

Partnership Working

Tackling Stigma in Hard to Reach Communities

What did we do?

See Me has funded and worked with deafscotland for around three years. The partnership has a focus on continuing work with harder-to-reach communities to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination for those affected by deafness in an inclusive way.

With funding and support from See Me and The ALLIANCE deafscotland developed several short and accessible film clips, incorporating BSL, subtitles and voice over. The film clips were launched in April 2019 and provide information and stories about issues including mental health, anxiety, depression and bereavement. The film clips were co-developed with those affected by deafness including BSL users. The project also involves training peer supporters, trailing a baseline mental health survey and promoting awareness of the stigma and discrimination faced by people affected by deafness and sharing learning.

Why did we get involved?

Evidence shows that people affected by deafness across the four key pillars (Deaf/Deaf BSL, deafened, deafblind and hard of hearing) are at increased risk of mental ill health. Opportunities to build resilience and peer support to help prevent mental health problems for those affected by deafness is reduced by a number of factors including lack of knowledge and understanding of concept and impact.



How does this fit with See Me's work?

deafscotland is aiming to adapt the essence of the See Me programme to be fully accessible to Deaf British Sign Language users. See Me also need to reach people across Scotland tackling stigma and discrimination in different communities. Partnership working is the best way to do this.

What was the process?

This has been a phased approach initially identifying the need to raise awareness and build capacity among BSL users in relation to mental health stigma and discrimination. deafscotland intends to access Community Champion training through See Me, to adopt the Champion approach. The partnership works towards two intended outcomes:

- To reduce mental health stigma and discrimination within D/deaf communities.
- To reduce the multiple stigma and discrimination experienced by D/deaf people more widely in communities and key settings.

Partnership Working

Tackling Stigma in Hard to Reach Communities

What was See Me's influence?

A representative from deafscotland said there are links between the organisation and See Me in their aims. The significant number of people affected by deafness and mental health problems can often be overlooked. The concept of empowering people to take control of their lives and mental health and the preventative approach of See Me, resonated with deafscotland. Often it is seen as less acceptable to have a mental health problem in the deaf community because there is a lack of understanding and it is not seen as the norm. Working with See Me has helped to break down these preconceptions.

The impact they've [See Me] made in society in Scotland has been great, and the work they've done with deaf people has been phenomenal compared to other mental health organisations. **deafscotland representative**

Everybody has mental health. Some people have good mental health, and some have bad mental health...they forget about deaf people, thinking it's a small minority, but it's actually one in five of the population. **deafscotland representative**

What is the Impact?

Emerging impact of partnership working between See Me and deafscotland has demonstrated increased confidence and improved awareness of mental health conditions through the survey and indicates that BSL users identify with the issues raised by the film clips. There has been about 10,000 view of each of the film clips. The launch of the films raised awareness of the mental health challenges faced by people affected by deafness. Using See Me's national platform, deafscotland has been able to grow its reach and communicate messages more widely.

We really wanted to get our messages out to everybody...taking that whole population approach. **deafscotland representative**

We're very much about the social model and how we break down barriers, rather than how we fix the individuals. **deafscotland representative**

Working with See Me enabled deafscotland to explore a peer support approach as an alternative to traditional services and care. It has also supported deafscotland to reframe its work in the language of human rights and understand more about prevention and early intervention. It has emphasised the importance of using the voice of lived experience to co-produce messaging and materials.

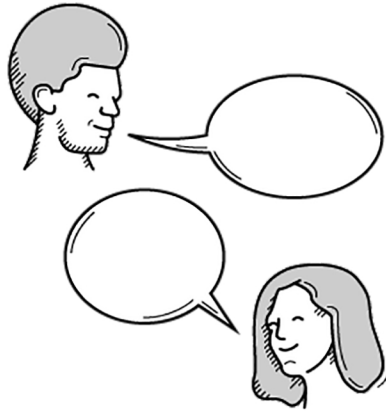
I think the benefit to us and to See Me is that we've had deaf people at the heart of the work that we've been doing. **deafscotland representative**

Funding from See Me allowed deafscotland to leverage other investment that has made work around mental health stigma and discrimination among those affected by deafness possible. But also the faith that See Me placed in deafscotland to achieve positive outcomes was important.



Partnership Working

Tackling Stigma in Hard to Reach Communities



Learning and next steps?

The project has encountered some challenges along the way including sourcing match funding to progress the work and the time taken to ensure that activities were genuinely BSL-led. Moving ahead there is a clearer understanding of the timescales involved in accommodating language and communication barriers.

deafscotland will focus on securing additional investment to build on the anti-stigma work they have begun. The next stage of work will be about getting the anti-stigma message out beyond the deaf community. deafscotland would like the opportunity to raise awareness among and educate health and social care professionals about the unique mental health challenges faced by deaf people. An early intervention and prevention approach could result in longer-term savings for health and social care services because due to the complex communication and language barriers involved.

Sourcing funding to undertake in-depth research about the interaction between deafness and different types of mental health conditions, to demonstrate the need for mental health support for those affected by deafness is a priority going forward. An increased focus on the impact of mental challenges on young people affected by deafness is being explored. Future work with See Me around influencing policy and national decision making about investing in mental health for people affected by deafness is also a priority.

I think we've learned a lot from our involvement with See Me in terms of the campaigning work and approach. **deafscotland representative**

