



Public stigma

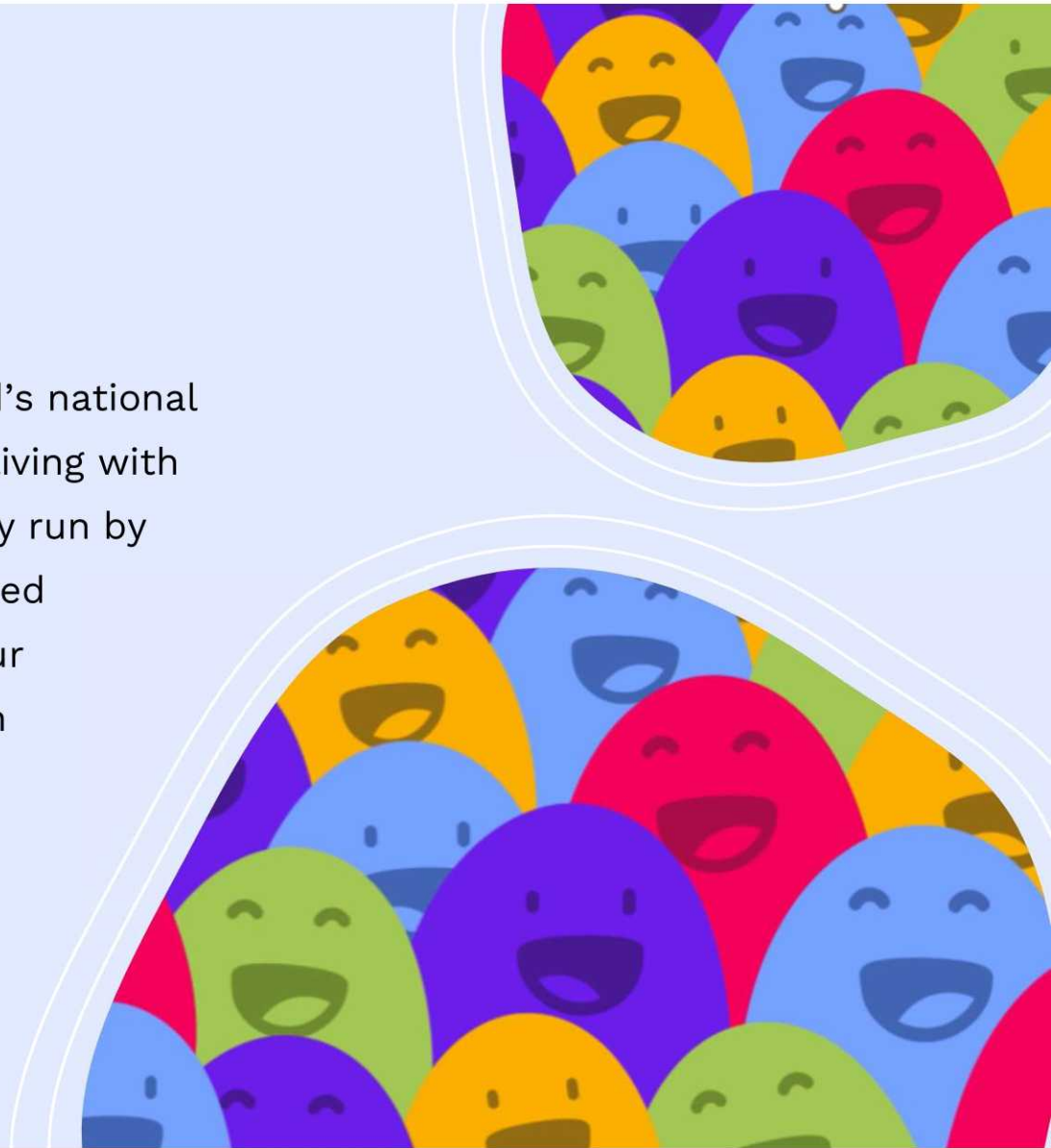
Natalie Stevenson

VOX Scotland



Voices of Experience (VOX) Scotland is Scotland's national organisation for collective advocacy for people living with mental illness. We are a membership-led charity run by people with lived experience, for people with lived experience of mental ill health. We represent our members' views to Scotland's politicians, health professionals and other bodies to try to ensure mental health policy and practice reflect our members' needs and interests.

<https://voxscotland.org.uk/>



Public stigma

1. Exploration of stigma and how it affects people with experience of severe and complex mental illness
2. The role of VOX and lived experience in tackling stigma
3. What you believe needs to change, and how we can achieve that



Exploration of stigma and how it affects people with experience of severe and complex mental illness

A still from a talk show featuring Lewis Capaldi on the left, wearing a light blue blazer and laughing heartily. He is seated in a large, plush, mustard-colored armchair. To his right, another man with long brown hair, wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and black trousers, sits in a similar armchair with a more neutral expression. Between them is a low, round wooden table. In the foreground, another round table holds several glasses and a bowl of fruit. The background consists of a large window showing a vibrant, illuminated city skyline at night. A white speech bubble is superimposed over the center of the image, containing the text "People thought I was on cocaine".

