



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

School Pupils and Teachers Across Ayr to Get Mental Health Stigma Training

SCHOOLS across North Ayrshire have joined up with a leading mental health programme to tackle stigma and improve mental health for young people.

A total of 36 staff, and 240 pupils are being trained in in Scottish Mental Health First Aid, and See Me's 'What's on your mind?' pack.

The What's On Your Mind pack is for young people and the adults in their lives, to help build confidence on discussing mental health, look at the impact of stigma and discrimination and how we can tackle it.

Teachers and pupils began their training in June, and once it's complete the staff and pupils will be able to take the pack back to teach in their schools, potentially reaching all 7842 pupils in North Ayrshire. Training is also being run in Lanarkshire, and The Borders, reaching 23,000 pupils in total.

Getting young people to talk about mental health is a key focus for See Me. A survey released as part of their FeelsFM campaign in September revealed that only 26% of young people would tell someone they're finding it difficult to cope, and 62% think people are treated unfairly if they have a mental health condition.

Kirsty, one of the pupils who took part in the training, said: "I decided to do the mental health training because mental health is a really big thing and impacts on everyone's lives. I want to help people if they ever need someone to talk to."

See Me youth volunteer, Sally Nimmo, 25, is helping to train the pupils. She said: "When I was in school we didn't get anything on mental health, we didn't know what mental health was. So I think this is really important to give the kids space to talk about things which they have maybe never spoken about before.

"The more opportunity you give young people, the more comfortable they become in speaking about it. I think getting young people to ask questions about suicide is really useful, because they probably will have never done that before, and it is a really useful skill to have."

Stuart Sheriffs, Geography and Modern Studies teacher at Auchenharvie Academy, said: "We wanted to do the training as it's about the confidence to approach conversations with the sound knowledge that you aren't saying something you're unsure about. We often avoid these sorts of conversations and pass them on to pastoral staff or deputy heads.

"Staff training will empower school staff to feel confident when discussing mental wellbeing and open up conversations as easily as we discuss our physical health.

"We wanted our pupils to take part in the training as following feedback from previous See Me work in other local authorities it was emphasised that junior years took more out of the sessions when delivered with senior pupils. By providing our senior pupils with this knowledge and skill to listen effectively, it is hoped that they can better support the junior years and those entering into secondary education from primary."

Michelle Fullerton, PT Guidance teacher at Greenwood Academy, said: "It's important to be able to discuss mental health and show young people that it's important to talk about it. Nobody should feel they can't."

Suzie Dick, deputy head teacher at Arran High School, said: "We are aware of our unique context that, as an island, there is no separation between us and the community, we are all one, so that whatever we did had to reflect that. See Me were key partners for us in helping us provide training for our community.

"The end result has been 34 members of our community, including our upper school, who have a certificate in mental health first aid.

"The ultimate impact we are hoping for is that the stigma is removed community wide and that the support begins at home with early recognition and acknowledgement that everyone has mental health and what to do to promote a positive mental health and to support others to do so also. "

Eilidh James, principal teacher mental health and wellbeing at North Ayrshire Council, said: "I wanted to organise this training as there is a real need for young people to develop confidence in emotional literacy. One of the barriers to this is stigma and discrimination I believe that through the work with See Me, there should be a positive impact on student wellbeing."

Laura Sharpe, See Me's education and young people manager, said: "Too many young people feel they can't speak about how they are feeling, often because they worry about being judged or dismissed.

"To help young people recover from mental health conditions they need to be able to speak about it, to get care and support quickly.

"So we are delighted that schools across North Ayrshire want to help equip adults and young people to have these important conversations on mental health and tackle the stigma which still exists."

You can find out more at <https://www.seemescotland.org/young-people/>.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

NICK JEDRZEJEWSKI [Communications Manager]

0141 530 1049/07710 387 517

Nick.jedrzejewski@seemescotland.org

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Schools taking part are **Ardrossan Academy, Arran High School, Auchenhavie Academy, Garnock Community Campus, Greenwood Academy, Irvine Royal Academy, Kilwinning Academy, Largs Academy, St Matthews**
2. See Me is Scotland's National programme to end mental health stigma and discrimination, enabling people who experience mental health problems to live fulfilled lives.

We do this by:

- Mobilising people to work together and lead a movement to end mental health stigma and discrimination
 - Working with people to change negative behaviour towards those with mental health problems
 - Ensuring that the human rights of people with mental health problems are respected and upheld
3. Follow See Me on Twitter or Instagram @seemescotland or find us on Facebook: Facebook/seemescotland, or at www.seemescotland.org
 4. See Me is managed by SAMH and the Mental Health Foundation and funded by Scottish Government and Comic Relief

