



ANTI STIGMA SUMMER SESSIONS

EVALUATION
OCTOBER 2020





Executive Summary



The age groups that mostly engaged with Anti Stigma Summer Session event evaluation were **40-49** and **50-59** and the majority of research participants were female (**72%**).



Under half (**45%**) of respondents felt that the events made them feel very comfortable talking about the mental health of others, while under a quarter (**23%**) felt very comfortable talking about their own mental health.



The majority of people who engaged with Anti Stigma Summer Session events reported no physical disability (**67%**) but the majority reported lived experience of a mental health problem (**94%**).



Three quarters of survey participants felt more able to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination because of the Anti Stigma Summer Sessions. Some said that the events encouraged them to get more involved and start conversations. A few acknowledged that tackling stigma and discrimination could be daunting.



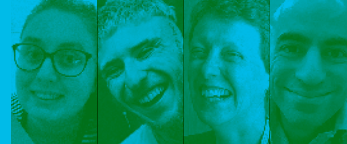
While this research is based on a small non representative sample of participants it seems somewhat representative of See Me volunteers and suggests that there is more opportunity to develop greater diversity among audiences. Targeting specific groups and increasing diversity within audiences should be considered for the next series on online events.



Most research participants reported that they felt inspired to do or change something as a result of taking part in Anti Stigma Summer Session events. These included sharing their experiences, getting involved in local and national anti stigma activities, applying learning in a professional context and exploring more creative ways of opening up discussions about mental health.



The most commonly cited reasons for attending Anti Stigma Summer Session events were both personal and professional. Some worked with people with mental health problems and some had personal experience of poor mental health.



Overall experiences of taking part in Anti Stigma Summer Session events were positive. People who took part in the research reported that the events were fun, interactive, engaging and inspiring. Topics were presented in a clear and confident way, which participants found relatable and accessible.



Audience members involved in the research felt that a series of linked online events to break down bigger topics into more accessible parts would be beneficial.



Key success factors of attending Anti Stigma Summer Session events included meeting other people with common interests and goals, developing a better understanding of the work of See Me, using new technology to engage in ways in which they had not done before, overcoming geographical barriers to attending events and developing personal and professional networks.



Providing more opportunities to talk about the language and terminology used in relation to mental health problems would be welcomed by audience members.



Some challenges and improvements for participants of the Anti Stigma Summer Sessions included improved use of technology, running a series of linked events to address larger and more complex topics, improved structure for and format of events and how to personalise remote events in the absence of face-to-face social contact.



Evaluation participants suggested a greater variety of topics, speakers and formats in future online anti stigma events. Audience members liked more interactive events.





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1. Introduction and Background



Inspired by the high levels of interest and engagement in See Me online events generated during Mental Health Awareness Week (MHAW) 2020, an ongoing series of online events was created called the Anti Stigma Summer Sessions (ASSS). Online events delivered by See Me and its volunteers and partners sparked a passion within people to get involved, keep talking and take action to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination. The ASSS included a wide range of online activities, such as arts and crafts, poetry, books and writing, film and theatre and community activism. The events were delivered using the Facebook Live platform.

In the wider context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the social restrictions that impacted on everyone in a range of ways, the ASSS offered a way for people who wanted to talk about their own and other's mental health and stay connected during lockdown and beyond. See Me has ambitions to grow this online community to continue to reach more people, create wider awareness and expand the social movement to end stigma and discrimination.

The purpose of this evaluation was to explore the process and impact of the ASSS 2020. People who engaged with the online events and activities delivered between July and September 2020 were signposted to an evaluation survey. Survey respondents were given the opportunity to leave their contact details for follow up telephone interviews with a researcher from the Mental Health Foundation Scotland (MHF), to talk about their experiences in more depth. All data gathered has been processed and analysed, and the findings are presented in this report.



2. Methodology

MHF Scotland is the research, learning and evaluation partner for See Me. The MHF team is responsible for evaluating work delivered by See Me within specific programme settings and cross programmatically. This model ensures that most research and evaluation activities remain objective. The team works to demonstrate that programme outcomes are being achieved and is guided by the research question: what works to tackle and eliminate mental health stigma and discrimination?

A mixed methods approach was applied to this evaluation. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered to explore the process and impact of the ASSS between July and September 2020. Quantitative data was gathered through an online survey for people who engaged with ASSS events and activities. Qualitative data was gathered in the form interviews with people who engaged in the events.

Survey and interview questions were designed to gather views on the process and impact of ASSS, using an outcomes focused approach. Quantitative data was cleaned, and descriptive analyses were undertaken using Microsoft Excel. Qualitative data was transcribed and analysed using NVivo software.

All participants involved in the research gave written and verbal consent to take part. Additionally, those who took part in interviews gave consent for these to be audio recorded where appropriate. Participants received information about the research process and purpose when they completed the online survey, and an MHF researcher reviewed this information with them if they agreed to take part in a follow up interview by telephone.

2.1 Summary of data collection and limitations of the data

This report is based on relatively small samples of data – **18** responses to the survey, three in depth individual interviews and feedback from one See Me volunteer. This is not representative of the total number of people who engaged with Anti Stigma Summer Session online events, but it gives us a flavour of peoples' experiences, what worked well and what could have worked better. The report findings should therefore not be interpreted as representative, rather they should be treated with some caution, and recommendations considered in this context.

This evaluation was developed quickly in line with See Me's online programme of events which was developed rapidly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings presented here are very much intended to provide See Me with some initial insights and information that might inform future online volunteer led events. There is more work to be done to understand the true impact of arts anti stigma events on audiences and participants, and to identify how effective they are in tackling mental health stigma and discrimination.



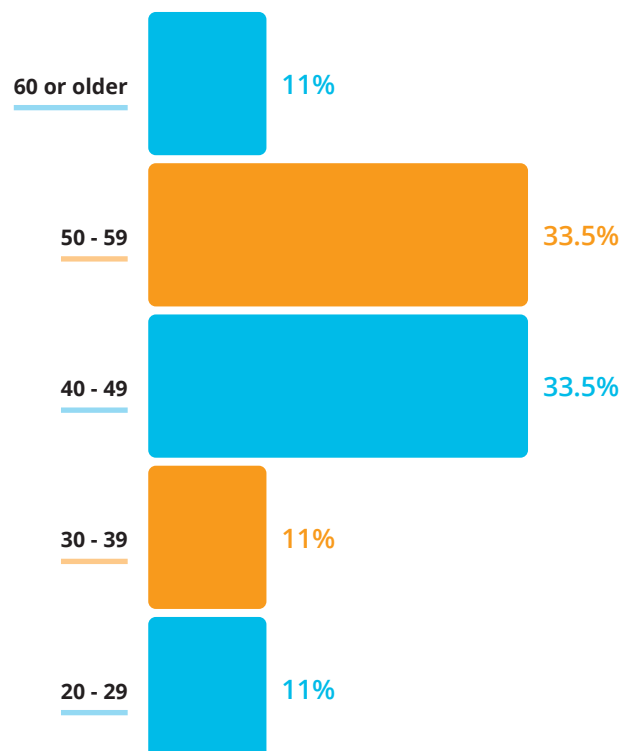
3. Participant demographics and characteristics

This section of the report explores the quantitative findings of the evaluation collected through the audience survey.

