IMPACT

Piloting a regional approach to SMSC using the TTT model

Schools from seven of the eight local authorities in the Northern Alliance participated, with **107** secondary school staff and practitioners trained in **41** schools.

Survey feedback showed that the training increased confidence of participants to implement See Me See Change as part of a wider mental health approach in school, with one participant stating:

"[I] feel confident and ready to roll out the programme with secondary schools."

TTT delivery effectively met all the intended learning outcomes. Survey data and feedback showed significant increases in:

- Understanding of evidence-based approaches to tackling mental health stigma and discrimination.
- Knowledge of actions and resources that can be used
- Understanding and confidence of the SMSC approach and delivering it

Thematic analysis of feedback gathered through focus groups and surveys showed that participants also benefited from a collaborative approach where they could share learning.

They reported finding the training relevant and important to their role:

"I liked engaging with people from other schools and having the chance to share our experiences."

Implementation

Evaluation showed schools to be at different stages of implementation. Whilst some adopted a co-creation approach, others were more top-down. Schools that successfully engaged with the programme focused on building awareness of SMSC within the school and found ways to incorporate it into wider school planning.

Feedback from teachers suggested SMSC offered pupils a sense of empowerment over their learning.

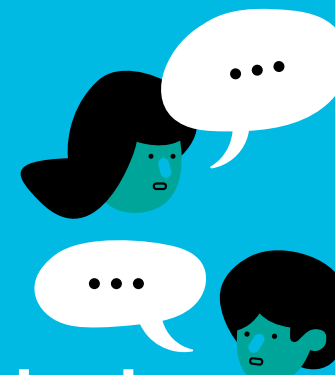
"You will come up with your plan in conjunction with the pupils and staff and that's really exciting and different because although we involve pupils we don't actually put them on a solid, even playing field to us and that's what we are doing with this programme."

Focus group participant



23,028
pupils

2,657
staff reached



KEY LEARNING

- A programme that tackles stigma and discrimination is much needed in schools. Teachers we spoke to welcomed SMSC as an approach to combatting a recent rise in intolerance amongst pupils towards those they perceive as different.
- Strong endorsement of SMSC from those in more senior, influential positions is critical to achieving SMSC buy-in within schools.
- For SMSC to work, staff need to be given time and space to do the training and implement an action plan within their school.
- Focus group participants reflected that female pupils and staff were over-represented within those engaging with the SMSC programme in schools. It was acknowledged that to get more males there needed to be clear leadership from male members of staff.

Alford Academy Case Study

OUTCOME
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OUTCOME
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Alford Academy in Aberdeenshire has begun embedding SMSC and action planning their anti-stigma approach within their school since completing TTT sessions. Two school staff delivered SMSC training to staff and pupils concurrently in November 2023. A parent council member was invited to join staff training sessions.

Following the training, a core group met to action plan (with lunch provided!). The school set-up a collaborative space for pupils and staff to work together, enhancing ownership of the action planning activities. The group identified a range of goals as part of their action planning. Some of built on existing work that the school has rolled out, whilst others were new ideas. Smaller groups of pupils and staff have led on different activities following the action planning.

“...It’s been great for them to see that actually they’ve got ownership of this. You know that it’s their ideas that we’re working on... They came into that group setting where there was staff, but there was no hierarchy, you know, everyone just got stuck in and yeah, it’s been managed really well. So yeah, I’m really pleased by it. Really pleased.” Jo Munro, Alford Academy Staff

Pupils were also encouraged to identify short term goals that they could lead on. Recognising the importance of awareness-raising, pupils created and shared positive messages and posters around the school. Pupils reinvigorated the school Talk to Me badges, so that pupils can easily identify staff

they can speak to if they are struggling. Finally, they have provided a drop box in the library where pupils can submit a request for some support.

“It was a real highlight to take this group of 12 young people and lead them through the sessions. It was absolutely brilliant.” Jo Munro, Alford Academy Staff

In the longer term, the school is hoping to create a school ethos across all the year groups including those in their feeder primary schools, that breaks down the stigma and builds a culture where people feel okay to say if they’re not doing okay.

Going forward, they want to link up the work more with parents and plan to build a Wellbeing Hub which will be able to provide information of supporting mental health and wellbeing, space to share lived experience and organise sessions and workshops. Embedding SMSC and sustainability of the programme for future academic years will be a focus for the school, ensuring more younger year groups can be trained and involved to keep momentum and the programme continuing as well as creating more opportunities for staff to be involved.

