

**See Me**  
End mental health  
discrimination



# ***Impact Report***

2024–2025

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▲ Antje at the conversation cafe event Glasgow, October 2024.

## Foreword

**We are moving into the final year of our five-year strategy With Fairness in Mind and it's a good time to take stock of what has been achieved, what we are learning and what we need to prioritise in 2025/26 and beyond. Data shows stigma and discrimination are rising due to societal, economic and political influences, with increasing levels of intolerance towards people and communities who are already marginalised, including people with experience of mental illness.**

Across the UK there is an unhelpful public narrative surrounding people who experience mental health problems and illness. It is essential that we continue to invest in action to ensure we minimise the inevitable backslide on the prevalence and impact of mental health stigma and discrimination.

In 2024/25 See Me has continued to drive forward a whole system approach providing leadership, guidance, support and tools to equip a wide range of stakeholders across the country to act to reduce mental health stigma and discrimination at public, structural and individual level. Although it's not possible to describe all the great work that staff, partners, volunteers and people with lived experience have taken forward, a few highlights that stand out for me this year are:

Working alongside many national and local partners to develop and test an intersectional approach to tackling mental health stigma and discrimination. Although challenging at times, this work has helped us better understand that mental health stigma and discrimination are rarely experienced in isolation of other forms of discrimination. The Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study (2022) reinforced that people with a diagnosis of complex mental illness are often marginalised, stigmatised and discriminated in most areas of their lives.



Our work with people from racialised and marginalised communities has shown that people frequently face mental health stigma and discrimination in combination with other forms of discrimination (racism, ablism, poverty and homophobia), or associated with other conditions, identities, or behaviours. It has reinforced the systemic nature of mental health stigma and discrimination, and to tackle the inequality it creates, we need to drive forward an intersectional approach at structural, cultural, institutional and individual levels.

Through our arts fund we learned more about the importance of creativity in relation to individual and collective advocacy and the power of working with groups and communities to understand what the specific needs and issues are and find different ways to tackle them.

We have worked closely with a number of government colleagues and partners to mainstream action on stigma as foundational to actions set out in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan, the Leadership Board, Equality and Human Rights Forum, and the Workforce plan. Through our tailored consultancy and support we have influenced an increase in focused activity to tackle stigma in distress brief interventions, suicide prevention, mental health service improvement and workforce development.

Through our partnerships in workplaces, schools, mental health and health and social care we have been working to embed action on stigma as 'core to business' rather than being something additional to deliver. Influencing change in public services when there are pressures from staffing shortages, increasing demand, limitations in funding is particularly challenging. Despite this, through our partnerships we have been able to increase our reach through building relationship with partners, understanding their context and offering flexibility in how the work is progressed.

We have seen firsthand the power in engaging people with diverse lived experience in challenging the underlying, systemic and pervasive stigma and discrimination that continues to create bias, barriers and inequity for too many people, both a cause and consequence of poor mental health. The strength of social contact has shone through our communications, policy and public affairs work. I am incredibly grateful to all See Me volunteers and people with diverse experiences who give their time to doing all they can to challenge stigma and discrimination.

See Us, our social movement, continues to grow by combining the effort of people with lived experience with champions, supporters and partners who are all working to act on tackling stigma and discrimination. We know that to achieve the change necessary it will take all of us to create the conditions where people are treated fairly and respectfully, with no fear, shame or judgement and can realise their rights.

I'm pleased to share the impact of some of the work taken forward in this year and would like to thank everyone who joins us in our effort to end mental health stigma and discrimination for all.



**Wendy Halliday**  
See Me, Director



# Overview of Impact Report

The purpose of this report is to summarise our progress and impact over 2024/25 (Phase 3, Year 4) for Scottish Government Ministers and the programme funder.

