



Briefing Paper

See Me Scotland: building on what works to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination





This summary briefing paper provides insights from the See Me Phase 2 evaluation (2016-2019) into a fresh perspective on what we know works to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination.

It builds on existing evidence in the form of the mechanisms for change that work to support successful anti stigma and discrimination initiatives and that contribute to the efforts to challenge stigma and discrimination when and where it is identified.

The evaluation was carried out by the Mental Health Foundation in Scotland, in the form of a suite of six aligned programmatic and cross programme reports, that demonstrate the impact of See Me over a three year period.



The individual evaluation reports for each of the programme areas and the Cross Cutting Themes report can be found at <https://www.seemescotland.org/about-see-me/how-we-are-making-a-difference/three-year-evaluation-reports-2016-2019/>



Experiences of mental health stigma and discrimination in society

Around one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year¹. In Scotland this rises to more than one in three people². At any one time, approximately one in six people in the UK will have a mental health problem³. There was a UK-wide increase in the suicide rate for both men and women between 2017 and 2018⁴ with a similar trend in Scotland where a greater increase was recorded among females⁵. The impact of this public mental health crisis is unevenly distributed, with people living in the most deprived areas twice as likely to have a common mental health problem compared to those who live in less deprived areas⁶.

Other groups more likely to experience mental health problems or access support at the point of crisis include people who identify as LGBTQ+, people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, and other vulnerable groups such as people who are care experienced and young carers⁷. Mental health stigma and discrimination is heightened significantly when a mental health problem is combined with one or more protected characteristic.

The above issues are compounded by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on population groups across the country. Work is ongoing to understand the impact of the pandemic on mental health stigma and discrimination, particularly in relation to high risk groups. Initial research suggests that people may feel less comfortable talking

about their mental health during this time, despite the fact that more people than ever may be struggling with their mental health⁸. One recent report⁹ based on a survey of 2,111 young people living in the UK with a history of mental health needs during March 2020, reveals that some young people felt more isolated and less connected to others as a result of the virus, and this is linked to concerns about not being able to talk about their mental health comfortably, reduced social networks, and a loss of healthy coping skills.

What works to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination

The See Me Phase 2 evaluation tells us about more about what works to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination in different settings. It reinforces that social contact facilitated by lived experience remains at the heart of the programme, and that education and training, and protest in the form of influencing and activism, play key parts in the fight to eliminate stigmatising attitudes and behaviours towards people with mental health problems.

The following diagram is an illustration of how these established and well evidenced approaches work together within the programme, alongside new and emerging mechanisms for change that are found to be effective in tackling stigma and discrimination. The emerging mechanisms for change surfaced by the Phase 2 evaluation are leadership, strategic partnership working and programme brand. The remainder of

Diagram 1: Mechanisms for Change



this summary paper explores how these approaches are used successfully by See Me across the programme.

Social contact

Social contact is defined as 'conversations that take place between people who have lived experience of mental health problems and those who may not¹⁰'. Evidence consistently demonstrates that social contact-based theory underpins successful approaches to tackling mental health stigma and discrimination. The presence of social contact as a mechanism for change runs

throughout the See Me programme. Drawing on the evidence that social contact is particularly impactful when used with targeted groups such as employers, education professionals and healthcare workers, See Me continues to learn from and strengthen social contact in the workplace, schools, communities and the healthcare sector. Features of effective social contact are where it is frequent and sustained and combined with a peer-to-peer approach.

For example, Youth Champions with lived experience of mental health problems working with school pupils, Workplace Champions working



with employers and employees, and Community Champions delivering anti stigma and discrimination activities within their communities.

Social contact is evident within the Health and Social Care programme through the involvement of volunteers with lived experience of mental health problems in the redesign of NHS Inform CBT resources. Social contact has been used successfully in See Me's Communications programme, as the foundation for campaigns such as #passthebadge and FeelsFM that encourage people to start conversations about mental health using a range of media channels.

Education and training

The See Me evaluation highlights that education and training in its different forms across settings is still a core success of the programme. Across all programme areas it is clear that education and training are highly valued and effective. For example, in the Workplace programme, the e-Learning resource is an education-based programme designed to promote mental health and reduce the stigma of mental illness in a workplace setting.

The training includes videos of scenarios in which stigma may occur and stories of people who have experienced mental health problems in the workplace, to communicate key messages.

Between November 2016 and September 2019, 67 employers signed up to the programme, engaging 1,834

participants. Feedback from users demonstrates that the programme content is informative and effective and inspires employees to change their behaviour in the workplace.