▼ Two pupil-led wellbeing initiatives at Alford Academy: a Wellbeing Drop-box (top) and Talk to Me badges (bottom).



TALK TO ME badge

We would like to encourage our pupils to talk to us about their wellbeing.

We can offer a sympathetic ear, and even if we cannot ‘fix’ problems, we might be able to signpost you the relevant support in school.



Collaborative working with international and national partners

OUTCOME
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OUTCOME
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Collaborative working with international and national partners is crucial in tackling mental health stigma and discrimination and is core to See Me's approach. Working with partners can help us to share learning and leverage resources, enabling us to develop and share a wider range of best practices and resources.

Working with national partners has helped us to amplify our efforts, allowing campaigns and initiatives to reach a wider audience, as in the case of the If It's Okay Campaign. This not only includes reaching more geographical areas but also targeting diverse populations within those areas, ensuring that anti-stigma messages are inclusive and culturally sensitive. As seen with the Expert Group, a collaborative approach can strengthen efforts to influence policy changes.

Collaboration also fosters a rich environment for research and innovation. By bringing together diverse expertise and perspectives such as in our international anti-stigma partnership, partners can conduct more comprehensive research, which is crucial for understanding the multifaceted nature of stigma and effective ways to combat it.

By working together, organizations and countries can create a more significant impact than any single entity could achieve alone, pushing forward the global agenda against mental health stigma and discrimination more effectively.

This project has elevated opportunities for anti-stigma research beyond See Me's national reach and scope in ways that were previously not anticipated. It has strengthened See Me's international relationships with partners and placed it at the centre of new, global research to understand experiences of and tackle mental health stigma and discrimination.

INTERNATIONAL ANTI-STIGMA RESEARCH COLLABORATION

An international collaborative research partnership has emerged as a result of the [Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study](#), bringing See Me and the Mental Health Foundation together with research partners from Glasgow Caledonian University, the Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences, Victoria University, the University of Ontario, and Opening Minds.

Building on the findings from respective global stigma research studies, this anti-stigma collaborative partnership aims to design and deliver impactful research activities that draw out common learning from across global studies and progress further work to help us understand what works to reduce stigma and discrimination in an international context. As the longest-running international anti-stigma programme, See Me is well-placed to coordinate and contribute to this.

Throughout 2023/24, we have facilitated regular online partnership meetings to discuss potential joint research opportunities, including comparative journal papers, international conference inputs and future potential stigma research.



COMPARATIVE STIGMA FINDINGS

The international partnership has highlighted consistencies between findings from the Scottish, Australian and Canadian stigma studies. Across all three surveys, participants with lived experience identified relationships with family and friends, healthcare services and employment as the top three areas in which they were most impacted by stigma and discrimination. This has provided a new spotlight on experiences of stigma and discrimination in an international context, with scope for further exploration.

