See Me
End mental health discrimination

Spotlight on…

Senior leadership commitment to tackling mental health stigma and discrimination

Senior leadership commitment and engagement is one of seven key building blocks for creating a workplace environment inclusive of mental health and free from mental health stigma and discrimination.

Senior leaders have the power to create the right working conditions and environments to enable employees to bring their whole self to work; perform at their best, and get the support they need to stay in/return to work when their health and wellbeing get in the way of carrying out duties and responsibilities to the best of their abilities.

Senior leadership commitment is most effective when set in the wider context and strategic approach, and a plan is in place to identify and take action to address any issues.

Why it's important for senior leaders to understand the impact of stigma and discrimination in the workplace

Mental health stigma and discrimination prevents employers from meeting their legal and moral responsibility to promote and protect employees' health and wellbeing:

- **35%** of the Scottish workforce have been formally diagnosed with a mental health condition at some point in their lifetime – that is **one in three employees**.

- **Two in five** (**39%**) employees in Scotland have experienced poor mental health due to work, or where work was a contributing factor.

- **One in five** (**22%**) employees in Scotland think that people in their workplace have a good understanding of the importance of employee mental health.[1]
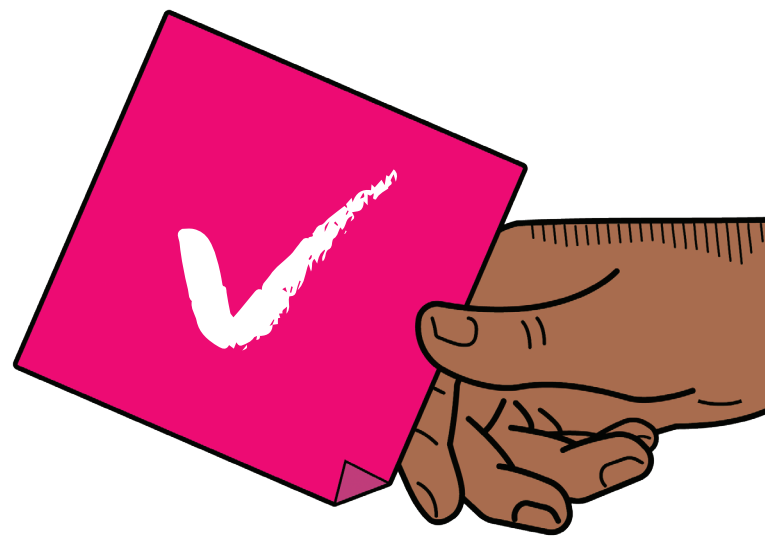
Mental health stigma and discrimination carries a high cost for employers:

- The cost of poor mental health (including presenteeism, sickness absence and staff turnover) to UK employers is estimated to be up to **£56bn**, with mental health problems accounting for the loss of **over 91 million** working days each year.[2]

Mental health stigma and discrimination can add a human cost to your business:

- In Scotland two people die by suicide every day. **81%** of people that completed suicide were of working age and two thirds were employed at the time.[3]

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1. Mental Health at Work 2019 Summary Report: Scotland focus. BITC.
2. Mental health and employers, the case for investment - pandemic and beyond (2022) Deloitte.
3. Probable Suicides (2021). National Records of Scotland.

Mental health stigma and discrimination thrives in workplaces where business is put above employees' wellbeing:

- The **three main causes** of stress at work in the UK are reported to be:
    1. excessive workload
    2. lack of control
    3. lack of support

- **67%** of employees self reported as having moderate to high levels of stress.[4]

- **75%** of managers in the Scottish workforce say there are barriers to them providing mental health support.

- **64%** of managers in the Scottish workforce faced situations where they put the interests of their organisation above the wellbeing of colleagues.

Mental health stigma and discrimination stops employees from asking for help:

- **48%** of employees think that someone in their work would be unlikely to disclose a mental health problem for fear of losing their job.

- **55%** of employees think that a colleague would be unlikely to disclose a mental health problem for fear of being moved to another post / passed over for promotion.

- **37%** of those who disclosed poor mental health symptoms felt ignored.

4. Top 10 causes of stress at work (2022). Champion Health.

The See Me in Work programme identified three key actions for senior leaders

1

Leadership role models

Organisational and culture change requires leadership action. Leaders have an opportunity to role model positive attitudes and inclusive behaviours, and to facilitate a culture that is open, honest and free from mental health stigma and discrimination. By opening up and talking about their own mental health experiences, or creating the conditions for others to safely speak out, leaders set strong messages and permissions for employees to take action without fear of negative consequences.

2

Internal communication

If employees are unaware of the existence or purpose of training, support, mental health first aiders, champions, campaigns, etc. they won't engage or make the best use of them. Leaders must encourage clear and consistent communications that express commitment to addressing stigma and discrimination. This should be across multiple channels and at times when employees, especially those seldom heard or less likely to engage, are likely to be able to engage with them.

3

Line management

Leaders have a key role in ensuring all managers have the skills and confidence to open conversations about mental health with their employees; offer a compassionate and supportive response, and signpost to available support. Leaders should ensure line managers have a clear, consistent process and policy to put reasonable adjustments in place when employees disclose mental health problems – or are experiencing early signs of poor mental health. They must also have up-to-date signposting information.

Key resources and reading

- **Senior leadership commitment and engagement - A case study from Scottish Government Safer Communities Directorate:**
  www.seemescotland.org/media/10228/see-me-bb1-case-study_leadership.pdf

- **Leaders as Role Models – What the Research Tells Us:**
  www.people-equation.com/leaders-as-role-models-research

- **Making the business case:**
  www.seemescotland.org/media/7639/stigma-and-discrimination.pdf

- **Mental Health Toolkit for Employers, Business in the Community:**
  www.wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/all-resources/toolkits/mental-health-employers-toolkit

- **Poor mental health cost calculator:**
  www.seemescotland.org/workplace/see-me-in-work/step-1-sign-up/cost-calculator

- **See Me in Work self-assessment tool:**
  www.seemescotland.org/workplace/resources-and-e-learning

- **Thriving at Work, UK Government (2017):**
  www.gov.uk/government/publications/thriving-at-work-a-review-of-mental-health-and-employers

Want to do more?

Support your workplace by downloading and sharing the Spotlight On videos and other social media resources.
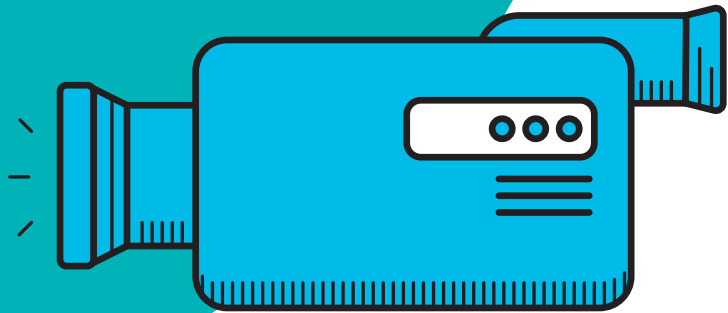
Join the conversation on social media and share what you or your organisation is doing to create a workplace inclusive of mental health and free from mental health stigma and discrimination.

 seemescotland

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See Me

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Find out how See Me in Work can help your organisation at:

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