The Social Movement programme adopts an education based approach to tackling stigma and discrimination, with lived experience at the core. Between November 2016 and October 2019, 57 Community Champions were trained. This has achieved positive outcomes for participants, including improved confidence, self-esteem, skills, knowledge and builds the capacity of people and groups to tackle stigma and discrimination in communities.

Participants said that they felt valued, listened to and empowered through training. Training also opens up opportunities for participants to meet new people and build relationships. The development of peer support networks was directly linked to training and volunteers highlighted this as an important impact of the programme.

Education and training delivered in the Health and Social Care programme was also reported as favourable through the evaluation. For example, See Me's contribution to the DBI programme in terms of embedding stigma and discrimination into training is recognised as vital. See Me's role in supporting health and social care partners to review training materials was welcomed and See Me has acted as a critical friend to some programmes, reviewing training documents and providing advice on language and presentation.



Protest and influencing

Protest is perhaps most evident in its traditional form within See Me's social movement; driven by youth and adult volunteers with lived experience of mental health problems. Volunteers talked about the importance of See Me as a platform to have their voices heard. It provides people with opportunities to challenge negative attitudes and behaviours toward those with mental health problems.

Some volunteers come to the programme with experience of activism, while others told us they discovered activism through See Me. Some reported that See Me helps to demystify activism and supports people to understand it in its different forms. For some, this means campaigning and taking part in local and national events to share information and experiences of mental health. For others it means

fulfilling supporting roles such as working with See Me to help develop and test tools and resources to continue to improve the programme.

In terms of protest in the form of influencing policy and practice, this is clearly evident in the Health and Social Care programme. The programme aims to change minds, policy and practice to achieve mental health inclusion within healthcare services. See Me works to influence health and social care leaders and practitioners to engage in this agenda and to work practically with them to address stigma and discrimination, to build a mentally healthy culture within their practice.

An example of this includes ongoing work with Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland to raise awareness of stigma and discrimination among practitioners and improve outcomes for its service users. The Health and Social Care





programme also carries out influencing and consultation work around the inclusion of stigma and discrimination in policy development, for example embedding stigma and discrimination messages into the Scottish Government's Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027.

Strategic partnership working

Over the past three years, See Me has increasingly moved towards a strategic partnership working approach to reach more people through partners, build capacity, improve and increase delivery and advance outcomes across programme areas. See Me identifies organisations with shared goals that will help achieve its own, and partner objectives, through mutually beneficial working relationships.

For example, in the Health and Social Care programme, See Me has developed a strategic partnership with Stigma Free Lanarkshire (SFL). See Me contributes financially to the work of SFL and has a place on its Strategic Board. Alongside its membership of the regional Lanarkshire Mental Health Strategy Group, these partnerships enable See Me to achieve positive outputs such as coordinated anti stigma and discrimination training delivery within schools and the facilitation of a series of awareness raising events targeted at senior health and social care leaders.

These are designed to provide opportunities to share experiences of, and solutions to, tackling mental health stigma and discrimination. In partnership with SFL, See Me has also been

instrumental in embedding anti stigma and discrimination messages into North and South Lanarkshire's cross-sectional Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2024 (Getting it Right for Every Person).

Within the Education and Young People programme See Me works strategically with relevant education partners and boards to ensure the consistent delivery of anti-stigma and discrimination training to senior pupils and teachers in a significant number of schools. See Me training has been mandatory for every school in one Scottish local authority over the last two years. See Me works as part of an interdisciplinary team of professionals to achieve key mental health deliverables and a sustainable approach to mental health interventions in schools. This is a longer term strategy to embed stigma and discrimination into the school system in a coordinated and sustainable way¹¹.

See Me has also developed a range of strategic partnerships with intersectional organisations working with people who face multiple stigmas often related to protected characteristics, to support them to embed stigma and discrimination into their work including Community Champion training. This enables See Me to continue its efforts to address these complex issues by extending the reach, scope, diversity and credibility of the Social Movement programme through a partnership-based approach. It promotes community-led anti stigma and discrimination work at local level, facilitated by local partners supported by See Me, who are best placed to understand the needs of their areas.



Leadership

Senior leadership has been identified across all See Me programme areas as being key to the sustainability of the programme. Senior leaders can play a significant role in creating the conditions for strategic, cultural and system-wide change. What is crucial about senior leadership buy-in is a commitment to the resources required to act; sustained engagement with the programme requires a commitment of resources from partners who engage. After initial stages of engagement with the See Me in Work programme, the cost for the organisation begins to increase insofar as any recommended actions come with an associated cost or resource for the organisation¹². Maintaining engagement with employers through this stage is where it is most crucial to gain senior leadership buy-in.