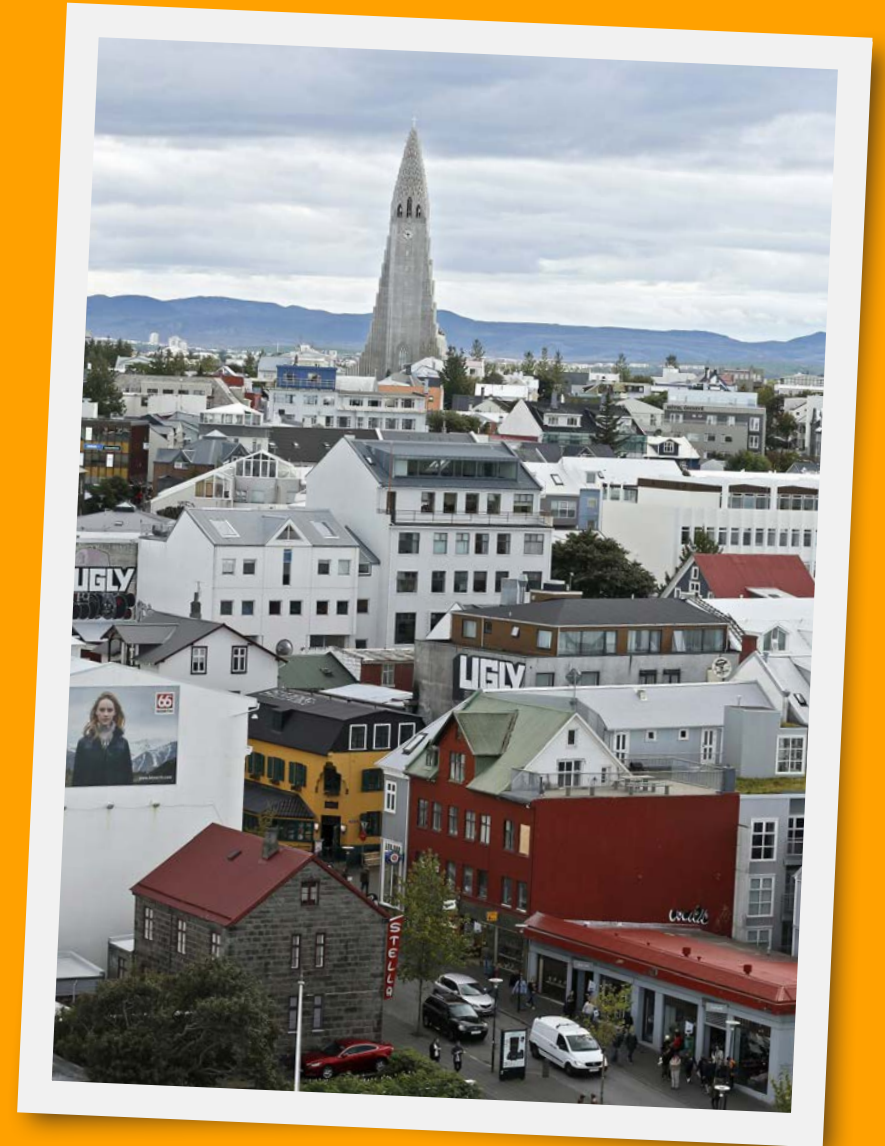
The three international stigma studies were implemented slightly differently which has led to challenges around comparing findings across this work. While the Scottish and Australian methodologies were deliberately similar, Canada's methodology was different meaning that producing a joint three-way paper has proved difficult. However, there is scope for the Scotland and Australian teams to jointly develop journal articles for peer review.

This has highlighted the importance of national and international collaboration, to coordinate studies and methodologies that give greater scope for international comparison.

IMPACT

The collaboration has for the first time provided a global lens by which to examine and understand lived experiences of stigma and discrimination around the world. It has resulted in regular discussions between partners about ongoing and new stigma research, and opened up opportunities for joint working. For example, there is potential for partners to support a new Australian study specifically looking at mental health stigma and discrimination experienced within relationships with family and friends.

Discussions about developing collaborative journal papers with international partners based on research findings continue. Partners from Scotland, Australia and Canada are attending the [Together Against Stigma conference](#) in Iceland in June 2024, with other global anti-stigma programmes, to take part in a panel discussion to talk about joint research findings, as well as to present the findings from their individual studies.



Together Against Stigma
Reykjavík 2024

Influencing national stigma data collection

OUTCOME
1

OUTCOME
6

This project has influenced the way that national future data on mental health stigma and discrimination will be collected by Public Health Scotland and other public bodies that carry out national surveys. Ensuring that mental health stigma data is captured in a consistent way at a national level will help facilitate our learning of how attitudes and experiences of mental health stigma and discrimination change over time and the factors impacting that change.

BACKGROUND

Public Health Scotland identified a gap in their Adult Mental Health Indicator Set relating to measurement of mental health stigma.

To address this gap, they approached See Me and the Mental Health Foundation in late 2022 for guidance on how to develop a mental health stigma indicator that:

- Is suitable for the whole population
- Covers aspect(s) of stigma most important to assess
- Is short enough to fit into national surveys
- Can influence national surveys

PROCESS

The research team organised a discussion co-facilitated by Public Health Scotland. The three-hour virtual session brought together people with lived and professional expertise in mental health stigma and provided a space to share and debate ideas for mental health stigma population indicators. Before the session, the team conducted desktop research and discussions with a range of national and international experts, to identify different approaches to measuring stigma at a national level.

The discussion group was invited to explore the merits and challenges relating to measuring different types of stigma and how these could be represented within national indicators.

The group then worked together to develop a set of indicators and identify survey questions. A wider network of experts who were unable to attend the session had the opportunity to feed into the process via email after the session notes were circulated.

IMPACT

The group concluded that due to the complex nature of mental health stigma, the indicator should include a scale measure of public stigma, using social distance questions. The Reported and Intended Behaviour Scale (RIBS) was identified as the best option, with an understanding that this may be too large, therefore single item questions that were noted by the expert group were also highlighted.

