



PRESS RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 ON 6/2/2020

*PHOTOCALL AND INTERVIEWS WITH SEE ME VOLUNTEERS, MUSICIANS AND STAFF
AVAILABLE AT NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY AT 11AM ON FEBRAURY 6*

PICS ATTACHED

New research shows surveyed Scots could be losing out on mental health support from loved ones, because they want to avoid having awkward conversations.

A NEW survey of Scottish adults has revealed that nearly a third would put off speaking to a friend who is struggling with their mental health, to avoid having an awkward conversation.

A survey, released for Time to Talk day (FEB 6) also revealed that 39 per cent would avoid having a conversation with a friend about that friend's mental health, for fear of saying the wrong thing.

As well as that, more than half of people (51 per cent) said they would prefer not to tell anyone if they had a mental health problem and deal with it themselves, even if they thought it would be helpful to speak to someone about it.

See Me, the national programme to end mental health discrimination, said that stigma is stopping conversations and wants to see people talking more and getting help.

Jenn Barnes, 32, from Glasgow, found it difficult to talk to anyone when she was struggling with depression. She said: "I didn't think by sharing my problem it would have made it better, so I kept it to myself. I've always been quite an independent person and thought that I could fix problems on my own and when I realised I couldn't, I was embarrassed more than anything.

"I wasn't able to ask people to help me, because inside my head I didn't know what was going on and I couldn't find that path through to feeling better, to feeling happy again. By having to talk to someone and ask for help I felt like I had failed.

“When I eventually did speak to a friend after it getting to a point where I really thought I was going to do myself some damage, I realised that if I had done that weeks before I could have saved myself a lot of grief and emotional problems that lasted a whole lot longer than if I’d tackled it earlier.”

In the last two years Jenn has spoken a lot about mental health, and encouraged others to speak out and ask for help, after her brother, Calum, took his own life. However, she found that people would avoid talking to her, just when she needed to talk most.

She said: “My friends, my close group are very good at talking to me about it, but other people would just completely avoid me. I remember walking through the city centre and seeing someone I knew, and they saw me and literally walked the other way so they didn’t have to speak to me.

“It is a very difficult conversation to have with anyone, but all I wanted was to talk about it, because for me it helped and it still helps now.

“I think by speaking about it, and telling as many people who will listen, it makes me feel better about it. I know it’s not the same for everyone, and some people don’t want to talk about their loss, but for me it’s very important because that is where I find relief.”

See Me are encouraging people to come down to the National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh today (THURS) from 11am to join them for a live gig, spoken word performances a mental health art tour and a Virtual Reality experience of mental health.

Wendy Halliday, See Me interim director, said: “If people avoid conversations on mental health because they might be awkward, and people who are struggling don’t want to tell anyone, that leaves a huge gap where support and care could be.

“There are a lot more conversations happening on mental health, and this Time to Talk day is set to be the biggest yet in Scotland.

“However stigma is still stopping a huge amount of conversations from happening. 75 per cent of people we surveyed would tell someone they were fine, even if they were struggling with their mental health.

“We all have a role in changing this, if you’re worried about someone, ask them if they’re okay today.”

Time to Talk day is run in Scotland by See Me, in England by Time to Change, Time to Change Wales, Change Your Mind in Northern Ireland and See Change in Ireland. Get involved using #timetotalk on social media.

ENDS...

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Release for Scottish Media, please contact Time to Change for England, Time to Change Wales, Change Your Mind in Northern Ireland and See Change in Ireland for specific national releases.

1. The research was conducted by Censuswide, with 4,251 UK respondents with 1009 in Scotland, 1000 in Northern Ireland and 500 in Wales between 09.12.2019 - 16.12.2019. Censuswide abide by and employ members of the Market Research Society which is based on the ESOMAR principles.
2. Full results:
 - Of the respondents who would avoid a difficult/serious conversation, 28% would put off speaking to a friend who is struggling with their mental health, to avoid an awkward conversation
 - Of the respondents who would avoid a difficult/serious conversation, 39% would you avoid having a conversation with a friend about their mental health, for fear of saying the wrong thing
 - 51% said if they had a mental health problem would prefer to not tell anyone and deal with it alone – even if they thought it would be helpful to speak to somebody about it
 - 75% said if somebody asked you ‘how are you’ and you were struggling with your mental health, such as feeling low, anxious or depressed, they would still say they were fine anyway
3. Case studies and interviews with See Me spokespeople are available on request.
4. 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
5. Follow See Me on Twitter or Instagram @seemescotland or find us on Facebook: Facebook/seemescotland, or at www.seemescotland.org
 6. See Me is managed by SAMH and the Mental Health Foundation and funded by Scottish Government and Comic Relief

