



End mental health
discrimination

Spotlight on...

**Creating mentally healthy,
stigma-free organisational culture
and ethos**

Creating a stigma-free culture and ethos is one of seven key building blocks for creating a workplace environment inclusive of mental health and free from mental health stigma and discrimination.

Organisational culture is at the heart of normalising mental health. It is crucial to foster environments where trust and confidentiality are established, and people feel confident and safe to speak openly about their mental health – whether this is good or poor.

Targeted activity and interactions that embed credible social contact and listen to people with experience of mental health problems can highlight the reality of stigma and discrimination experienced by employees, and reinforce recovery.

The development of peer or peer-led approaches (e.g. networks) can help to break down stigma-related barriers by normalising recovery.

What do we mean by organisational culture and ethos?

- Culture can have multiple definitions depending on the context. In this case, we refer to the beliefs, attitudes and social behaviours of an organisation's employees and representatives at all levels. From the workers to the senior leaders.
- An organisation's ethos refers to the underlying sentiment or character of the culture. Some organisations might have a defined ethos as part of their mission statement or company values. In this case, we refer to whether the organisation's workplace culture can be described as inclusive, supportive and accepting of those with experience of mental health problems.



What does stigma-free culture and ethos look like?

Organisational culture and ethos free from mental health stigma create a working environment where:

- Everyone can talk freely about their mental health needs, ask for help and get support when needed.
- Everyone understands that mental health and physical health are equally as important and they are interlinked.
- The organisation provides regular opportunities for everyone to share experiences and get peer support.
- Everyone, but particularly line managers and senior leaders, acts as role models, encouraging open discussions about mental health, challenging stigmatising language and attitudes, and taking a zero-tolerance approach to discriminatory behaviours.



What are the benefits of a stigma free culture and ethos?

There are multiple benefits to creating organisational culture and ethos free from mental health stigma and discrimination, including:

- People thrive in a culture which promotes trust and respect; protects fairness and creates equity for people experiencing mental health problems.
- People are able to share their experiences of mental health problems, helping to normalise the conversation, create empathy and provide hope to others that recovery is possible. In fact, evidence shows that social contact (i.e. people with mental health problems having conversations with those that do not) is a key feature of tackling mental health stigma and discrimination.
- Employees feel valued and listened to as a part of the organisation. This is particularly true when employees who experience mental health problems are encouraged to help shape relevant policies, procedures and mental health improvement interventions. This not only builds trust but it also helps reduce the risk of structural discrimination in the future.
- Employees are able to share their experiences with people who have an understanding of their circumstances, and can engage in peer-led activities that provide a safe space to build trust and have open conversations about mental health.

What the See Me in Work programme identified

The See Me in Work programme identified key conditions for creating organisational culture and ethos free from mental health stigma and discrimination:

1

Senior leaders role modelling and positively influencing the perception and practicality of speaking about mental health in the workplace. This positive environment can be encouraged through openly discussing the issue, taking part in learning events, communicating the importance of mental health and leading sessions with employees about mental health in the workplace.

3

Ensuring that employees with experience of mental health problems are involved in the development of practices that impact them. This will support more inclusive policy and practice based on lived experience. It will also improve the control and influence employees have, helping improve their wellbeing outcomes and recovery.

2

Ensuring social contact and peer-to-peer approaches are embedded in the organisation, helping normalise the conversation around mental health, as well as challenge stigmatising language and stereotypes.

4

Prioritising workforce wellbeing and ensuring that colleagues can care for themselves, request and access support when needed and work in an environment where they can support each other.



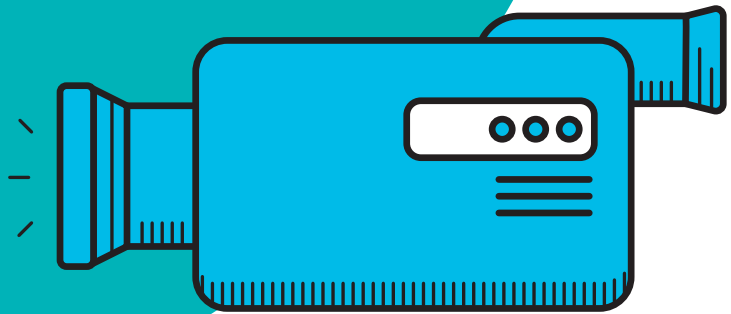
Key resources and reading

- **Stigma-free organisational culture and ethos – A case study from Dunoon Grammar School:**
www.seemescotland.org/media/10234/see-me-bb7-case-study_organisational-culture.pdf
- **See Us – Social Movement Campaign:**
www.seemescotland.org/SeeUs
- **Keeping yourself well at work:**
 - www.samh.org.uk/documents/5ways_Leaflet_digital.pdf
 - www.samh.org.uk/documents/SAMH_How_To_Be_Mentally_Healthy_At_Work_1.pdf
- **Pass the Badge in work:**
www.seemescotland.org/workplace/learning-from-others/pass-the-badge-in-work
- **Learning from others:**
www.seemescotland.org/workplace/learning-from-others/facilitating-mental-health-awareness-sessions



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.

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