The expert information gathered by this project was **published** in August 2023. It provided Public Health Scotland with an informed way to measure stigma on a national, population level scale. Through facilitating this discussion and by providing invaluable national data on stigma through SMISS, See Me have influenced national data collection which will have a lasting impact on the population.

If It's Okay campaign

OUTCOME
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OUTCOME
3

Around two thirds of Scots think that there is shame and fear associated with mental illness. The 'If It's Okay' campaign has changed behaviour and understanding on how shame impacts on people with mental illness, making a difference for people with lived experience and those around them who may be causing shame.

People who experience more complex, long-term mental illness can find that when they want to tell someone what they are experiencing, they are judged, dismissed, isolated and discriminated against. Rather than feeling like "it's okay to not be okay", they are made to feel shame. Feelings of shame can cause people to hide their mental health problems, even from those closest to them. This can stop them from getting the help and support they need, make them feel alone and lead those living with a mental illness to withdraw from opportunities others may take for granted.

See Me aimed to tackle the continued sense of shame around mental illness through a UK-wide public campaign, run through the UK Anti-Stigma Alliance. By collaborating with our UK partners, we hoped to create conversations across the different populations of the UK, asking people to think about the impact that stigma and shame still have. If It's Okay took a well-used phrase in mental health campaigning "it's okay not to be okay" and asked people to go further when considering what that might mean for someone with a more complex, long-term mental illness.

PROCESS

Creating the campaign required regular meetings with the UK Anti-Stigma Alliance, which includes Mind, Time for Change Wales and Inspire Wellbeing. We also collaborated with VOX to run a series of lived experience focus groups and their volunteers provided feedback into the creative direction of the campaign. In total, 13 people with lived experience from Scotland helped to develop the campaign.

From these lived experience inputs, we created billboards and posters using real life examples of when people have felt like it hasn't been okay to not be okay. These were shared on posters on over 150 sites across the UK. On our banners, we featured See Me volunteer Bridget and VOX volunteer contributor Ruth. On our website we had tips on what people could do to tackle shame for themselves and others. Social media pages of all four charities were then populated with the messaging, call to action and the hashtag #ifitsokay.



◀▲ See Me volunteers at the launch of the If It's Okay campaign.

IMPACT

The campaign received substantial media coverage; volunteers spoke about their personal experiences associated with shame on BBC Radio Scotland and we appeared in regional papers across Scotland.

In a short online survey, we asked members of the public from across the UK to review campaign material. More than 200 people participated in the survey. The majority felt that they understood the message of the campaign, describing the purpose as:

“To challenge cliché, empathise with people who’ve ‘heard it all before’ but haven’t seen any real change. And hopefully it’ll cause other people to stop and think about their responses to friends, family, colleagues with mental illness”

Over 90% of respondents felt that the overall message of the campaign reflected their own experience at least ‘a little’ (68% felt that it reflected their own experience ‘quite a bit’ or ‘very much’). The majority agreed* that the campaign:

- Helped them think about the impact of shame on people living with mental illness (88%)
- Made them more confident to speak out about their own experiences of shame, and to ask for help for their mental health (60%)

- Helped them better understand how shame impacts people living with mental illness (77%)

See Me volunteers involved in developing the campaign reflected during a focus group that they had enjoyed being part of developing the campaign. Volunteers felt that the campaign message resonated with them and their experiences, *“for me, I think a big underlying part of mental health is shame and guilt”*.

They felt that the campaign successfully portrayed its key messages and was a useful tool to open up mental health-related conversations. For example, one volunteer said:

“I definitely found that once the campaign was launched and I shared [it] with friends and family, it definitely opened up a few conversations... my sister-in-law told me about some of the things that she was struggling with. It’s kind of a non-confrontational way to share something or just start a conversation saying, hey, look what I was involved in and then talk about the shame.”



KEY INSIGHTS

The campaign's success was in part being able to execute this across the four nations – thereby, maximising the reach of the anti-shame messaging.

While the feedback on the campaign was overwhelmingly positive, working with small budgets meant that the campaign could not reach as many people as we would like and therefore the impact was limited. Next time we would build more time in for creative development and we would also consider how to reach more groups during this creative development.

We hope to build on our learning from this campaign, to inform future communications. The messaging of the campaign means that it can continue to be shared on social media and referenced by See Me staff and volunteers when hosting stalls/events.