3.1 Age of survey respondents

The majority of those who completed the online ASSS survey were aged 40-49 (**33%**) and 50-59 (**33%**). According to statistics published in April 2020¹, individuals aged 25-34 made up the largest group of Facebook users by age in the UK (**25%**). The same source reported that those aged 45-54 represent **16%** of Facebook users in the UK and those aged 55-64 make up **11%**.

This might suggest that See Me has been particularly successful in attracting an older age group to participate in online events hosted through Facebook Live. We also need to consider that more people are turning to online communication channels during these unprecedented times in which they cannot see people in person as easily as before the COVID-19 pandemic. This is likely to be a driver behind the rising age of Facebook users in this instance.



¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1030055/facebook-users-united-kingdom/>

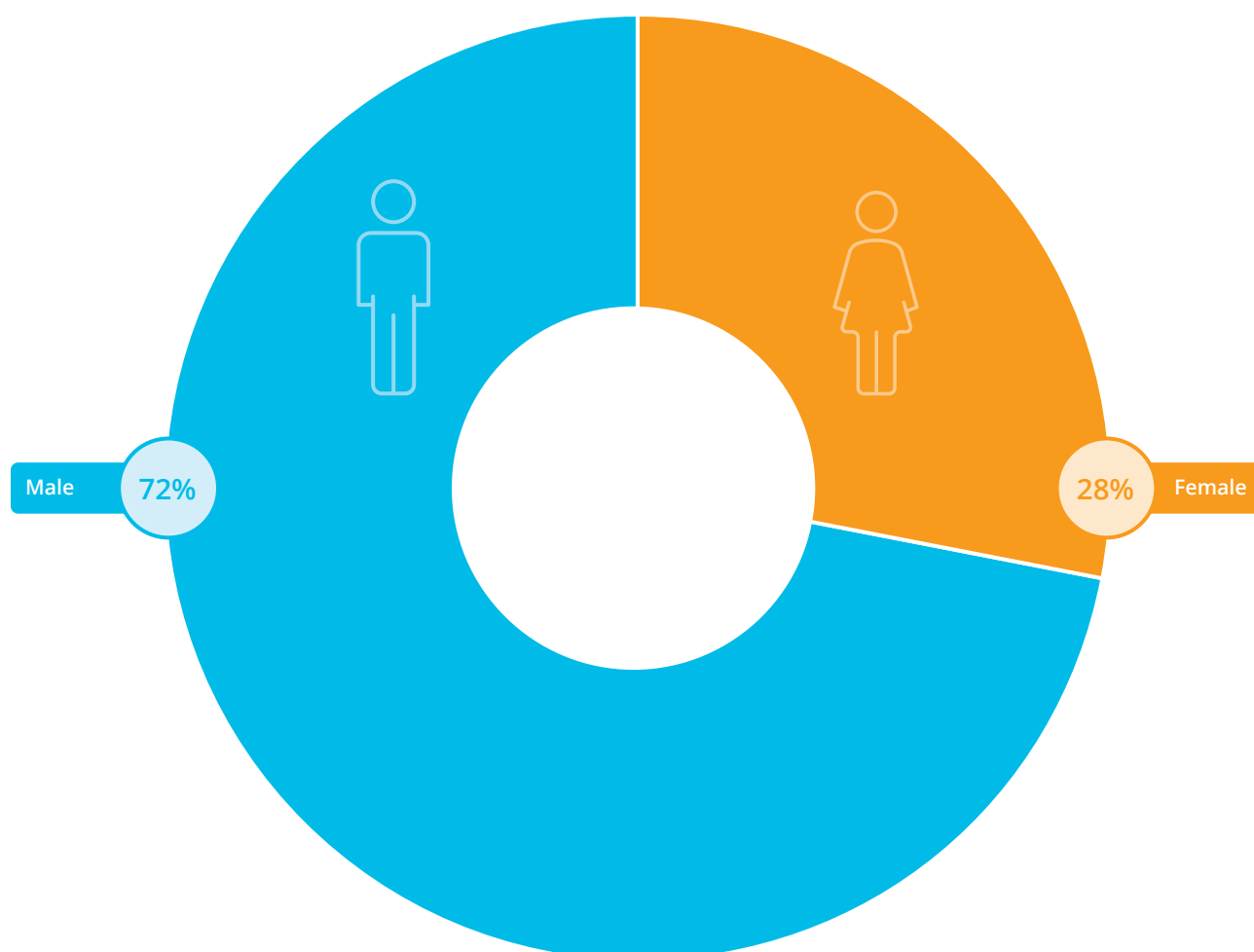


3.2 Gender of survey respondents

Most survey respondents who engaged with ASSS events and activities were female (**72%**). The minority were male (**28%**). Statistics published in 2020² reported that 52% of Facebook users were women and **48%** were men. See Me has attracted a larger than average proportion of women to ASSS events.

However, these findings resonate with the content of an article published by the Mental Health Foundation³. This piece reported that women

show a greater willingness to seek support for mental health problems than men and are more likely to talk to others about their feelings. The article suggested that women are more likely than men to have greater social support including family and friends. Good social support makes it more likely for women to tell someone if they are struggling with their mental health – contributing to the prevention, early intervention and recovery agendas.