Examples of using leadership to achieve programme outcomes can also be found within the Education and Young People programme, where See Me works with senior leaders in two different ways: senior leaders within schools; and

senior leaders within local authorities. In local authorities where schools opt into the programme individually, buy-in from senior leadership at school-level is essential, as is maintaining a close relationship with the local authority lead to maintain momentum.

Peer leadership is a significant driver for challenging mental health stigma and discrimination across settings. For example, within the Social Movement programme, there has been a focus on supporting and promoting grassroots leadership through inspirational leaders within communities. This has been particularly true in relation to See Me's support for Moray Wellbeing Hub (MWH)¹³ and Fife Voluntary Action's Delivering Differently project¹⁴. Strong leadership is critical to the success of a social movement: while Champions with lived experience, skills and knowledge drive forward work on the ground, strong and clear leadership facilitates this. It is also recognised that a lot of knowledge lies in leadership and this must be effectively cascaded to ensure sustainability in the future.



The See Me brand

See Me's Communications programme drives its brand through publications, presentations, online and multimedia campaigns. Campaigns such as #passthebadge, FeelsFM and Time to Talk Day connect with a range of audiences across Scotland, increasing engagement with the wider programme. See Me's social media followers have grown steadily year-on-year, which can be attributed to the power of the See Me brand. This has implications for the potential to use social media to connect with people on a large scale and result in wider societal impact.

The evaluation shows that individuals and organisations highly value the See Me brand and their association with a well-known and trusted national anti-stigma and discrimination programme. A significant number of participants involved in the evaluation recognised the expertise that See Me brings to their work.

The See Me brand appears to be most widely recognised in the Social Movement programme. Volunteers and partners reported that their association with See Me enhances their anti-stigma and discrimination projects and activities, adding expertise and credibility. Most volunteers felt that their work towards tackling mental health stigma and discrimination is taken more seriously because of their connection with See Me.

Evaluation of the Workplace programme shows that organisations highly value their association with the See Me brand. It increases the engagement of employers and employees with anti-stigma and discrimination activities within workplaces. It was reported that See Me's brand is trusted among workplace partners.

The Mental Health Check adopted by employers tends to be well received within workplaces because of See Me's reputation as an independent expert.



Conclusion



Evidence consistently demonstrates that social contact-based theory underpins successful approaches to tackling mental health stigma and discrimination. Social contact is most effective when people with lived experience of mental health problems are supported by See Me to share their stories. This has helped to normalise conversations about mental health. Protest is most evident within the Social Movement programme in a traditional sense but more widely embedded across the programme in the form of working at both grassroots and policy levels. This involves a combination of peer led and policy influencing approaches, at national and local level.

Across programme areas education and training are core to tackling stigma and discrimination. This is achieved through volunteer training in communities, e-Learning in workplaces, training delivery in schools, at residential and in health and social care settings. Embedding the voice of lived experience in education and training is important to participants and a powerful way to communicate key messages.

Evaluation data has shown that the development of strategic partnership working has been integral to the achievements of See Me over the last three years. This allows for greater reach, diversity and access to people who experience multiple levels of stigma and who are historically harder to engage. And leveraging the power of

senior and peer leadership approaches to the development and delivery of anti stigma and discrimination interventions has proved successful across programme areas.

Finally, the reputation of See Me is trusted and valued by those who work with the programme, by individuals and organisations alike. It has a multitude of benefits including increased buy-in to and engagement with anti-stigma and discrimination activities because of the trust that people place in the expertise of See Me. The evaluation indicates that work to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination across programmes would not be as effective without an association with See Me.

While social contact, protest, and education and training are well evidenced approaches widely used to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination, there is more work to be done to understand how strategic partnerships, leadership and brand contribute to this agenda. The Phase 2 evaluation goes some way to exploring what makes these approaches successful in specific settings.

The Mental Health Foundation in Scotland will work with See Me to continue to build the evidence base around these concepts and the role they play in progressing the reduction of stigma and discrimination in our society, and particularly in relation to increasingly marginalised and vulnerable groups.

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11. This work is overseen by the Education and Young People Strategic Steering Group that encourages partnership working in all aspects of programme development and delivery. The group supports the wider influencing work of the Education and Young People programme, provides support and identifies opportunities.
12. Associated costs may be in the form of staff time, training, additional capacity or a change in policy.
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