See Me in Work Peer Learning Network Celebration Event Report

Our See Me in Work Peer Learning Network ('the Network') celebration event held in Glasgow on 28th January was our biggest Network event to date, with 25 attendees from 16 organisations. The event was chaired by Mairead Rowan (Workplace Officer) and supported by Dr Patty Lozano-Casal (Health, Social Care and Workplace Manager), and Graeme Young (Assistant Director – Delivery). There was representation from a range of employers and some See Me volunteers (see Annex 1 for full list). The session was focused on sharing learning between employers engaged in See Me in Work and celebrating their successes of their work to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination.

This report summarises key highlights and learning from the day.

About the Network

The Network offers safe facilitated space for employers engaged in the See Me in Work programme to share with peers their challenges and good practice around what works in tackling mental health stigma and discrimination and promoting mental health inclusion in the workplace. The aim of the Network is to create opportunities for attendees to:

- Develop and improve practice to create workplaces free of stigma and discrimination.
- Share good practice and encourage learning around creating mentally healthy workplaces.
- Strengthen social movement within organisations, through use of social contact as a key component to tackle stigma and discrimination within and across organisations.
- Strengthen relationships and to share practice between organisations engaged with See Me in Work.
- Strengthen relationships between the See Me Workplace programme and employers engaged with the programme.

The format of the event

The event was focused on peer interaction and included an introduction from the See Me Workplace team, a presentation from an organisation engaged in See Me in Work, a volunteer with lived experience of mental health stigma and discrimination; followed by group discussion. The session was filmed by Media co-op to gather learning on the Network.

The importance of Peer Networks

Dr Patty Lozano Casal (Health, Social Care and Workplace Manager) opened the event by sharing her thoughts on why the Network is a key aspect of the See Me in Work programme. Sharing her journey through her career, Patty spoke about how when starting her career as a Research Fellow– in Academia, she felt that there was little support from peers, a lack of peer learning opportunities and where these were offered they were a series of presentations without discussion time. When she moved on to the third sector organisation, Evaluation Support Scotland, she had responsibility for managing the Evidence into Action programme of work. Using her learning from previous roles, she took the step to embed peer networks into the programme. Patty reflected that she could see the value and benefits for employers to be able to exchange ideas and learn from others. In particular, she highlighted that it was useful for third sector and public sector organisations, and independent funders to be able support each other and evidence the impact of their work through (self-)evaluation and evidence use. Patty shared that the benefits included sharing challenges and experiences; safe and open conditions for peer support, and employers feeling valued by being able to be part of a group.

When Patty moved to See Me, as the Manager for two of our programmatic areas of work: 'Health and Social Care' and 'Workplace', her initial reflections were that there were similarities between the See Me in Work programme and some of the strands of work in Evaluation Support Scotland. However, a key

difference was that the See Me in Work programme was lacking peer support approaches. As such, Patty wanted to ensure that a strong element of peer support was embedded as a key aspect of the programme. The aim of this was to encourage a solution-focused approach, whereby the barriers that employers face in regard to implementing the programme could be discussed and solutions identified. By meeting others in similar situations, employers could be inspired to try new approaches, building on the knowledge of where to start, and practical steps for implementation.

Patty ended her input by extending her thanks to attendees for their ongoing commitment to the Network, the support to develop workplace resources, and engaging widely with the See Me Team.

Celebrating successes

In groups, attendees were asked to create a 'boaster poster' highlighting their key successes through engaging in See Me in Work to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination in their workplaces. The key successes highlighted by employers were:

- Increased confidence of employees to speak about mental health and dialogue opened up more widely about wellbeing that had not previously been discussed.

- Work to support managers, in particular increasing the number of managers trained in Healthy Working Lives's Mentally Healthy Workplace Training.

- Partnership work with other employers, to ensure they aren't working alone, recognising the importance of sharing good practice.

- Steps taken to create culture change – not focusing solely on training. It was recognised that stigma needs to be reduced before the work can make an impact.

- Increased lived experience in approaches as it was felt that it's the most powerful way influence change.

- Increased understanding of mental health stigma and discrimination through use of See Me Power of Okay videos, increasing mental health awareness and ensuring appropriate responses to distress through: Wellbeing Walls, Mental Health First Aiders and Mental Health Buddies.