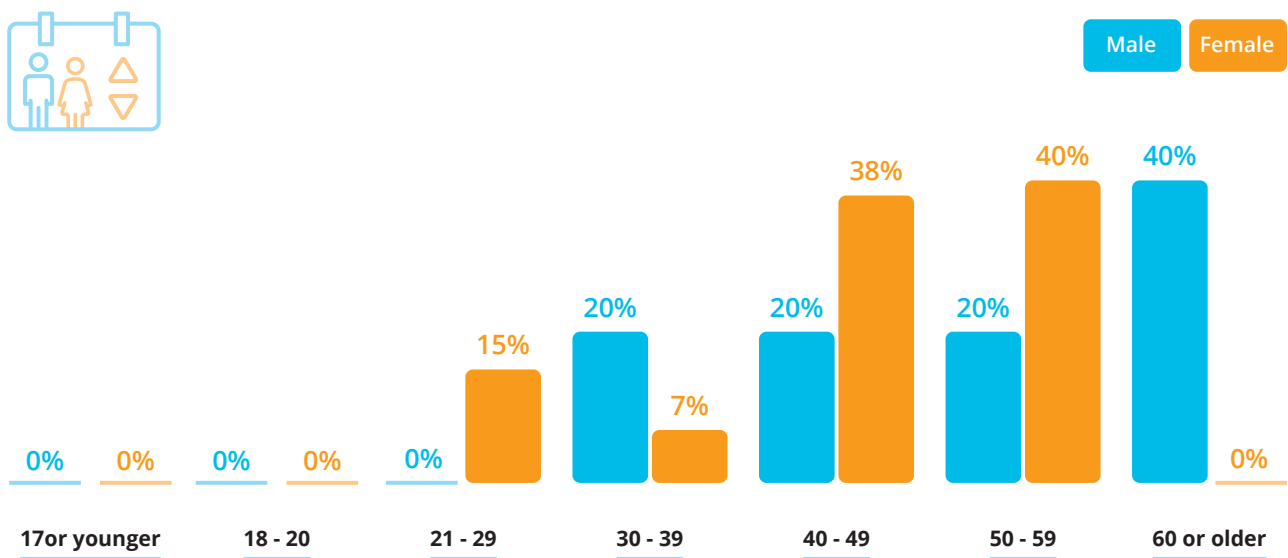


² <https://www.socialfilms.co.uk/blog/facebook-uk-statistics>

³ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/w/women-and-mental-health>

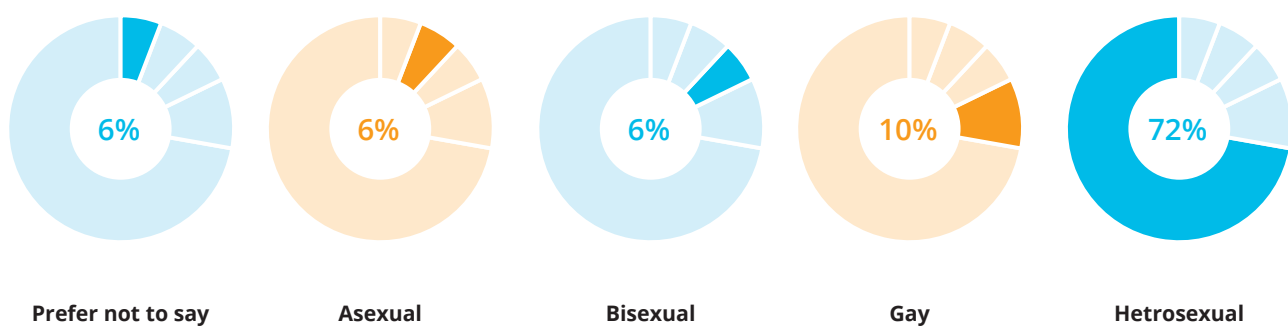
3.3 Age and gender

While female ASSS participants who responded to the survey were among the majority overall, more men (**20%**) from the 30-39 age group engaged than women (**7%**), and in the 60 or older age group, all were men. Given that respondents connected with ASSS events, this echoes research conducted in July 2020, which reported that male Facebook users were higher than female Facebook users for the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups. It contradicts the same research that indicated among the 65+ age category, more females than males use Facebook. For this albeit small and non-representative sample, all participants aged 60 or over were male.



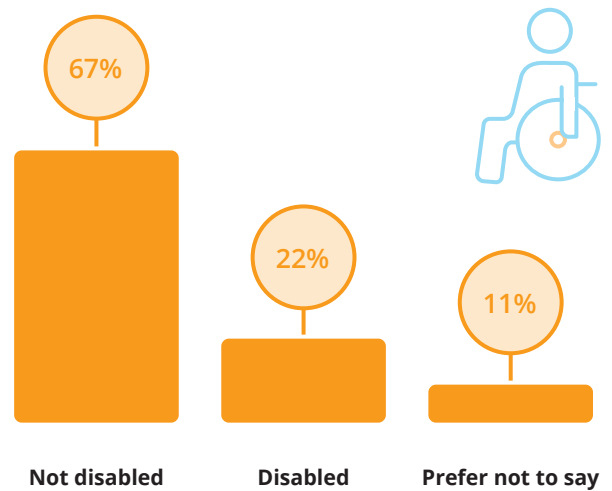
3.4 Sexual orientation

Most survey respondents (**72%**) who engaged in ASSS events and activities described themselves as heterosexual. A smaller proportion (**11%**) described themselves as gay, **5.5%** as bisexual, **5.5%** as asexual, and **5.5%** preferred not to say. This suggests that See Me could be thinking about how to target events in order to increase diversity, and also looking more closely at how to better diversify its volunteer base.



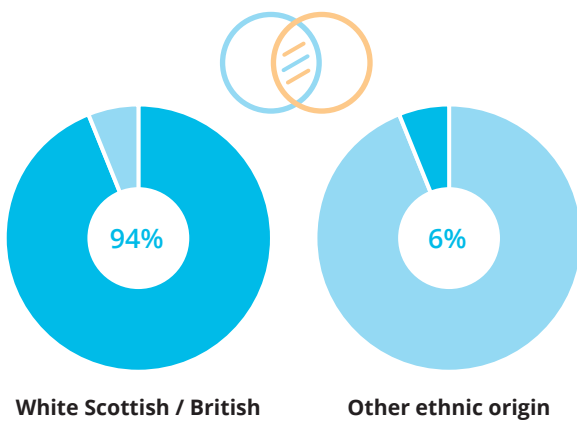
3.5 Disability

The majority of survey respondents (**67%**) who attended ASSS events and activities reported having no physical disability. This again indicates that See Me could be thinking about how to target events in order to increase diversity in this respect, and to consider whether online events create the potential to achieve this, while looking more closely at how to diversify its wider volunteer base, as highlighted above.



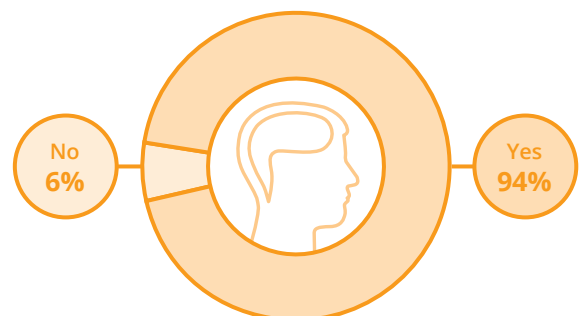
3.6 Ethnicity

The majority of people (**94%**) who engaged with ASSS events and activities were White Scottish / British and the remaining (**6%**) described themselves as 'other ethnic origin'. Again, greater diversity among those engaging in ASSS events should be considered when designing the content and format of future events. This could be progressed by working with intersectional partners and a range of community groups and volunteers.