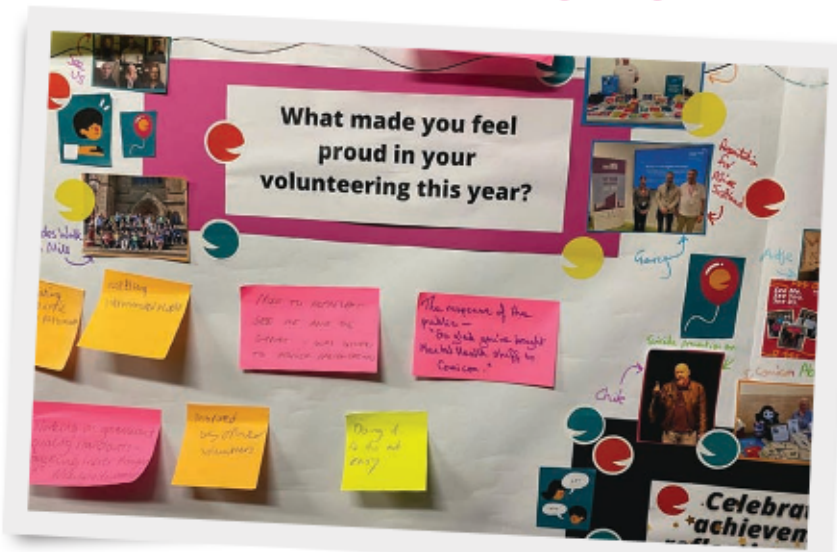
The first section of this report highlights some of the key successes and impacts achieved through the work of the See Me programme this year.

The second section features **case studies** of projects that demonstrate collaborative working, new approaches, and ultimately progress towards the six medium term programme outcomes as detailed in the See Me theory of change (see **With Fairness in Mind** 2021–2026) and listed on page 5 (**Outcomes Matrix**). This report highlights where partners and people with lived experience have worked with us to help define the nature, scale and impact of mental health stigma, to create tools and resources that can be adapted and used to challenge within systems, settings and communities. This will enable us to continue to deliver our ambitious programme in a streamlined and sustainable way. It also draws out learning and common themes across projects to highlight what works to tackle stigma and discrimination.

**This report has been produced collaboratively by See Me and the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) as programme partners and aims to describe the differences that we have made during 2024/25 and explore the learning produced.**

\* See Me recognises that terminology and labels used to refer to groups racialised and marginalised by society is ethically and politically complex, can be harmful and is subject to debate and update. Throughout this report we have used the terminology partners themselves have used to refer to the communities they are led by and work with. [This link](#) provides a glossary which illustrates our own current understandings of key terms. We are committed to continually engaging with this critical debate to understand and mitigate harm.

▼ Volunteer gathering, December 2024.



▲ Volunteers Chik and Bridget at Time to Talk Day workshop in Peebles, February 2025.



# See Me IN NUMBERS

2024/25

## COMMUNICATIONS

**105m** People reached by our media – a **36% increase**.

**4.14m** Social media impressions – a **221% increase**.

**303,000** Estimated additional mental health conversations in Scotland held for Time to Talk Day.



## POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**38** MSPs signed up to motions supporting See Me's work to tackle stigma.

**16** Policy consultation responses.

**4** Number of parliamentary events or receptions we participated in.



**60,686** Social media engagements.

**54,249** Social media followers.

**34,390** Website visits.

**19,605** Website downloads – a **6% increase**.

**5,108** People signed up for See Us movement.

**224** Media mentions.

## WORKPLACE

**164,800**

Potential number of employees reached.

**2,200**

Numbers of employers reached.

**1,750** Number of employers directly engaged with.



## GLOBAL AND UK WIDE PARTNERSHIPS

Contributed to **6 international events** and **4 UK learning exchange sessions**.

Presented our learning and research in **14 sessions** involving **39 countries**.



## COMMUNITY AND PRIORITY GROUPS

**3,700**

People reached through arts fund projects.

**114**

Capacity building sessions delivered – **more than doubled from last year.**

**855**

Participants and volunteers attended capacity building sessions.

**110**

Community and intersectional partnerships made, sustained or influenced.



## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE



**1,062**

Number of people we engaged with – **a 77% increase.**

**137**

Number of partners we worked with – **a 23% increase.**

**20**

Number of events we delivered/attended.