- Engagement in a pilot programme in Lanarkshire schools to work with pupils and employees concurrently and signing off their See Me in Work action plan.

- Influenced the re-development of HR policies to ensure that employees can be appropriately supported to stay in work.

The Workplace Team has been delighted to see the commitment from employers to creating the conditions for open and honest conversations in workplaces, free of stigma and discrimination. We would like to extend our thanks to all employers who have engaged in the programme and joined our movement to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination in their workplaces. Every action that you take as an employer helps to ensure that employees are valued and feel that they can bring their full selves to work!

Learning from Peers

Stephanie Kinnear (Senior Human Resources Assistant, Perth and Kinross Council) shared her journey through the See Me in Work programme. The Council are the programme's most recent See Me in Work Partner, and we are pleased to have been able to recognise their commitment to creating stigma and discrimination free working environments.

Stephanie shared that the Council has been involved with See Me since 2010; engaged in the See Me in Work programme in 2017, undertaking the baseline survey the same year and the follow-up in 2018. As detailed above, they became a See Me in Work partner in 2019. They have strong ongoing support from their new Chief Executive Officer, who previously worked in the Care Commission. Their improvement plan continues to be a working document, with key actions that have been implemented as part of the plan including:

- Five employees shared their stories (anonymously) as part of case studies focused on a variety of topics, including recruitment, returning to work and staying in work while managing a mental health problem. These have been shared internally on their intranet and extranet to highlight the support available to current and prospective employees and their engagement in See Me in Work.

- See Me in Work e-learning has been embedded as part of induction training and there is a pin alert when line managers complete the training as a method to remind others.

- A Health and Wellbeing Framework has been developed in place of the sickness absence policy – taking in to account mental, physical and financial wellbeing.

- Ten 'Train the Trainer' Mental Health First Aiders was been embedded within the Council, which has allowed them to train 139 Mental Health 'Champions'.

- Written guidance for managers to highlight the importance of conversations between managers about mental health. Stephanie shared that this has empowered some managers that didn't have the confidence before.

Stephanie highlighted that the aim of their work with managers is to ensure managers take the following approach in the relation to supporting employees experiencing mental health problems:

"Ask them what they need; don't tell them what they need."

Stephanie also shared some of the challenges they have encountered while working through the programme:

- Despite using various approaches (including newsletters and the intranet) to communicate key messages around mental health stigma and discrimination and the support available to employees, there continues to be employees who are unware of the support on offer to them. As such, they are continually reviewing how they can effectively reach all employees.

- They only have a small working group to support the implementation of their improvement plan.

- They wanted to embed the Power of Okay video in the induction programme, but they did not get permission to do so. As such, they share the video by e-mail following induction to employees.

We very much appreciated hearing from Stephanie regarding her learning from engaging in the programme. Perth and Kinross Council have highlighted practical steps employers can take forward to ensure they create the conditions for workplaces free of stigma and discrimination.

Championing Mental Health in the Workplace

According to the evidence base and learning from the See Me programme, social contact is key to tackling mental health stigma and discrimination. We have taken steps to ensure the lived experience is embedded as a key aspect of the Peer Learning Network.

Sharon Edwards (See Me volunteer and See Me in Work lead for Her Majesty's Passport Office) shared her experiences of mental health stigma and discrimination in the workplace and the work she has undertaken to increase mental health awareness and support within her workplace.

Sharon's experience of mental health stigma and discrimination in the workplace began when she experienced bullying by a manager in the workplace. The impact of this resulted in her considering suicide, taking time off from work and taking medication to support her recovery. However, her manager's behaviour was not challenged by the organisation. Tragically, the death of her son resulted in her experiencing PTSD and the effects of memory loss as a result. Sharon took some time off from work and received counselling through her organisation and adjustments were made to help her when she returned. However, it was clear to Sharon that there was a lack of understanding from managers regarding the impact of bereavement on employees' mental health and wellbeing, and experienced a lack of support.

Following the death of her son, in 2015, her husband attempted suicide. Despite such challenging circumstances, Sharon returned to work and received counselling for herself and her daughter and further adjustments were put in place for her, to help her back in to and to remain in work. Sharon reflected that her most recent period of absence and support on her return to work was much more positive and she was aware of the improvements in the support provided by her workplace from her first period of absence.