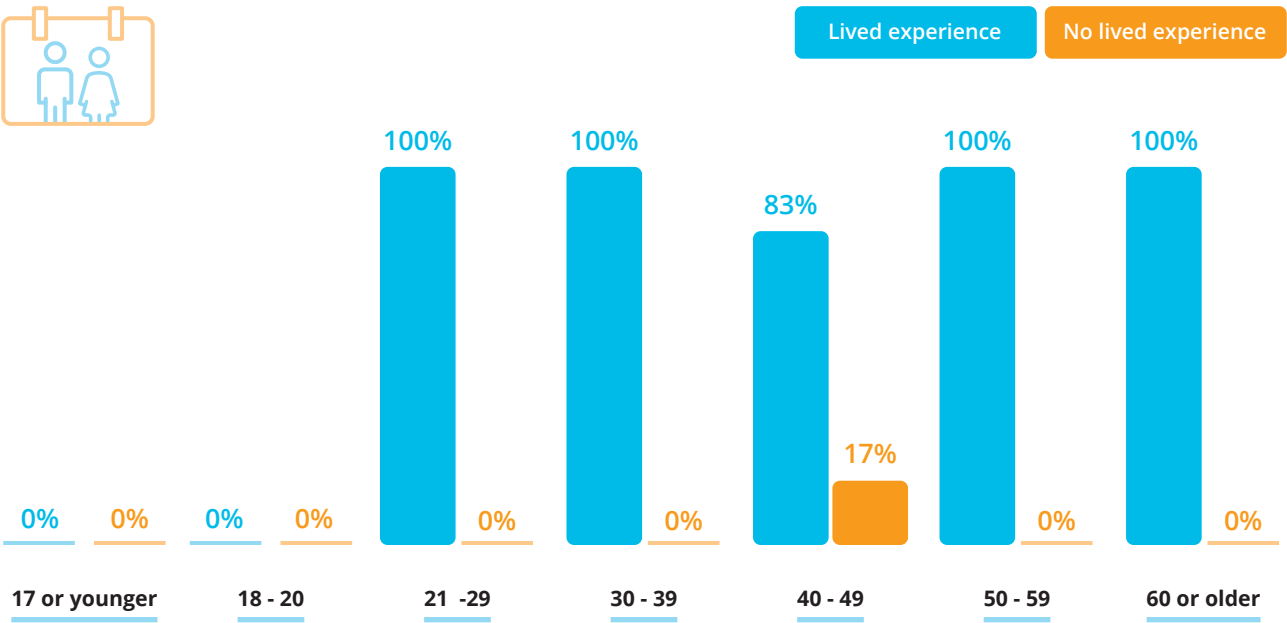
3.7 Lived experience of a mental health problem

The majority of survey respondents (**94%**) who engaged with ASSS events and activities described themselves as having lived experience of a mental health problem, while **6%** did not. This demonstrates that ASSS events and activities appealed to a core audience of people with lived experience of mental health problems. It also highlights that future events could be targeted more specifically to attract more people with no disclosed or perceived lived experience of a mental health problem. This would further See Me's aim to improve awareness and knowledge of mental health and convert that into action. It would show that See Me can attract people beyond its core base of supporters.



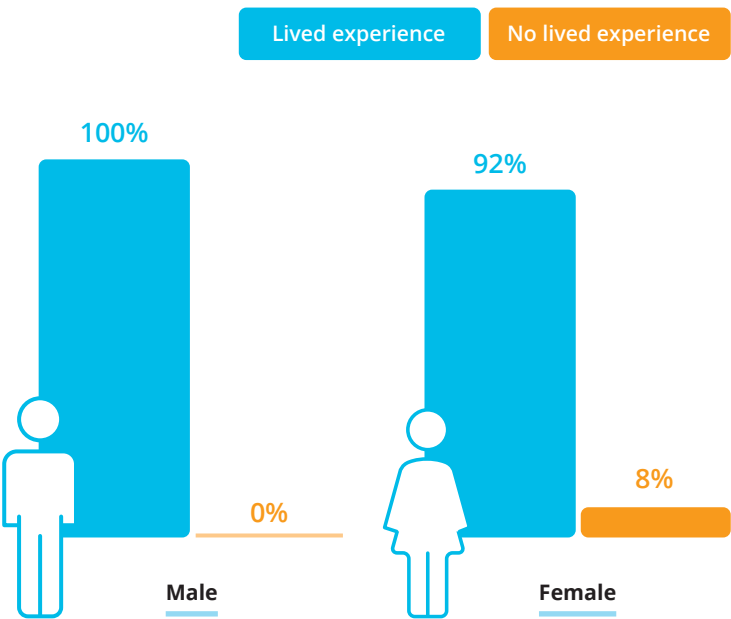
3.8 Lived experience and age

This demonstrates that of those who engaged with ASSS events and activities, the minority who reported not having lived experience of a mental health problem were among the 40-49 age group. This could help to further target those with no lived experience of mental health problems for future events.



3.9 Lived experienced and gender

The majority of survey respondents who attended ASSS events and activities had lived experience of mental health problems. Those who did not, described themselves as female. As above, this could help to further target those with no lived experience of mental health problems for future events.





3.10 Location

People who engaged with ASSS events and activities lived across **12** local authority areas. As See Me continues to develop its online volunteer led events, it will be interesting to monitor whether this reach increases.





4. Key findings



This section of the report presents the key findings of the research. It includes quantitative data collected by the audience survey, and qualitative data captured through interviews with people who took part in ASSS events.