**18**

Number of strategic/operational partnerships we took part in.

## VOLUNTEERS

**64%**

Lived experience representations appeared in 64% of Time to Talk Day media coverage.

**36**

Volunteers participated in training.

**18**

Volunteer-led events and activities – **a 64% increase.**

**12**

Volunteers shared their story in the media – **a 20% increase.**



## EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**299,822**

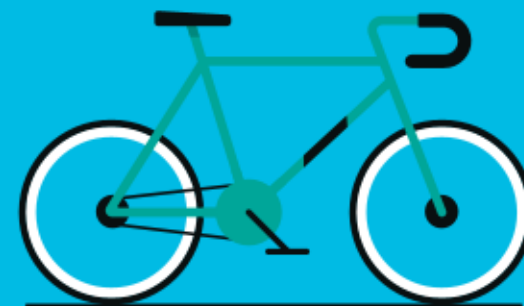
Potential number of employees reached.

**20,877**

Potential numbers of students reached.

**2,530**

Potential number of staff reached.



**295**

Number of people trained to deliver See Me See Change in schools.

**278**

Number of schools downloading Time to Talk Day resources.

**171**

Number of partners we directly engaged with.

**20**

Number of events we delivered/attended.





# ***Outcomes and Key Impacts***

# OUTCOME 1

## KEY IMPACTS

### People in the populations we target feel confident to talk openly about their mental health and their experience of stigma and discrimination

#### Centring lived experience in our communications: Time to Talk Day

Time to Talk Day is a UK-wide campaign aimed at promoting conversations about mental health. This was the eighth year of running the campaign in Scotland. The campaign featured media-trained volunteers who were supported to share their mental health experiences.

**Impact of lived experience voice:** we saw a **93% increase** in the representation of lived experience in Time to Talk Day media coverage this year, reaching a potential audience of **27 million**. The campaign also saw a 44% increase in website visits and an 11% rise in downloads, indicating a **strong public engagement**.

#### Impact on Employers:

- "We... use the packs and guidance developed by See Me, contributing to making Time to Talk Day one of the most recognised campaigns that we deliver each year." Scottish Power
- "See Me's support helped not only to foster open conversations about mental health between co-workers but demonstrated the importance of challenging overall stigma in the corporate realm. We received some fantastic resources to help drive these efforts within our own Wellbeing Champions Network." Turner & Townsend
- A participant at these sessions also stated "Because of the Time to Talk Day session I am better prepared to listen and support others."

**Impact on people with lived experience:** Our approach has also had a positive impact on the media volunteers who took part. One volunteer reflected, "It's shown me that I can speak up publicly for what I believe in and given me more confidence in doing so."

#### Breaking the Stigma project with LGBT Youth Scotland

LGBT Youth Scotland and See Me collaborated with young people and Queer Film Night to produce three videos. The videos explore the impact of mental health stigma on LGBTQ+ young people and are designed to be used to spark conversations in a range of settings.

- The videos have been viewed **over 800 times online**.
- The Breaking the Stigma project has been **shortlisted for a National Youth Work Award**.
- "These videos are extremely important to me not just as a young queer woman but also as an individual with a disability. It's very difficult to have your voice heard never mind considered but on this occasion working alongside See Me and LGBT Youth Scotland I was given that opportunity to not only have my voice heard but projected with the most important part being that there is now materials out there to help others that may feel a similar way." LGBT Youth Scotland



# OUTCOME 1

## KEY IMPACTS

### People in the populations we target feel confident to talk openly about their mental health and their experience of stigma and discrimination (continued)

#### Relaunch of If It's Okay continued the conversation around shame and mental illness

In March, we worked with partners at Time to Change Wales and Inspire in Northern Ireland for a second push of the 2024 **If It's Okay campaign**, exploring the shame often felt by people with experience of severe and enduring mental illness. Lived experience was at the heart of the campaign, shaping the messaging and extending its reach. The campaign's "If it's okay..." strapline was completed with updated verbatims from See Me volunteers and supporters, which featured across social media and our website. Volunteers Paul, Denise and Angela shared their experiences of shame too, which featured online and in the media.