Through her experiences of mental health problems and her facilitation skills, Sharon decided to take action to champion tackling mental health stigma and discrimination in her workplace. Sharon feels that through her own lived experience, that it is important to ensure that workplaces more inclusive. She advocates that lived experience should be a baseline for taking action in workplaces, as it reflects genuine interest in supporting employees and by sharing experiences is creates trust.

To raise awareness of mental health in her workplace, Sharon has devised workshops for employees aimed at increasing mental health awareness. She shares her experience of mental health problems while in employment, reflecting both how times have changed in relation to support for employees and insight on how workplaces can help people experiencing mental health problems. Challenging attitudes is a key aspect of the work and by sharing her experiences and using the See Me in Work e-learning dramatisations she feels that it creates the conditions for others to feel safe to open up.

"It's vital to open up honest conversations about mental health. It allows others to feel safe to open up."

Her organisation has taken further steps to ensure that employees are appropriately supported and hold sessions specifically designed for managers to learn from and challenge each other. Sharon has also been instrumental in setting up twelve Mental Health 'Buddies' for her office. Their roles sit separately from Mental Health First Aiders, and are in place to be a listening ear for employees and signpost to appropriate support.

Sharon's fantastic work has been recognised within her organisation through receiving a Passport Office Civil Service Award and being appointed the Chair of the Home Office Disability Network.

Sharon has been a great supporter of See Me, and the Workplace programme. We are grateful that she spoke so openly about her experiences of mental health problems at the Network meeting. She also provided practical steps for employers to take action within their workplaces, while highlighting why lived experience is key to tackling mental health stigma and discrimination.

Group discussions

Each of the Network sessions involves the opportunity for employers to share practice on specific topics related to creating stigma and discrimination free working environments. At this session, case studies were used to focus on three key levers of change identified by the evidence base and reinforced through learning from the See Me programme for creating a workplace environment inclusive of mental health, free from stigma and discrimination:

- Creating a stigma free culture and ethos

- Confident and informed line managers

- Internal communication.

The case studies and key discussion points can be found in **Annex 2**

Feedback

We were encouraged by the enthusiasm and interesting conversations throughout the day. Feedback from participants' highlighted a greater understanding of how to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination in their workplace and the importance of social contact in tackling mental health stigma and discrimination in my workplace.

"Lived in experience has been most valuable. There is always something new we learn to take to the organisation to consider."

The session was also viewed as providing opportunities to share good practice with / learn from peers around what works in tackling mental health stigma and discrimination in the workplace and opportunities to network with peers.

"Very open and honest discussion from everyone about their organisations. Great venue/forum to link up and share experiences."

"I particularly like the range of organisations involved and therefore the opportunity to share best practice with different organisations. (…) I have made contacts that I will be using to follow up and find out more about approaches to mental health."

Following the event participants were inspired to…

"Think more about supporting and empowering line managers to have conversations about mental health with their teams."

"Drive See Me in the workplace / MH initiative forward more confidently in my role."

The Workplace and wider See Me Team thoroughly enjoyed the event and were encouraged by the buzz in the room throughout the morning. We are delighted that the sessions are valued by employers and as a Team are grateful for the willingness of employers to be open about the steps they have taken and the challenges associated with engaging in See Me in Work. See Me have created the opportunity for employers to come together, but employers have really made the Network a success by investing their time in the sessions and sharing their experiences.

Annex 1: List of participating employers and See Me volunteers

Perth and Kinross Council
Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
South Lanarkshire Council
Her Majestey's Passport Office
Scottish Courts andTribunal Service
Cardinal Newman High School, North Lanarkshire Council
QTS Group
Scottish Government
North Ayrshire Council
Ceartas
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS)
British Airways
EnerMech Ltd
Department of Work and Pensions
Police Scotland-Highland & Islands Division
Trust Housing Association
Chik Duncan, See Me Volunteer