4.1 Discovering events

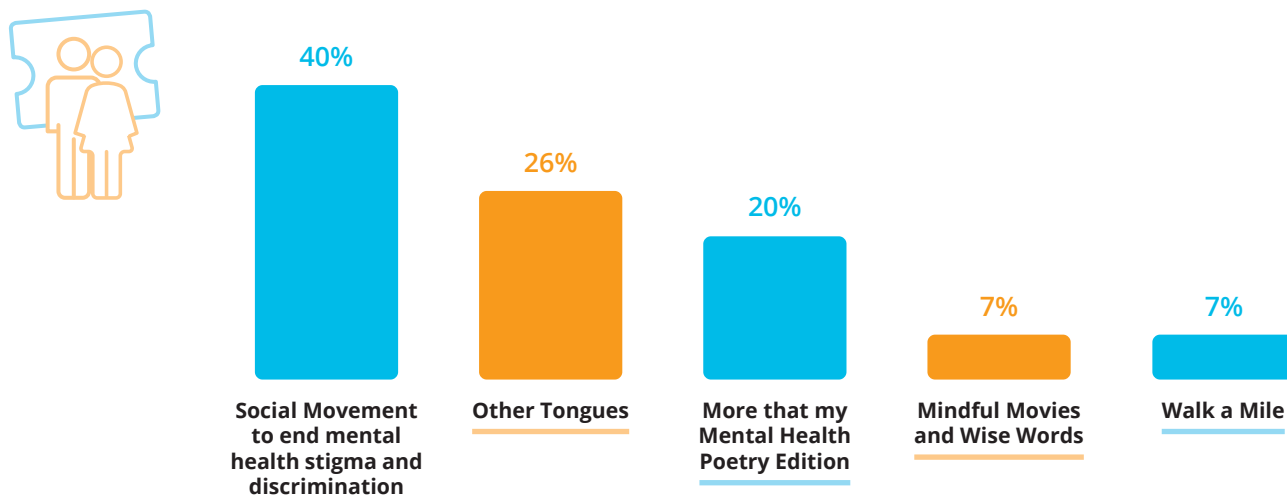
Participants who we interviewed told us how they found out about Anti Stigma Summer Session online events. A few heard about the events through their own professional networks, and a few through social media channels. Another participant found out about the event through a family member who was friends with one of the volunteers involved. Each of the people we interviewed attended one event each and had both personal and professional reasons for taking part.

4.2 Events and activities attended

Survey respondents indicated what events and activities they attended as part of ASSS.

Most respondents (**40%**) attended 'Creating Stigma Free Communities: Social Movement to end mental health stigma and discrimination'. In this session the See Me Social Movement team gave tips and advice and looked at what actions others have taken in their communities to help challenge mental health stigma and discrimination.

What event/activity did you attend?



Just over a quarter of respondents (26%) attended a book reading called ‘Other Tongues’ in which a See Me supporter read passages from a book they have written about experiences of schizoaffective disorder. This event explored the power of sharing stories about mental illness, the importance of asking ‘are you okay?’ and life beyond labels.

A fifth of respondents engaged with ‘More Than My Mental Health: Poetry Edition’. This session involved See Me volunteers who shared and discussed poetry and life during lockdown. A few (7%) respondents attended ‘Mindful Movies and Wise Words’ in which volunteers hosted a discussion about books and films that are important to them and connect with challenging mental health stigma.

Other events were added to the ASSS series that were not captured in this survey, and that are being evaluated separately.

4.3 Motivations for participation

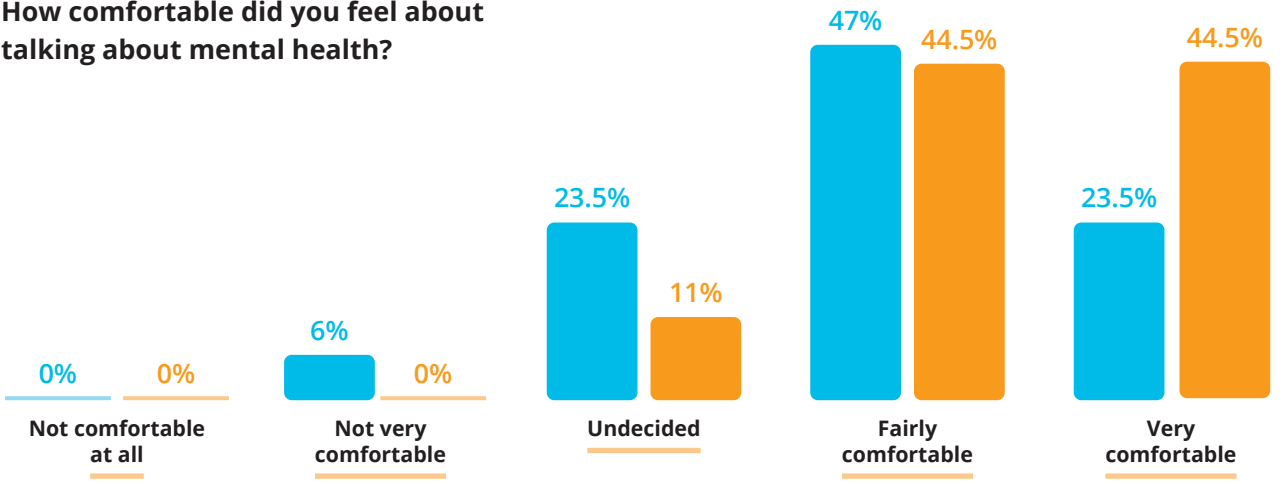
Participants that we interviewed told us more about their reasons for taking part in ASSS events. Reasons for participating varied. Two people attended because the events were relevant to their professions. One of these people had experience of discussing issues around mental health stigma and discrimination with people they work with, including those with severe and enduring mental health illnesses and were interested in learning more about online strategies that would enable them to continue this. They planned to apply this learning within their work environment. Another interviewee from a teaching background was interested in the events because of the complex issues that they addressed. Other participants interviewed attended ASSS events because the hosts were family or friends.

“This event seemed relevant to my role.”
Interviewee

4.4 How comfortable respondents felt to talk about mental health

We asked survey respondents how comfortable the event made them feel talking about their own mental health and the mental health of others. Overall, respondents felt more comfortable talking about the mental health of others, rather than their own.

How comfortable did you feel about talking about mental health?



Under half (**45%**) of respondents felt 'very comfortable' talking about the mental health of others at the events, compared to under a quarter (**23%**) who felt 'very comfortable' talking about their own mental health. A high proportion were fairly comfortable talking about their own mental health (**47%**) while **44.5%** were fairly comfortable talking about the mental health of others. No respondents felt uncomfortable talking about the mental health of others, while 6% felt 'not very comfortable' talking about their own.

Consideration might be given to the picture emerging, albeit from a small sample of event participants, that people in the 'very comfortable' category were more comfortable talking about others' mental health rather than their own. This is offset partly by a higher proportion of people being 'fairly comfortable' talking about their own mental health and the mental health of others. Future ASSS events and activities could be tailored to empower people to focus on talking about their own mental health, to move them from the 'fairly comfortable' to 'very comfortable' categories.