##### Impact online

Through digital advertising managed in-house, If It's Okay **reached over 800,000** people in the two-week campaign period, with paid-for posts reaching **over 2.6million impressions**. Organic social posts were **seen 13,803 times**, with **545 engagements** and an overall **engagement rate of 6.12%**. The See Me website received **over 6,000 visits** in the two-week period.

##### Impact in the media

The campaign received good media coverage, securing **18 items of coverage across** national and local media in print and online – six more than the original launch in 2024. This reached a potential audience of 14 million people. Lived experience featured in **61% of coverage** for the campaign.

#### Arts Fund

This year, the Anti-Stigma Arts Fund supported six community-led participatory arts projects to explore experiences of intersectional mental health stigma, with a particularly emphasis on racialised communities.

- **115 participants** were directly involved in the arts projects across a series of exhibitions, events and workshops, which **reached an audience of 3,700 people**.
- Reflections captured from participants demonstrate increased confidence of participants to talk about mental health, on their own terms due to the elements of trauma informed safer spaces, creative freedom, peer support, community connection and strong facilitator support.

*"Being able to unmask, to share my experiences, my thoughts, my opinions, my feelings because I was given a SAFE space to do so free of judgments. And using art as a therapy to cope and to express myself was a huge added bonus! Thank you!"* (Empower Women for Change, Anti-Stigma Arts Fund)

## OUTCOME 2

## KEY IMPACTS

### People in the populations we target feel confident to have conversations with other people who are experiencing poor mental health

#### Tailoring our approach with community members

Over the past year, we have continued to build meaningful partnerships with organisations working with racialised communities and with anti-racist expertise, strengthening existing partnerships with community groups such as WSREC and Pachedu. We have also developed new partnerships with Boots and Beards and the Coalition for Race and Equality Rights.

- With senior leaders at Boots and Beards, See Me delivered a workshop on **Intersectional Stigma and Mental Health**. They highlighted the importance of continuing mental health awareness work in communities but also the need for structural change and need for equality.
- With Pachedu, See Me delivered the **It's Okay to Talk workshop**, which explored themes such as the need for cultural awareness and the importance of representing their community in the scenarios and videos provided. Participant feedback was positive, and they told us about the changes they would make because of what they learned in the session:

*"I would be more open to sharing my worries with my colleagues and been willing to help out at any challenges someone near has."* It's Okay to Talk session participant, Pachedu

*"Give more listening ears, be more empathetic and less judgemental when attending to people with mental issues."* It's Okay to Talk session participant, Pachedu

#### Parents and carers

Several of our partner schools want to involve parents and carers in their anti-stigma work. To inform this, See Me invited parents and carers of young people aged 11-18 to share their thoughts and experiences of engaging in mental health conversations with their young people via an online survey. We also engaged 10 parents and carers in a facilitated session hosted by See Me in Work partner Burness Paull.

- 130 parents and carers** took part in the survey.
- Findings from the survey enabled us to learn more about the parent and carer experience and the barriers that they face when having mental health conversations with their young people.
- Survey findings are being used to inform the development of an anti-stigma tool that schools and others can use to engage parents and carers and support reducing mental health stigma and discrimination across the school community.
- Evaluation of the workshop at Burness Paull LLP showed that the session increased participants' understanding of mental health stigma and discrimination and knowledge of resources to support mental health conversations with their young people.



## People in the populations we target feel confident to have conversations with other people who are experiencing poor mental health (continued)

### Partnership with Scottish Ambulance Service

As part of our ongoing strategic partnership with Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) we supported a survey investigating public experiences and perceptions of SAS's responses to mental health emergencies.

- **439 participants** who have experience of mental health problems or illness shared their views and experiences through the survey. The data is to be used internally within SAS to drive forward improvements in access and experience of care. The survey has been invaluable in guiding effective inclusive approaches to mental health emergency response.