1,092
social media post
engagements

31,631
social media post
impressions from
organic posts

123,870
impressions from
advertising on Meta

99,765
from advertising
on Google, with
1,330 clicks through
to the our website

100
people scanned
the See Me posters
on the street, to
take them through
to the website

A strategic approach to tackling stigma

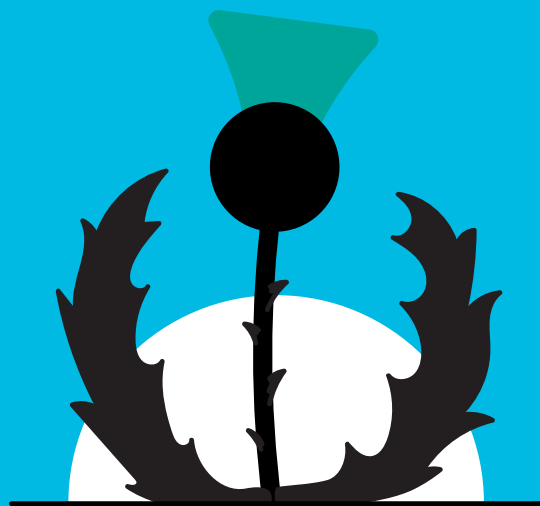
OUTCOME
4

OUTCOME
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OUTCOME
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The Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study highlighted the continued prevalence and impact of stigma and discrimination across every life area, for people living with mental illness. Research participants suggested an extensive range of changes needed to address stigma and discrimination.

Key themes included social values, understanding and inclusion, work and education settings and identity and representation. The results of the survey demonstrated the need for a broad strategic approach to tackling mental health stigma and discrimination, in order to explore and address the action needed to tackle stigma at multiple levels.



Additionally, people from racialised and other marginalised communities continue to call for transformation to tackle the structural stigma and discrimination they experience due to mental ill health but also in multiple areas of their lives. To make a difference for all people with mental health problems in Scotland, a cross-policy response to these issues is needed.

To do this, more people and partners need to be involved, working across different parts of the system to influence change in attitudes, behaviours, practice and cultures. We have also learned that embedding anti-stigma priorities and actions in legislation and across different policy areas can have a significant impact on driving change and improvement across the system.

In reaction to the Scottish Government strategies and policies related to mental health being developed this year, See Me needed to ensure that the impact of stigma and discrimination was understood in all policy areas. This understanding should then lead to actions being taken to address it. Therefore, we looked to take a more strategic national approach to addressing stigma. Our national strategic approach has three distinct parts to it.

This year we have completed the first two parts:

● **Part 1**

To influence the national policy, to ensure that stigma and its impact is rooted in policy and there would be a national remit for cross policy work to tackle stigma.

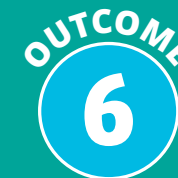
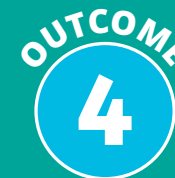
● **Part 2**

To create an Expert Group to offer advice and recommendations on specific action needed to create a step change in the reduction of mental health stigma through strategic, collaborative and accelerated action. We aimed to bring together a range of stakeholders with lived/living and/or professional expertise.

Our objective was to create an action plan with members, which would identify what they felt was needed to tackle stigma, over and above what was already happening.

We also wanted to inspire leadership in new areas to take forward work to tackle stigma.

An Expert Group



This project has influenced around 50 different partners to spend time thinking and planning how we change our ways of working around tackling stigma in Scotland. A report of the work of the Expert Group has been produced. The report gives a clear indication on what the majority of group members suggest needs to be done to create change in areas where stigma and discrimination still exist.

We began by holding meetings with the Scottish Government and our managing partners, to set out the strategic approach and discuss membership of the Expert Group. We also met with potential members of the group, to gather their views on what would work. We decided to have a mix of mental health experts and partners from other areas, including equalities, finance, housing, education, health care and local and national government. This meant we could ensure that key issues in mental health weren't missed, while new perspectives in areas which haven't been fully targeted before could be investigated, in line with findings from the SMISS.

We created a list of 59 experts and invited them to take part in three in-person meetings, and supplemented this with online meetings and engagement.