Some respondents commented further on this question. A few felt that they gained confidence to talk about mental health through the events:

"[Social Movement team member] is so vivacious it makes you more confident yourself."

"Felt good talking about my mental health issues. Knowing that there are others who have the same issues, that we can relate too."

"[Social Movement team members] set clear ground rules at the beginning of the workshop which immediately created a safe space and made me feel very comfortable."

Survey respondents

A few respondents explained why they found it more challenging to open up about their own mental health problems:

"I understand the push right now to get people talking about their mental health but the services aren't even there for people already using them - what hope do new people coming along have."

"Having lived with mental illness for almost my entire life, I still find it difficult to speak about, for fear of not being believed as has happened... I'm slowly getting there about sharing my experience about my illnesses and diagnoses. I feel very comfortable supporting others as I have gained so much insight and still researching and learning."

Survey respondents



Of those who commented, some suggested that their progress in relation to talking about mental health was slow but moving in the right direction. Those who do not feel comfortable talking about their own mental health mostly reported that they had difficult experiences in the past – of not being believed, of being judged, and of not being able to access the support they needed at crisis point. Supporting others seemed more comfortable than seeking support for themselves.

Of those who felt more comfortable talking about mental health, the events offered a way to connect with others, share common issues, reduce isolation and know that others were experiencing similar challenges and that they were not alone.

A few participants that we interviewed reported that they felt comfortable talking about their own and others' mental health prior to the events they attended. One said that they attended an ASSS event because they have a family member who suffers from severe mental illness. When asked if the events they attended encouraged participants to talk about mental health, they agreed that a safe environment was provided to allow people to talk openly.

An interviewee said that event hosts including See Me staff and volunteers were very confident when talking about their own experiences of mental health and this helped participants to identify. They felt that this encouraged those taking part to talk more openly about experiences of mental health in turn. Another person interviewed reported that being able to ask questions using the Facebook chat function worked well, because it can be intimidating to ask questions about mental health in front of others.

"It worked well because participants didn't have to contribute if they didn't want to. There was no pressure."

"It felt like a comfortable environment to talk about mental health."

"It was not dry like other webinars."

"Embedding lived experience voices within the event was really successful."

Interviewees



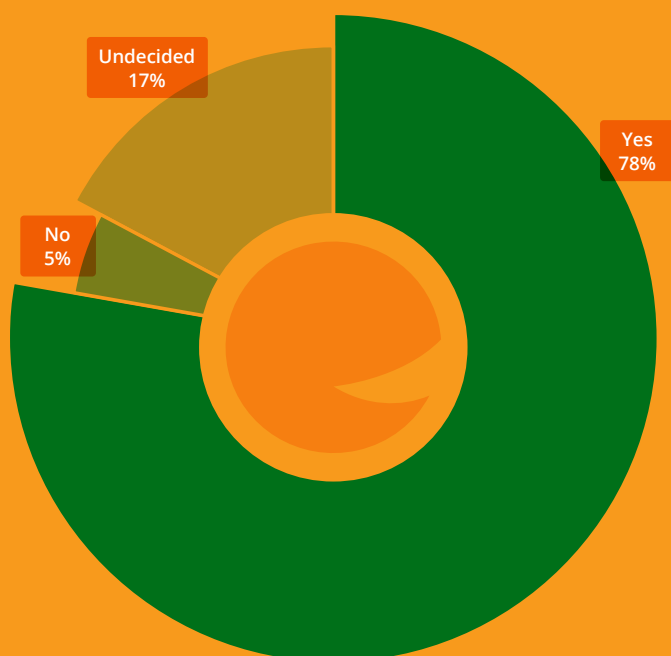


4.5 Challenging mental health stigma and discrimination

Respondents indicated how comfortable engaging in ASSS events and activities made them feel to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination.

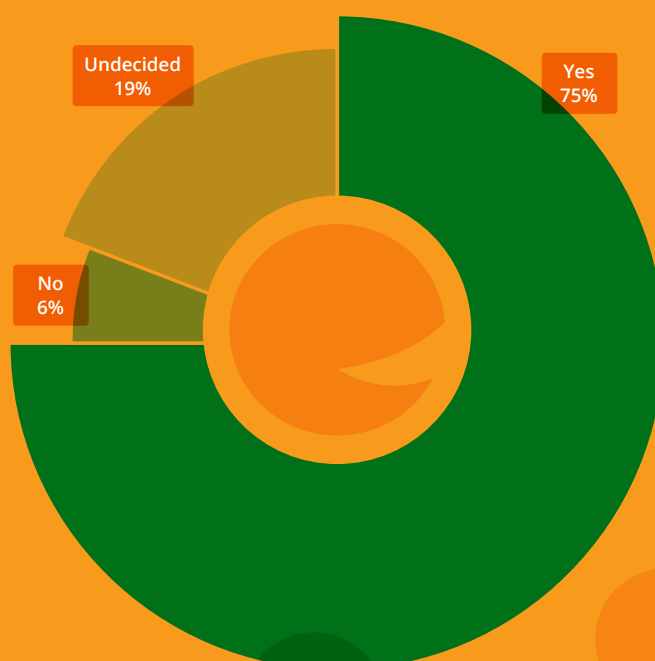
A significant majority of respondents felt enabled, through attending ASSS events, to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination. Three

quarters of respondents felt more able to tackle discrimination, while over three quarters felt more able to tackle stigma. A small minority did not feel able to challenge either mental health stigma or discrimination, and between 17-19% were undecided.



Has this event made you feel able to take action to challenge mental health stigma?

Has this event made you feel able to take action to challenge mental health discrimination?



This is a very positive finding. It suggests that See Me has much to build on when developing further ASSS events and activities. Some respondents commented further on this question. Of those who felt more able to tackle stigma and discrimination, their commitment felt strong:

"It is like everything else. If you feel strongly about it and want to see change...you have to make that change happen. You can't sit back and expect someone else to do it. We are all responsible for stigma and challenging and changing it."

"Hearing from the volunteers reminded me how subtle stigma can be and how important it is to challenge stigma whenever I can."

Survey respondents

Some respondents took a very practical route to enable them to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination:

"I have taken courses at the Distance Learning with the West College Scotland. I have achieved Level 3 certificate in Mental Health."

Survey respondent

And others acknowledged the scale of the challenge:

"A mixture of confidence and fear."

Survey respondent

People we interviewed felt that ASSS events worked well in terms of normalising issues related to mental health, and one would have liked to have spent more time talking about that. One interviewee said that they planned to apply the new ways they learned to normalise mental health issues, at work.

"It normalises mental health and starts conversations."