"People thought I was
on cocaine"

Lewis Capaldi 2022

Where are the places where people might experience stigma from the public?



- Public transport / moving around places we live
- Including travelling to work / appointments



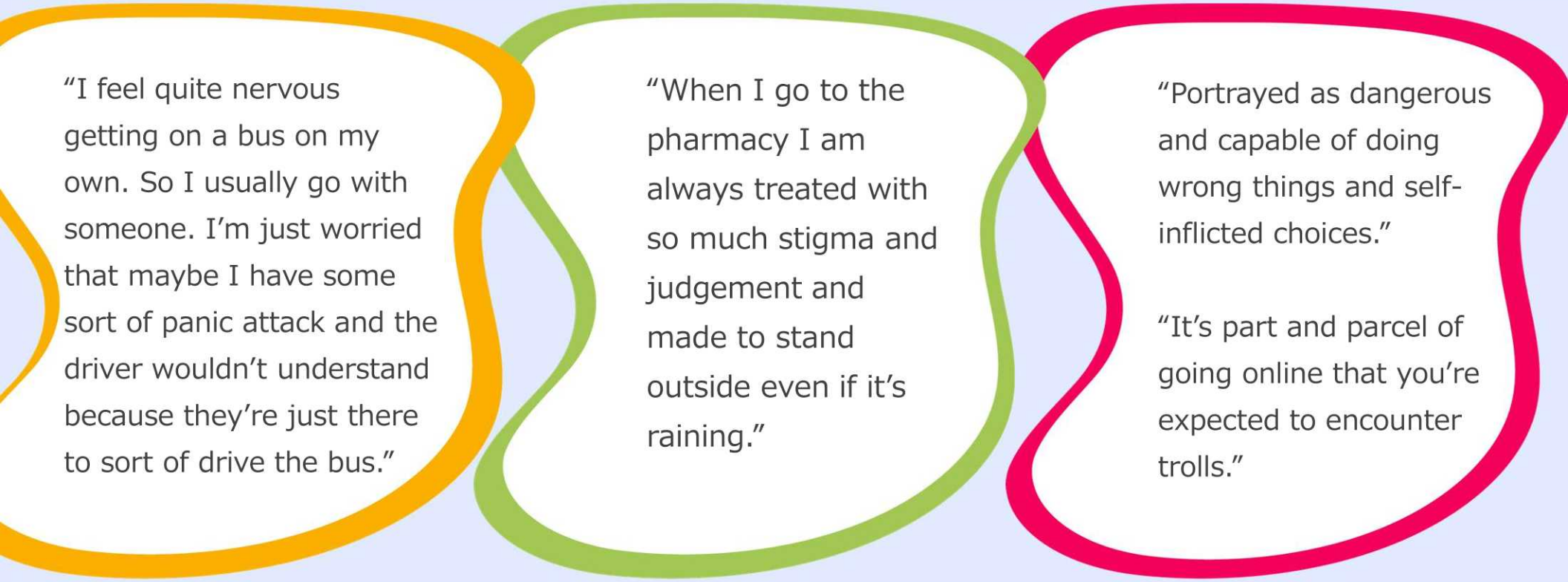
- Where we live (particularly if our homes look different)
- At work
- In public spaces such as cafes, libraries, cinemas, religious buildings, pharmacies, etc



- Online
- In the media

- Being treated unfairly, without respect and dignity
- Not being included or being asked to leave
- Feeling pressured to into unwanted decisions or not being included in decision making
- Seeing hurtful, offensive and/or upsetting attitudes, views and portrayals of people living with mental illness
- Having their thoughts, views, opinions dismissed or not taken seriously
- Receiving inappropriate or inadequate service, care and/or support





"I feel quite nervous getting on a bus on my own. So I usually go with someone. I'm just worried that maybe I have some sort of panic attack and the driver wouldn't understand because they're just there to sort of drive the bus."

"When I go to the pharmacy I am always treated with so much stigma and judgement and made to stand outside even if it's raining."

"Portrayed as dangerous and capable of doing wrong things and self-inflicted choices."

"It's part and parcel of going online that you're expected to encounter trolls."

"I use the sunflower mental health lanyard when I'm in situations where I might feel anxious. I've never had any problems and other people have treated me with patience and allowed me to take my time, and seem to care that I have mental health issues, e.g. in the supermarket and at the dentist."