Annex 2: Group discussion case studies and key discussion topics

Creating a stigma free culture and ethos
Social contact is a powerful and effective approach to reducing stigma; its role can be maximised by creating opportunities and to build skills, capacity and opportunity for people with lived experience to be influencers of change. Targeted activity and interactions that embeds genuine social contact/ lived experience not only highlight the reality of mental health stigma and discrimination experienced, but also reinforces recovery and proposes steps and improvement that would make the experience much more inclusive and positive for those experiencing mental health problems Marie, a paralegal in a law firm, experienced Post-Natal Depression following the birth of her daughter and had to take some sick leave as a result. After returning to work she recognised that colleagues and managers do not speak openly about their mental health in the workplace. She is interested in setting up a network of peers to ensure that mental health is promoted within the organisation, and that policies and procedures are inclusive for employees experiencing mental health problems. She has approached her HR department regarding establishing the group. **Group discussion**: What steps would you suggest Marie takes to develop the group?
Key points from group discussion
- Engage/surveys   - Mainstreaming the culture   - Leaders being advocates/senior management buy-in (speak to them to encourage buy-in)/permission from key people   - Raise awareness, gather interest, get people behind you   - Leaders being advocates   - Survey provides a starting point – good indicator as to how engaged people are with the topic   - Ensure Marie has her own support

- Hold event/campaign/raise awareness and communicate/ Time To Talk Day

- Senior management buy-in

- Check what other organisations have done and see if you can piggyback onto it

- Preparation

- Support and signposting to organisations who can help must be available

- Support and reassurance for management – not expected to 'fix it'

- Be in it for the long haul

- E-mail to staff

- Anonymous survey support

- Plan for disclosure

- Look for existing concept/programmes

- Use a focus or a theme to open up the conversation e.g. Time To Talk

- Reach out to your colleagues

- Local autonomy

- Take risks!

- Be open and honest

- Share lived experience

- Give it value from the start

- Think out of the box

- Be creative: MH snakes and ladders; who wants to be a millionaire

Confident and informed line managers

Line managers and supervisors have a key role to play in ensuring that employees are appropriately supported in the workplace. They should have the ability to be compassionate and understanding about mental health; have the

confidence to open up conversations with employees about their mental health, and the knowledge to signpost appropriately. Line managers and supervisors require support and guidance from the organisation to fulfil their roles professionally and empathetically.

David manages a team of five in an IT company, including Chris. At his last performance and supervision meeting Chris disclosed his diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder and said that was struggling with his mental health and worried that it would impact on his ability to carry out his work. David was not expecting this disclosure; he didn't know what to say or do to help Chris. David was worried about saying the wrong thing and was unsure of the resources available to support Chris. David was also worried about Chris going off sick and the impact that that may have on the wider team. David felt al he could do was to say 'thank you for letting me know'.

Group discussion: What steps should an organisation take to ensure that all managers have the ability to have open and supportive conversations with employees about their mental health at work, and the confidence to signpost to help and support?

Key points from group discussion

- How supporting managers in supporting colleagues

- How to be clear about boundaries and support staff how to do this

- Mandatory training: induction; new line managers

- Randomised coffee trails to know colleagues

- Scheduling in time to debrief to allow you to cope with what you are being told

- Buddy system (mental health) for advisors

- Signposting to resources

- Avenue to debriefs

Internal communication

If employees are unaware of the support available to them when they are experiencing mental health problems, there will be little impact of employers' efforts to invest in the health of the workforce. Communicating consistently across multiple channels and making employees aware of the support available to them is a key method to highlight the prioritisation of workforce wellbeing and to help create the conditions for positive conversations about mental health.

Lucille experiences Seasonal Depressive Disorder and is concerned that, with Winter approaching, she will relapse. She is aware that she can self-manage her condition to stay in work, but she doesn't think that there is any support available to her through the organisation. She has been considering accessing private counselling but worries about the financial impact on her family.

Group discussion: What steps can employers take to ensure that all employees are aware of the support available to them? What advice would you give to a small organisation that might not have resources to provide 'in house' support (e.g. Employee Assistance Programme, Occupational Health, etc.)?

Key points from group discussion

- EAP

- Use free local MH and national services

- Value 1:1

- Training

- Self-awareness

- Recovery action plans

- Money

- Signposting to internal and external services

- Reasonable adjustments

- Inductions