Interviewee

A few interviewees commented that ASSS events initiated discussions about the language and terminology related to certain mental health conditions, and how the media can amplify negative perceptions. One interviewee said that this was "really inspiring" in terms of empowering participants to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination.

"You need to change media perspectives to change individual perspectives."

Interviewee

Where those we interviewed told us that normalising issues about mental health helped to challenge mental health stigma, the same people felt that ASSS events they attended had the potential to tackle discrimination.

"It broke down the negative stereotypes that are often portrayed in the media – it helps to combat that."

Interviewee

4.6 Did the events inspire you to do or change something?

The majority of respondents who answered this question confirmed that the events had inspired them to do or change something. These included:

- Trying to become more confident to share their experiences, keep learning and raising awareness.
- Getting involved in national and local mental health groups, online activities and starting anti stigma initiatives.
- Apply approaches to talking about and normalising mental health within professional settings, with colleagues and clients.
- Learning how to better communicate with and support others with mental health problems and understand how to challenge stigma.
- Exploring poetry, books and film as ways in which to learn how to share experiences of mental health.

"I want to get involved and I've already started conversations online."

"I have got actively involved in local mental health groups."

"To try and be more confident in myself. To share without feeling guilty."

Survey respondents

A few interviewees reported that because of the events they attended they learned how to start online conversations about mental health stigma and discrimination. They intended to apply this learning in their work environments. Others said that hearing the stories of people with lived experience had improved their knowledge about severe mental health conditions and this had inspired them to learn more.

"Conditions like [schizophrenia] don't need to be frightening."

Interviewee

4.7 Overall experiences of the events

Survey respondents and people we interviewed told us more about their experiences of the events they engaged with. Most who commented about this said that their overall experiences were positive. People found the events fun and interesting, presenting serious topics in an engaging and interactive way.

"...it was fun and not too serious, [I] learned things and the presenter was very good. The host involved other people which made it interesting."

Interviewee

One interviewee said that they have been to a number of online events since the start of lockdown, and that the See Me event was the best that they had attended. They liked the style of presenting – "so personal and confident" – and the way in which complex issues were broken down into manageable pieces of information.

"I loved the event! It was the best I've been to."

"I didn't think a session about mental health and stigma and discrimination could be fun."

Interviewees

Interviewees and survey respondents on the whole found event content relatable and accessible. Presenters explained the process well which resulted in interesting and beneficial discussions. The events were said to be practical and useful.

"...it was straightforward to sign up and take part."

Interviewee



5. Lessons learned

5.1 Key success factors

Findings from the survey and interviews revealed aspects of the Anti Stigma Summer Session events that worked well for those who took part in the evaluation. These included:

- Getting the opportunity to meet other people who attended the events for similar reasons. This might lead to developing professional and personal networks in the future.
- Participants highlighted that the events overcame barriers related to rurality and geography. Often it is difficult to find the time to attend physical events therefore the ASSS events offered an easier alternative. This made events more practically accessible.
- Improved awareness and knowledge about mental health was highlighted by participants – and some felt that it better equipped them to challenge stigma and discrimination.

"I will follow up with people who I met there."

Interviewee

- Participants who attended events reported that they developed a wider understanding of See Me, particularly those who had not heard of See Me before.
- Even participants who did not consider themselves to be overly comfortable using technology agreed that the events were accessible and straightforward in terms of taking part.

"I don't use tech a lot and I wouldn't say I was comfortable, but I can and will sign up and take part as I live in a remote area".

Interviewee

- Some participants reported that ASSS events helped them to learn new strategies for normalising discussions about mental health problems. They felt that the events did encourage open conversations about mental health.

"The event presentation and resources were sent out to delegates afterwards, which was helpful."

Interviewee

- The format of the ASSS events worked well for many of those who attended, including the use of break out rooms and small group discussions.
- There was a consensus that including voices of lived experience of See Me volunteers within events worked well, making the events relatable and informative. This was one of the elements of events that made them particularly engaging to participants.

"I would like to take part in more events."

Interviewee

- A few people said that attending the events would give them more confidence to tackle similar topics and issues in their own roles. Some commented that the events gave them ideas to use when delivering their own events remotely.



"It was very informative, and I recommend that ~See Me keeps them going."

Interviewee

5.2 Challenges and improvements

We asked interviewees if anything could have worked better or be improved about the ASSS.

Using technology

One participant talked about the use of break out rooms in one session and said that they found it confusing. They found the purpose of the break out rooms unclear. However, the interviewee acknowledged that using technology in this way is still a learning curve and as we continue to gain experience, online events generally will improve.

"It lost its way a bit, but we are all learning."

Interviewee

Linked events

One interviewee suggested that when dealing with a topic area as complex as mental health stigma and discrimination, a series of linked events could be developed to break the concepts down into more manageable, smaller sessions. They said that they would be keen to register for a series of events about tackling mental health stigma and discrimination in the future, with some learning to work on in between sessions.

"There could be more targeted sessions, where people could discuss in more depth. Running a series of sessions could achieve this and would be useful."

Interviewee

Structure of events

One participant felt that the event they attended was overly long and might have benefitted from some added structure. They acknowledged that the events were developed rapidly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that they would become more polished over time. The participant added that the event could have benefited from a wider variety of speakers, such as a panel, to break it up, offer variation and help those taking part to sustain their attention for longer.

"It was interesting, but it felt a bit unprogrammed. However, I understand why it didn't have more structure."

Interviewee

Stimulating discussion

Some participants said that it is harder to stimulate discussions online than in a face-to-face setting. They felt that remote events lack the nuances gained through body language and energy in a room. In addition, online events attract fewer people than face-to-face events. However, participants agreed that in the absence of physical events, online events were better than no activity at all. They wondered if it would be possible to make online events more personal, to make up for the lack of traditional social contact.

"It is not the same as being with people. It is not as fulfilling as face-to-face would be, for those who do take part. You don't get the same level of discussion."

"You don't get activities to do like in physical workshops. You are just staring at the screen."

"There is only a minority of people engaging, it is not representative. There are always those that won't or can't engage."

Interviewees

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Feedback from a range of people involved in ASSS events gathered quantitatively and qualitatively provides useful insight into who engaged and why, what worked well and what could have worked better. This final section of the report draws conclusions from this data and presents some related recommendations for future online events.

As previously highlighted, this section is intended to be indicative, and not treated as representative, due to the small sample sizes of research participants. However, it does give us an emerging insight into what the successes and learning were for those who did involve.

6.1 Conclusions

Wider context of the pandemic

The ASSS events were informed by the successes of volunteer led events facilitated by See Me during MHAW 2020. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and related social restrictions the MHAW and ASSS events experienced relatively high levels of engagement from people who wanted to talk about mental health, keep challenging stigma and discrimination and stay connected during lockdown and beyond.