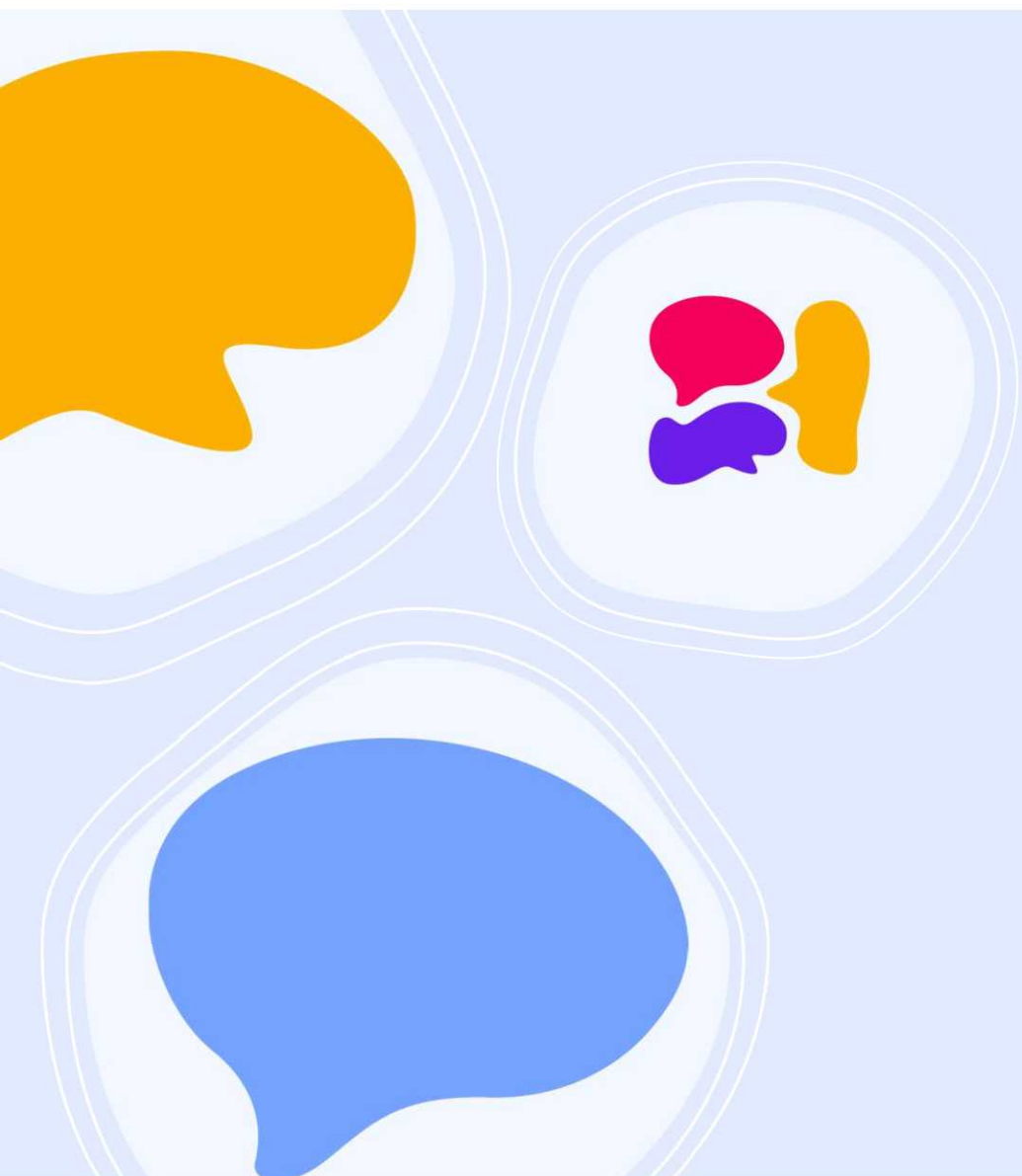
Psychiatric disorders now make up 39 per cent of claims, while musculoskeletal issues, including pain, account for a further third of total claims.

The statistics reveal that the group most likely to claim for anxiety or depression are people in their 50s, followed by those in their 30s.

The figures follow Sir **Keir Starmer** pledge last month to 'crack down hard' on the 'bulging benefits bill blighting our society'.

Am I a blight
on society?





What is the impact of public stigma for people living with mental illness?

I have ASD/ADHD/EUPD. I've been called "loser," "monster," a vast range of negative labels. **How can I ever get better when constantly hearing these things**, not only from general public, but from the people who are meant to help!

VOX Member

**How can I ever get better when
constantly hearing these things**

The role of VOX and lived experience in tackling stigma

I know it's okay to live with mental illness. Awareness has come a long way. However, I still experience stigma from healthcare workers. I also feel reluctant to disclose my diagnosis at work despite applauding others for doing so. I can feel one thing but act the opposite. That's the effect of stigma.