*"We are incredibly grateful to See Me for their continued support in helping us engage with people who have lived experience, ensuring their voices are heard and valued in shaping and improving services the Scottish Ambulance Service provide. It has been a pleasure to work alongside such a dedicated and passionate team, and we look forward to continuing this positive and impactful partnership in the years ahead."* Chris Purnell, Scottish Ambulance Service

### Distress Brief Intervention (DBI)

From the outset of the national initiative See Me has worked with the national DBI team to embed action on stigma as central to the approach. See Me staff and volunteers have provided presentations, data, insights, consultancy, social contact based training and ongoing advice at each stage of the DBI design and implementation.

- As a result of working together, **addressing stigma is now explicitly recognised as core to the DBI approach** with particular emphasis on ensuring: Equitable and inclusive access to and experience of the service, that all points of contact are free from judgement and bias, and that people are supported in ways best suited to their needs and outcomes.

*"The continuous on-going support from See Me across our shared objectives has been invaluable, including reviewing and supporting improvements in the DBI training, strengthening the lived experience at the heart of the programme including producing videos and shaping case studies and ensuring anti-stigma best practice is culturally embedded across the programme. The results from the independent evaluation, shows that DBI is empowering front-line services to deliver a compassionate non-stigmatising response to distress, with people in distress reporting experiencing exceptionally high levels of compassion from the front-line service and third sector providers delivering the DBI support."* Kevin O'Neill, National DBI Programme Manager

# OUTCOME 3

## KEY IMPACTS

### People with experience of mental health problems feel more confident to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination

#### Youth-led Stigma PhD

See Me supported a PhD led by a student at Glasgow Caledonian University, exploring youth mental health stigma experiences. Three See Me Youth Champions were co-researchers throughout the PhD. A participatory action research model was employed, ensuring that the Champions contributed meaningfully to the development of youth stigma theory and measurement, which will shift the landscape of mental health stigma research towards a more youth-informed perspective.

- Successfully completed this year, this project has wide-reaching impact in its contribution to theoretical understanding, practical measurement, youth empowerment and involvement in research, and implications for intervention in youth mental health stigma.
- The PhD project has resulted in the development of a new conceptual model and measurement tool of Youth Mental Health Stigma.
- Findings from this research have been disseminated to over 300 conference attendees.
- *"Being the expert in the room is empowering and contributing my voice as a young person to a field that has the facilities to create change, demonstrates that we can find these spaces if we put in the work. I never considered myself capable of further education, never mind active research. I wasn't the smartest in the class, or confident enough to share my ideas – but I have learnt through this research project that I am capable."*  
K, Youth Voice Blog

#### Media training for volunteers

Tailored media training was provided to seven new volunteers, including Paul and Lisa, who shared their mental health experiences for Time to Talk Day. Their stories were used in press releases and media coverage, significantly increasing the presence of lived experience voices in the campaign. Pre-recorded audio from Lisa was used on Heart Scotland news bulletins on Time to Talk Day itself, and she also participated in a follow-up interview with BBC Scotland.

- Lived experience input had a positive impact on this year's media activity. For this year's Time to Talk Day, lived experiences voices appeared in 64% of media coverage in Scotland (83 out of 129 items of coverage featured lived experience quotes), compared to 32% in 2024 (43 out of 132) – a 93% increase in lived experience voices overall.
- *"To be honest I was very apprehensive... I was so worried about getting negative reactions... But it is something you have to be prepared for if you're sharing your story so publicly. And the negativity all stems from stigma and that is what we are trying to challenge and change... Overall though I'm glad I did it and hope that it helped at least one person, challenged someone's stigmatising attitudes or gave a voice to those in similar positions as me but who don't have the opportunity to speak out."* Paul, on sharing his story for Time to Talk Day after receiving See Me media training



# OUTCOME 3

## KEY IMPACTS

### People with experience of mental health problems feel more confident to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination (continued)

#### Moray Wellbeing Hub Peer led leadership and influence

Peer-values led, Moray Wellbeing Hub (MWH) host a social movement where their champions use their life experiences to better understand and self-manage their wellbeing but also provide support for others. Between 2018 and 2025, See Me has supported MWH through partnership working and modest funding resources. The partnership aims to tackle stigma, with a focus on self-stigma, using social movement approaches to deliver evidence-based resources and interventions in Moray.