Remote social movements during the pandemic

Given the desire to continue involvement in online anti stigma and discrimination activities, See Me might maximise this desire to engage and work to continue to deliver online events that offer the potential for remote social contact. See Me has the opportunity to build on its initial success, understand and apply proxy social contact approaches during these uncertain times. While some people will always prefer face-to-face social contact that is likely to be limited for some time. Recent research suggests that movements for social justice have been particularly active during this period. Therefore, it will be valuable to explore different platforms and technologies that provide a range of engagement opportunities for people and compare these for effectiveness and impact.

Event participants

While ASSS event engagement was relatively high (do we have engagement numbers?) it should be noted that the quantitative and qualitative samples used to inform this report were small.



That being said, demographic data collected through the survey did seem to be reflective of the demographics of See Me's wider volunteer base. Overall, participant demographics largely suggest that the diversity of those engaging in the events could have been greater. This applies when considering at gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity and lived experience.

Motivation for engaging

Most participants engaged in the ASSS events for personal or professional reasons. Some wanted to learn more about how to talk to their colleagues and clients about mental health online and hoped to apply lessons learned to their own work. Others attended because either they or people close to them had experience of a mental health problem and were interested in the topics being discussed in the events. A few people we interviewed said that a wider variety of content, topics and speakers could have been engaged.

Talking about mental health online

More research participants were very comfortable talking about the mental health of others during the events (**45%**) in comparison to talking about their own mental health (**23%**). However, a high proportion were fairly comfortable talking about their own mental health (**47%**) while **44.5%** were fairly comfortable talking about the mental health of others. Overall a positive picture has emerged about how safe and comfortable participants felt, talking about mental health online. Much of this rests with the event facilitators – people felt at ease because those hosting events were open and honest about their own experiences of mental health. For future events there could be a greater focus on how to empower people to feel more comfortable to talk about their own mental health.

Challenging mental health stigma and discrimination

A majority of research participants felt that the events made them feel able to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination (**78% / 75%**). Comments suggested that the events reminded people of their roles and responsibilities – if people want to see change, then they must drive it and not wait for someone else to do it. The Creating Stigma Free Communities events seemed to strike a chord with people and reignite a spark to take action. Hearing the lived experience stories of volunteers reiterated for people that stigma can be subtle, and it must be challenged where it is found.

Normalising conversations about mental health

A common theme highlighted by research participants was that the events helped to normalise conversations about mental health. In some sessions there were discussions around the language and terminology used in the media to portray people with mental health problems. People found this inspiring and empowering in terms of how they planned to apply this in their work and lives. Some would have liked to spend more time talking about this.

Inspiring people to make changes

Most research participants said that the events has inspired them to do or change something. These include sharing experiences about mental health, getting involved in local and national activities and applying lessons learned in the workplace. While this shows intended behaviour change, it captures the immediate impact of attendees in terms of taking action. See Me and MHF have work to do to track whether these intentions translate into actions.

6.2 Recommendations for See Me and partners

Exploring remote social contact and online social movements

ASSS gives See Me a unique opportunity to explore the effectiveness of remote social contact and understand more about how to grow online social movements. Participants of the research indicated that they found the lived experience elements of ASSS powerful. Audiences valued the opportunity to expand their personal and professional networks through ASSS. Future work in this area, informed by the learning from ASSS, might consider the questions – how do we make social contact as authentic as possible in a time of physical distancing, and does it feel as though this approach has the potential to grow online social movements? Practical delivery of online events and workshops could be supported by a review of recent literature about remote social contact and online social movements.

Diversity within See Me's volunteer base and participating audiences

Given that the events were put together quickly in response to lockdown, it was to be expected that a core group of volunteers would get involved initially. This has provided a strong platform to build the diversity of volunteers and audiences who participate in future events. Consideration should be given to diversifying See Me's volunteer base and creating greater diversity among the audiences that it appeals to through future workshops and events.

Developing a series of universal and targeted events

Appealing to people who are generally interested in mental health personally and professionally, through to those affected by specific conditions or possessing protected characteristics, by offering themed and tailored events and workshops. This will allow people to participate in events and workshops based on their interests and needs and increase diversity of volunteers and audiences overall by offering a wider range of participation opportunities.

Variety of event and workshop content

Event participants suggested that a wider variety of content, topics and speakers would be welcomed. People liked the interactive nature of the events and engaging presenters with lived experience stories. They also liked that the events gave them useful information and practical advice to apply in their own work or lives. A consultation with a sample of volunteers and audience members could be helpful to inform future events. The consultation could explore what content and format for events would appeal to wider audiences and different groups.

Developing a series of linked events or workshops

It was recommended by evaluation participants that larger topics, such as mental health stigma and discrimination, could be tackled over a series of linked workshops that participants could register for. This may help more thoroughly explore complex issues in depth over a period of time. Other linked events could embed the concept of the 'one question' related intended behaviour change, followed by workshops in which we learn about how people have transformed their intended behaviour changes in actions.



Talking about language and terminology

It is recommended that See Me considers delivering events or workshops that offer the opportunity for wider discussions on language and terminology that surrounds mental health problems and conditions. Evaluation participants acknowledged that this can be a challenging area to navigate for people generally, and for professionals whether not they work in mental health. The language and or terminology that is used about mental health problems and conditions in the media often creates negative perceptions of people living with mental health problems. It is recommended that See Me aims to further break down these preconceptions through events or workshops that explore language relating to different conditions and concepts such as mental health stigma and discrimination. These events could include considering strategies for normalising discussions about mental health in different environments.

Reaching audiences across Scotland

It is recommended that See Me capitalises on the removed barriers related to rurality and geography achievable by online events and workshops – the ASSS sessions reached **12** local authorities. See Me could consider future events targeted to specific geographic communities and communities of interest to broaden its reach and relevance.

Creating safe online spaces that encourage conversations about mental health

Providing safe online spaces creating welcoming environments (e.g. closed Facebook pages) for people to continue conversations about mental health in between events and workshops. As well as keeping conversations going this would support the growth of online social movements.

Developing more creative evaluation methodologies

Exploring innovative and creative ways of evaluating the process and impact of future virtual anti stigma events and activities. It is anticipated that online events will continue to be delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond by See Me, led by lived experience to facilitate remote social contact that allows people to safely talk about mental health and to stay connected. The MHF-See Me partnership should continue to try new ways of measuring process and impact in online spaces, that will enable longer term positive differences for people to be better understood.





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