



# **Spotlight on...**

**Mental health awareness  
and literacy**

**Mental health awareness and literacy is one of seven key building blocks for creating a workplace environment inclusive of mental health and free from mental health stigma and discrimination.**

**Providing facts and dispelling myths about mental health will go some way to support everyone in your organisation to be better able to understand and support others with mental health problems, and challenge stigmatising attitudes, language and behaviour.**





# Why is mental health literacy important to tackle stigma and discrimination?

- Mental health literacy refers to an individual's knowledge and beliefs about mental health and mental illness. Having good mental health literacy means individuals:
  - Understand wellbeing and know how to keep well
  - Understand mental health problems and their treatments
  - Are confident to talk about mental health problems
  - Are confident to seek help for themselves and others.
- A lack of understanding about mental health and mental illness can lead to stigma and discrimination towards those experiencing mental health problems.
- People with limited mental health literacy may be unable to recognise signs of distress in themselves or others, which can stop them from seeking, offering or signposting to support.
- Using stigmatising, non-inclusive and/or offensive language about mental health and mental illness creates a culture where people won't want to speak up and ask for help when they are struggling.

# What are the benefits of increasing mental health literacy in the workplace?

- Encouraging open and honest discussion about mental health and mental health problems, using non-stigmatising language, reduces the reluctance to open up and fosters a more supportive workplace.
- Increasing awareness of mental health problems will allow employees to recognise the early signs that they might be struggling and seek help as soon as possible.
- When people feel confident to talk openly and honestly about mental health this also creates confidence to challenge negative attitudes and behaviours, and allows others to see that it is safe to speak up without fear of repercussions.
- Ensuring that all employees have access to information and guidance will support them to self-manage their own mental health and wellbeing.



# Key statistics

See Me commissioned a poll of over 2,000 people as part of the most extensive research into mental health stigma in Scotland for over five years. It was found that:

**82%**

in believe it is possible to have a mental health problem and live a meaningful life.

**66%**

with a mental health condition have experienced stigma and discrimination online, in work, in school or in a GP practice.

People most commonly experience stigma and discrimination from the people closest to them (friends, work colleagues, immediate family).

**62%**

think public perception around mental health has improved since the start of the pandemic.

Over one in ten (12%) people wouldn't recommend somebody for a job if they had a mental health problem.

**49%**

wouldn't be confident to tackle stigma and discrimination because they don't have the right skills.

**25%**

of Scots would not feel comfortable talking openly about workplace mental health.

See Me also commissioned Censuswide to carry out a specific poll of 1,000 Scottish workers, which found:

**45%**

say they have experienced a mental health problem.

**33%**

say their workplace supports employees who are returning to work after time off due to a mental health problem.

**29%**

of people say their organisation makes clear efforts to increase staff's mental health awareness.

**26%**

say their organisation encourages staff to talk openly about mental health problems.

**38%**

think that someone would be unlikely to disclose their mental health problem for fear of being discriminated against by their colleagues.

**38%**

think that someone would be unlikely to disclose their mental health problem for fear of losing their job.

**19%**

have needed time off for their mental health but have felt unable to take it.

# What the See Me in Work programme identified

**The See Me in Work programme identified that in order to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination and promote mental health inclusion in the workplace, action to increase mental health awareness and literacy is required. Information, training and details of sources of support:**

- 1 Should be made accessible to all employees in the organisation, including senior leaders, board members, managers, employees and volunteers, as part of their learning and development.
- 2 Should be included in the organisation's 'knowledge and skills framework', ensuring that employees with line management responsibilities and duty of care towards others in the organisation; have appropriate levels of understanding and confidence to open conversations about mental health, and respond effectively.
- 3 Should be mandatory for key roles, particularly those that require contact with people that might have experience of mental health problems.
- 4 Should be embedded across all areas of the organisation, e.g. customer service, operations, research and development, health and safety, IT, organisational development, etc.
- 5 Should be done using many forms such as leaflets, posters, lectures, videos and teaching materials.
- 6 Should contribute to embedding a focus on tackling mental health stigma and discrimination in the workplace, using inclusive and stigma-free language and promoting anti-stigma messaging.
- 7 Should be adequately resourced, building in costs/time for participation in advance. If cost is a barrier the organisation should tap into external free training and resources from programmes, including those listed in the next section.
- 8 Should raise awareness of a wide spectrum of mental health conditions, from common mental health problems like depression and anxiety to mental illnesses like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, psychosis, etc.
- 9 Should support the concept of recovery, promote self-management and include signposting to support organisations at local and national level.
- 10 Should take into account the needs of a diverse workforce.
- 11 Should include social contact activities (i.e. when conversations happen between those who have experience of mental health problems and those who do not).
- 12 Should be part of the role of peer networks and champions in the workplace.

# Key resources and reading

## See Me resources and case studies

- **Mental health awareness and literacy – A case study from HM Passport Office:**  
[www.seemescotland.org/media/10230/see-me-bb3-case-study\\_mh-literacy-and-awareness.pdf](http://www.seemescotland.org/media/10230/see-me-bb3-case-study_mh-literacy-and-awareness.pdf)
  - **See Me, Talking about mental health:**  
[www.seemescotland.org/media/7648/talking-about-mental-health.pdf](http://www.seemescotland.org/media/7648/talking-about-mental-health.pdf)
  - **See Us movement:**  
[www.seemescotland.org/seeus](http://www.seemescotland.org/seeus)
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## Other resources and guidance

- **SAMH Guides – About mental health:**  
[www.samh.org.uk/about-mental-health](http://www.samh.org.uk/about-mental-health)
  - **Mental Health Foundation – Educational films for mental wellbeing:**  
[www.mentalhealth.org.uk/educational-films-mental-wellbeing](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/educational-films-mental-wellbeing)
  - **Heads Together – Heads Up campaign video:**  
[www.headstogether.org.uk/heads-up](http://www.headstogether.org.uk/heads-up)
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## E-learning

- **See Me in Work – E-learning modules:**  
[www.seemescotland.org/e-learning](http://www.seemescotland.org/e-learning)
- **Samaritans – On line learning:**  
[www.samaritans.org/scotland/how-we-can-help/workplace/wellbeing-workplace](http://www.samaritans.org/scotland/how-we-can-help/workplace/wellbeing-workplace)



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

**[www.seemescotland.org](http://www.seemescotland.org)**

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