- In 2024–25, **45 volunteers** with lived experience participated in MWH events, contributing to a total of **176 activities**, with **51 new volunteers recruited**.
- The project engaged **11 employers** and developed partnerships with local organisations to enhance mental health awareness and support in workplaces.
- Moray Wellbeing Hub **reached 28 health and social care workforce members** and engaged **89 patients** during ward visits. MWH also engaged in three HSC strategic partnerships with various health departments.
- The MWH delivered **30 capacity-building sessions**, engaging **50 participants** and fostering **6-10 community partnerships** for mental health advocacy.

#### See Us: Building a social movement for change

The See Us movement encourages and inspires people to take action to tackle stigma and discrimination. This year, we have been continuing to build meaningful connections with our audiences by platforming people's lived and living experiences. Our website is a central hub where people can access change-making resources and get involved in campaigns.

- People on social media saw our content 4.14 million times.
- There were 34,290 visits to the See Me website and 126,000 page views.
- Our resources were downloaded 19,605 times.
- 96% of the total views of our content across social media was seen by non-followers, showing that our social media channels are key to reaching new people.
- Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study (SMISS; Ewens et al., 2022) data was downloaded 1206 times.

#### Empowering volunteers to take action

See Me focused on enhancing the skills and confidence of its lived experience volunteers, through targeted training and community-building initiatives, resulting in a 64% increase in volunteer-led events compared to the previous year.

- **87% volunteers** who responded to our engagement survey agreed they feel empowered by the volunteering opportunities they take part in.
- **88% agree** volunteering has had a positive impact on their mental health.
- *"Volunteering with See Me has improved my confidence, communication, interpersonal skills, presentation skills, public speaking, leading workshops, organising events, resource writing, teamwork and collaboration. I have grown personally and professionally. I learned new things and had a chance to try new activities out."* Antje, See Me volunteer

# OUTCOME 4

## KEY IMPACTS

### People in the settings we work in recognise mental health stigma and discrimination, know how to challenge and take action against it

#### See Me in Work

See Me have continued to provide information, advice and support to employers in Scotland wanting to take action to create mental health inclusive working environments, free from stigma and discrimination.

- We reached with **2,200 employers** and **164,800 employees** through See Me in Work this year. Amongst this number, **120 employers attended webinars**, **224 employees completed e learning modules**, **21 engaged with the See Me in Work portal** and **165 accessed consultancy support**. We have also engaged with employers through newsletters, and a range of external events.
- There were 1479 visits to the See Me In Work website this year, resulting in **900 resource downloads**. *"ScottishPower are delighted to work alongside See Me as we continue to improve how we as an organisation support good mental health. This is the second time we have participated within the See Me in Work Programme. The structure of the programme, along with the supporting resources on the Portal have been invaluable in helping us better understand the experiences of our people and identifying which areas we need to be focusing on to ensure that people are treated fairly when they come to work. In addition to See Me in Work, we also take part in Time to Talk Day every February, using the packs and guidance developed by See Me. They contribute to making Time to Talk Day one of the most recognised campaigns that we deliver each year."*
- We also worked with the Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland to co-facilitate the Supporting Mentally Healthy Workplaces: National Learning Network for Employers, reaching over 800 employers in Scotland.

#### Mental health undergraduate curriculums

See Me have been working with four universities across Scotland to develop and trial an approach to embed mental health stigma and discrimination in the undergraduate curriculum across mental health disciplines.