VOX Member

- Sharing the voices of people living with mental illness.
- Increasing awareness of the 'variety and fluctuations in mental health'. Sometimes we can look okay and sometimes we are in distress. What do severe mental illnesses really look like?
- Working to ensure that people are given time, space and compassion.
- Influencing Scottish Government: Shaping Scottish policy and the design and delivery of services.
- Campaigning when we see public stigma playing out in the media and politics for example responding to welfare reform consultations.
- Creating peer support and safe spaces.



What needs to change and how we can achieve that?



Resources

Better funding for services, less pressure within workforce and society



Leadership

Prioritising culture change across society



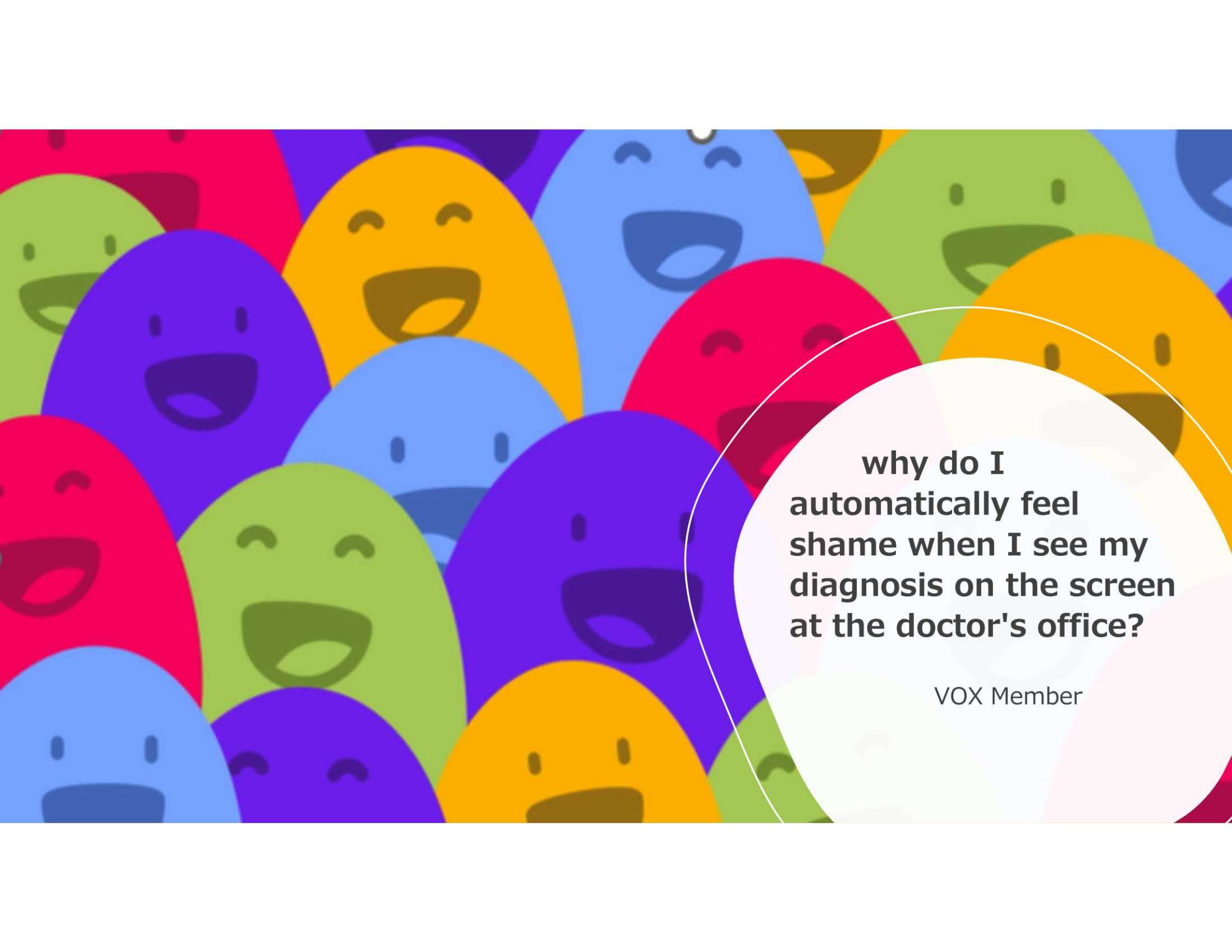
Awareness & Understanding

Education, training alongside people with lived experience



Listen to lived experience

Lived experience at the heart of service design and policy making



**why do I
automatically feel
shame when I see my
diagnosis on the screen
at the doctor's office?**

VOX Member



Thank You

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<https://voxscotland.org.uk/>