IMPACT

Of the 59 members invited, 49 contributed to the Expert Group. Representatives came from approximately 30 different organisations, helping us to influence and get investment in stigma work across a wide range of sectors and stakeholder groups. Through discussions and workshops, the Expert Group generated 297 different ideas on how to tackle stigma in 11 areas:

- Accessing support at the right time
- Relationships
- Community support
- Supporting young people
- Systemically marginalised
- Workplace
- Increasing capacity in healthcare
- Lived experience
- Justice
- Social services
- Media

The initial list of ideas was synthesised and refined to create a paper summarising the key points, including 39 insights that most group members felt if taken forward would help end stigma for people who are still experiencing inequity and discrimination. This draft insight paper was welcomed by most group members, who felt it reflected the conversations that took place. The paper will be shared and built on by anti-stigma collective due to meet later in 2024.

Partner organisations are already taking forward action based on the insights of the group include:

- Introduction of a campaign to tackle stigma in financial services (Money Advice Scotland)
- Work streams looking at intersectional stigma and stigma as a public health issue (Public Health Scotland)
- Identifying anti-stigma currently underway by members of the Rural Mental Health Forum (with Change Mental Health)
- Looking at how stigma is being addressed through Time Space and Compassion activity (With the TSC lead in Suicide Prevention Scotland)
- Increasing focus on addressing stigma as part of the trialling of the Adult Mental Health Standards (meetings arranged with HIS).
- Looking at how stigma and discrimination is reduced through peer support and peer workers (Moray Wellbeing Hub and SRN)

The process has also helped several members of the group to think about how they can provide leadership on mental health stigma and discrimination in their particular area of interest, to appreciate what they do already and to find ways of tracking their contribution and sharing learning from their approach.

KEY INSIGHTS

We succeeded in bringing together a range of people with diverse expertise in addressing stigma and discrimination and promoting inclusion. The success of the group was down to the group members' willingness to take time to consider how mental health stigma and discrimination impacts the areas in which they are active and to help develop ideas on how best to change this. See Me has a key role as an influencer and will drive forward work in specific actions via partnerships and the delivery collective (to be established in 2024/5).

The biggest challenge was timing. We originally aimed to get the Expert Group together to create an action list to feed into the Government's mental health and wellbeing delivery plan, but the first draft of this came out sooner than expected, before we had our first meeting. It was also not possible to get consensus from all group members around the actions identified. Instead, those listed were identified by the majority of group participants. If the process was repeated, more time would be given at the beginning to agree the scope and parameters of the project, ensuring all key stakeholders are on board and have agreed expectations of the work.



ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTED ON THE EXPERT GROUP

- Voices of Experience (VOX)
- Penumbra
- Change Mental Health
- Scottish Recovery Network (SRN)
- Moray Wellbeing Hub
- British Psychological Society
- Barnardo's
- Tiny Changes
- West of Scotland Regional Equality Council (WSREC)
- Intercultural Youth Scotland
- Interfaith Scotland
- CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development)
- Scottish Independent Alliance
- CAPS Advocacy
- Scottish Government
- The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
- Public Health Scotland
- Money Advice Scotland
- Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS)
- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Mental Welfare Commission
- Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights
- Northern Alliance
- Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
- Glasgow Caledonian University
- North Ayrshire Council
- NHS Borders

Embedding action on stigma and discrimination in national policies

OUTCOME
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OUTCOME
6

This year, the introduction of new mental health policies, delivery plans and supporting guidelines provided See Me with the ideal opportunity to influence greater commitment and action to address stigma and discrimination as an embedded cross-policy priority. Working with policy colleagues, we successfully embedded action on stigma across all of the policies we sought to influence, leading to long term commitment to act on stigma and discrimination.

Over the past year, several mental health-related strategies, policies and guidelines have been developed or reviewed by the Scottish Government, including mental health and wellbeing, suicide prevention and self harm. See Me sought to ensure that in the various policies under development, the impact of stigma and discrimination was understood and that there would be action taken to address it.

PROCESS

We identified key policy developments happening in a year where an increased focus on stigma and discrimination should be considered. Our responses to the various Government consultations were developed from:

- Lived experience testimony
- Data from existing research and publications
- Evidence from our own learning on what works to tackle stigma and discrimination

We ensured that people with lived experience and their voices were heard through:

- Engagement sessions
- Involving them in the planning process
- Co-facilitating engagement events
- Co-producing our responses (with credit)

This ensured that our responses were strengthened and that our asks were aligned with the views of those who would see the impact of these changes in policy. This year we responded to the following consultations:

- Mental health and wellbeing delivery plan
- Suicide prevention: call for evidence
- Mental health and wellbeing plan and delivery plan

- Self Harm Strategy (our work here has mainly been done through the working group)
- Independent Review of Community Learning and Development: Call for evidence
- National Care Service
- Perinatal Mental Health
- Policing mental health in Scotland
- SPS In full strategy
- Human Rights Bill
- Work capability assessment – co produced with SAMH
- Education Reform: A consultation on the provisions of the education bill
- Eating disorder care and treatment
- Mental health moratorium – co-produced with SAMH

We continued our influencing work by engaging with the policy leads responsible for the strategies and proactively keeping up to date with any developments. We continuously responded to amended versions of the consultations to ensure that action on stigma and discrimination were embedded within the strategies. We also kept up to date with new developments and publications of strategies that we have responded to in the previous year to determine where we have successfully influenced strategic developments.