- See Me delivered five anti-stigma workshops to **230 undergraduate and postgraduate students** within Pharmacy, Mental health Nursing and Global Mental Health Disciplines across four different universities.
- This project improved pre-registration healthcare students' understanding of intersectional mental health stigma and discrimination, the impact it has on people with lived experience and awareness of actions that can be taken to challenge it.
- Students reported that following the session they were more mindful of their personal biases, and that their approach to providing care would be more inclusive, non-judgemental and supportive. They further reported an increased confidence to challenge stigma and to advocate for anti-stigma measures in mental health services. *"I can now approach patient consultations with more empathy, and I now fully understand how difficult it can be for people to admit their mental health struggles."* Student





## Stigma in mental health nursing

As part of a wider project looking to develop, test and rollout anti-stigma intervention(s) to address stigma in mental health nursing, See Me and MHF worked with Mental Health Nurse Leads Scotland, and researchers at Abertay University to explore the scale, nature and impact of stigma by association in mental health nursing in Scotland and whether this is a barrier to entering and staying in the profession.

- **686 current or former mental health nurses and students** shared their experiences of stigma and discrimination related to the profession.
- We are working with the project team and Scottish Government policy colleagues to embed learning from the study into the National Mental Health Nursing Review, thus influencing explicit action on stigma.
- *"Mental Health Nurses have a prominent and important role in challenging stigma and discrimination and delivering human rights-based care. However, Mental Health Nurses and Student Mental Health Nurses face stigma by association both in their day-to-day roles and wider social and family lives. This important research brings the experiences of stigma by association into focus, and we are fully supportive of the recommendations set out in the study."* Keith Russell, Nurse Director and Karen Ozden, Nurse Director, on behalf of the Mental Health Nurse Leads



## Education: See Me See Change

See Me See Change (SMSC) is an approach to tackling mental health stigma and discrimination in schools, bringing together pupils and staff – from senior leaders and pastoral leads to support staff – to work on an equal footing to create a plan to tackle stigma which is unique to their school and circumstances. We have continued to promote and support adoption of SMSC across Scotland this year, launching a SMSC Network newsletter to raise awareness of SMSC resources and share good practice from participating schools.

- The newsletter increased awareness of key See Me campaigns such as Time to Talk Day (TTTD). The Education and Young People's pack was **downloaded 278 times**.
- *"We've been using the See Me See Change programme in some of our Fife schools over the past few years. What inspires me most is seeing the pupils deliver the interactive training to their peers with such passion and enthusiasm, particularly around issues such as stigmatising language. Pupils at Dunfermline High School have been speaking at assemblies, hosting drop-in sessions for their peers, and delivering mental health sessions to primary 7 pupils across the cluster, as well as parent sessions for these primary 7 pupils. It's incredible to see young people leading and encouraging a whole school approach to challenging mental health stigma. Over the next year, we plan to support several further schools in Fife to develop action plans within their school communities."* Health and Wellbeing Team Lead, Fife Council
- The SMSC train the trainer approach is in the final stages of submission to NHS Education for Scotland to be hosted on their webpages, supporting the promotion and reach of the resources across Scottish secondary schools.



## Intersectional stigma workshops

See Me have continued to build on work with community and strategic equalities partners to embed an intersectional approach to addressing stigma, from the local to national level. The demand for our intersectional resources, workshops and consultancy has grown throughout the year.

- This year, we delivered 20 intersectionality workshops to 285 participants from 50 partner organisations.
- Participants demonstrated substantial increases in their perceived level of knowledge and understanding of mental health and intersectional stigma, its impact and approaches to tackling it.
- As a result of these sessions, many of our partners have indicated they would make substantive changes in their own work: *"I will look at referral routes into our service with a view to ensure they are more inclusive."* Suicide Prevention and Self Harm workshop participant, COSLA offices 2024
- This has culminated in See Me's recent participation as a co-chair in a roundtable on racial justice and mental health with the Runnymede Trust (a research organisation dedicated to challenging structural racism).



# OUTCOME 5

## KEY IMPACTS

### Leaders in key settings and organisations create inclusive cultures and take action to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination

#### Embedding an intersectional anti-stigma approach within Suicide Prevention Scotland (SPS)

See Me have worked alongside leads from Suicide Prevention Scotland to embed action on stigma across the outcomes of Creating Hope Together.