IMPACT

See Me and our lived experience voices have made a clear impact on the development of these strategies. The most notable impacts published this year were:

- The **Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy** featuring stigma within the vision, outcomes and priorities. Stigma is highlighted in the strategy as something that needs to be addressed to achieve eight out of ten priorities.
- The **Mental Health and Wellbeing delivery plan** features stigma. We co-ordinated with the Scottish Government to ensure that tackling stigma was at the forefront of the plan. As a result of this, See Me's Expert Group is featured as the first action in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan.
- As part of the **Self Harm strategy development group**, we have ensured that tackling stigma is central, featuring in the vision and priorities. Our input has meant that tackling stigma is considered as something that runs through all work to support those experiencing self-harm. We have also been invited back to be part of the implementation group.
- The **Core Mental Health standards** now features explicit mentions of stigma within their guidelines that were not present before. Using SMISS data, our response suggested that mental health services must embed a stigma and discrimination free ethos. The standards have now embedded an explicit commitment to provide a compassionate and stigma free NHS, whilst also committing to reducing stigma and barriers to access for minority and protected groups.

These developments demonstrate an explicit commitment from Government to prioritise and take action to reduce mental health stigma and discrimination. The strategies are so widespread that there now means that there will be an active national effort to tackle stigma across many life areas – supported by the SMISS evidence.

KEY INSIGHTS

We have been able to influence a clear commitment to tackling mental health stigma at a national level. This has embedded our lived experience voices and our anti stigma agenda to influence change at a wider scale.

Our work has led to strategies that have placed stigma at the centre, which emphasises that the anti-stigma agenda is pushing forward and accelerates us towards a wider social movement.

The key challenges within this is volunteer engagement and embedding diverse lived experience voices. Our volunteer engagement is affected by a lot of factors e.g. timing and interest. As engagement increases and our influencing work continues, it is important to work alongside our lived experience participation officer to determine the best way to boost engagement numbers and ensure that our responses are creating positive impacts for those from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences.

MENTAL HEALTH POLICY INFLUENCE

- **Self harm strategy and action plan 2023 to 2027**
27 mentions of stigma
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy**
1 mention of stigma in initial draft to 37 mentions in official publication
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy Delivery Plan**
22 mentions of stigma in initial draft to 55 mentions in official publication
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Plan**
10 mentions of stigma in initial draft to 17 mentions of stigma in official publication
- **Adult Secondary Mental Health Services – quality standards**
0 mention of stigma in initial draft to 4 mentions in official publication

Tackling mental health stigma in 2024

Tackling mental health stigma and discrimination is a multifaceted challenge that demands a comprehensive approach, blending diverse strategies that address the issue from multiple perspectives. Detailed here are key themes and methodologies that have proven effective in See Me's delivery of anti-stigma work throughout the 2023–2024 programme.

1

INTERSECTIONALITY

This year, it has become increasingly apparent that understanding intersectionality is crucial in addressing mental health stigma.

This approach recognises that people may face multiple, overlapping forms of discrimination and stigma based on their race, gender, sexual orientation and other identities.

By acknowledging and addressing these complexities, interventions can be more effectively tailored to meet the unique needs of diverse communities ensuring no one is left behind due to systemic inequalities.

Embedding an intersectional approach to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) across See Me's work requires concerted activity at all levels to address our role as an employer and as a provider of a publicly funded programme. To enable this shift in approach, this year we:

1. Produced a high-quality knowledge base and intersectional stigma framework for the See Me team to develop their future work on. This framework takes account of social, political and economic factors, which shape the distinct nature of mental health stigma experienced in combination with other types of discrimination.
2. Built and strengthened relationships and community partnerships to deepen this knowledge base and expand the relevance and reach of this work across communities in Scotland.

This has helped us to move beyond thinking of mental health stigma in a silo, which will enable us to challenge intersectional stigma alongside diverse communities of place, interest and identity. This will equip us to better address and go beyond legal requirements under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. This is important because in order to embed an intersectional approach to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), across See Me's work there needs to be concerted activity at all levels to address our role as an employer and as a provider of a publicly funded programme.



▲ Celebrating lived experience at the Volunteer Gathering.

2

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

Engaging with communities and forming strong partnerships is essential for the effective delivery of anti-stigma initiatives.

Community engagement, along with an intersectional approach, allows for a deeper understanding of the specific stigma dynamics at play within different groups and settings.

By collaborating with community leaders and groups such as WSREC, LGBT Health & Wellbeing and ILFA, we have been able to leverage local knowledge and cultural insights, creating interventions that are relevant and resonant with the target populations. This approach enhances the sustainability and impact of anti-stigma interventions.

3

INVOLVEMENT OF PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

Incorporating the voices and insights of people who have experienced mental health issues firsthand is fundamental.

People with lived experience bring authenticity and credibility to our stigma reduction efforts, helping to design and implement projects that accurately reflect the needs and realities of those directly affected.

This year we have invested time and resources in understanding and growing the role of lived experience across the See Me programme. This ensures that our work is empathetic but also practical, driving changes that genuinely improve lives.

4

CREATIVE AND ARTS-BASED METHODS

Utilising creative and arts-based methods offers a unique and effective avenue for addressing mental health stigma.

As demonstrated by the Voices Through the Lens project, artistic expressions provide a powerful medium to convey personal stories and to challenge prejudicial attitudes. These methods can humanise the issue, making the abstract personal and fostering empathy among broader audiences.

Moreover, arts-based initiatives such as those fostered by the Anti-Stigma Arts Fund, can create safe spaces for discussion, reflection and understanding, reaching people in ways that traditional educational methods may not.



Youth Consultants and Volunteers
filming for the Media Coop

5

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Education and training are pillars of effective stigma reduction, particularly when coupled with a chance to hear directly from people with lived experience. Our Youth Consultants and Volunteers continue

to play a key role in designing and delivering mental health education across a range of settings, including schools, workplaces and universities. This approach not only equips people with the knowledge to challenge stigma but also promotes mental health literacy, reducing the fear and misunderstanding that often surrounds mental health issues.

6

POLICY INTEGRATION AND ADVOCACY

To achieve lasting change, anti-stigma efforts must be embedded within broader policy frameworks. Advocacy plays a critical role in ensuring that mental health and the associated stigma are recognised in national health strategies, workplace regulations and educational policies.

By influencing policymakers and integrating stigma reduction into legislative and policy agendas, a supportive environment can be cultivated where initiatives are not only launched but are sustained and scaled. This year, we have taken a big step towards this, through our policy influencing work with Scottish Government and through the work of the Expert Group.

7

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND CAMPAIGNS

Effective communication strategies are key to altering public perceptions and reducing stigma. Campaigns that use clear, respectful and relatable messaging can significantly influence societal attitudes toward mental health. These campaigns should aim to normalise mental health discussions, highlight the prevalence and normalcy of mental health issues and encourage supportive behaviours. Utilising various media platforms to disseminate these messages ensures a broad reach and impact.

This year's **If It's Okay campaign** is an example of the power of an effective campaign, bringing together partners from across the UK to look at the issue of shame. We worked alongside See Me Volunteers and others with lived experience to develop a campaign built around people's genuine experiences of shame. As a result, people found the campaign relatable and for many, it had an impact on their understanding of mental health stigma and shame.

8

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES AND RESEARCH

Grounding anti-stigma efforts in solid research and evidence-based practices is essential for their success. Continuous evaluation and research enable organisations to understand what works and what doesn't, allowing for the refinement of strategies over time.

This year, we have continued to develop our approach to evaluation, aiming to increase capacity for evaluation across the See Me programme by embedding self-evaluation processes within See Me and project partner organisations. Confidence is growing amongst the See Me team to design and lead self-evaluations as evidenced by the increasing number of projects that have been self-evaluated this year. We hope that this approach will help us to plan our projects with outcomes and impact in mind, and to more learn more from each one.

Each of these themes contributes to a holistic approach to tackling mental health stigma and discrimination. By combining these diverse strategies, our projects can address the root causes of stigma, alter prejudicial behaviours and ultimately foster a more inclusive and supportive society for individuals with mental health issues.

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See Me

End mental health
discrimination

www.seemescotland.org



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Scottish Action for Mental Health

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HEALTH
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