##### See Me have:

- Identified areas and opportunities for tackling stigma and discrimination.
  - Facilitated a full day in person workshop with strategic outcome and delivery leads and other SPS partners.
  - Produced a set of tools to encourage self-reflection on anti-stigma core competencies.
  - Provided sources of support, guidance and references where people can get more information and support.
  - Supported capacity building in three test of change areas looking to embed time space and compassion locally.
  - Worked with Time, Space and Compassion lead to shape a tailored workshop with local area leads.
  - Contributed to national support/engagement team to help facilitate the building connections (MH, EDI and intersectional) work being led by the policy leads in Suicide Prevention Scotland.
- "Action on stigma is being progressed within each of the strategic outcomes in Creating Hope together with action owners updating on activity within the evaluation and impact portal."* (SPS Outcome lead)
- A minimum of nine out of 19 actions to embed anti-stigma approaches have been recorded by SPS as direct result of working with See Me.

#### Anti-stigma education for mental health professionals

See Me have been working with the Mental Welfare Commission and NHS Education Scotland (NES) to identify and share existing good practice around tackling mental health stigma and discrimination in mental health services.

- See Me influenced the development of a critical review of the NES Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination and Inequality eLearning module. This will be promoted to all health and social care staff as part of the national continuous professional development suite of tools. This means that the health and social care workforce will have access to more robust and informative training on mental health stigma and discrimination, and therefore will be better equipped to provide high quality support to people, free of stigma and discrimination.
- Two Good Anti-Stigma Practice Sessions were delivered to 68 mental health practitioners. Post-session evaluations showed that participants reported an increased understanding of mental health stigma and good anti-stigma practice in mental health services, and increased confidence in their ability to undertake anti-stigma practice in mental health services. Attendees reported their intentions to confront and challenge discrimination within mental health services, to advocate for non-judgemental approaches in service delivery, such as using inclusive language and encouraging the same in others.
- One participant attending a session said they planned to *"review Fife MH Strategy actions under HSCP and stigma."*

## Leaders in key settings and organisations create inclusive cultures and take action to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination (continued)

### Partnering with Police Scotland

See Me have continued to support Police Scotland to take a cross organisational approach to addressing mental health stigma and discrimination by:

- Participating in the Policing Together Mental Health Reference Group
- Contributing to work to progress the recommendations from the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) thematic report on policing and mental health
- Sharing evidence and learning at workshops facilitated by the Mental Health Unscheduled Care Service Design Partnership to help redesign services
- Co-designing and piloting an anti-stigma intervention to upskill Police Scotland's Wellbeing Champions and delivering four workshops, a webinar and two Time to Talk Day sessions.
- Supporting social contact to end mental health stigma and discrimination within Police Scotland

- See Me's contributions to Forum discussions have helped focus on exploring solutions to how culture and stigma might prevent staff and people who meet the Police service on seeking help early.
- See Me are working with Police Scotland and partners to develop guidance and tools around inclusive language, particularly in public-facing roles, and to shape pilot initiatives around Transfer of Care.
- 101 Police Scotland Wellbeing Champions attended workshops addressing how to have confident conversations about mental health and understanding mental health stigma. When asked about actions they were going to try to put into practice because of this session, participants shared:  
*"Approaching someone I feel may need support, rather than waiting for them to speak to me."*  
*"To focus on being a good listener and not putting too much pressure on myself to know everything."*
- From the additional sessions participants stated they feel more prepared to support people with mental health problems within their teams and feel more aware of lived experience of mental health stigma and discrimination within the workplace.  
*"Working with See Me helps us to focus our attention on tackling stigma. We are a large and complex organisation who recognises the importance of good mental health. Achieving and maintaining good mental health is a challenge, promoting help seeking behaviours when mental health is not so good is even more challenging. Recently we have been working with See Me to take practical steps to address stigma and not just talk about the presence of stigma."* Diane Clayton, Health and Wellbeing Programme Lead at Police Scotland  
*"See Me was an excellent collaboration partner – very easy to work and collaborate with, we had impactful conversations that helped us to design, pilot and deliver a 2-hour session for our Wellbeing Champions. Our objective was to encourage our WB Champions to have conversations, in a safe space, and with confidence. See Me had a wealth of supporting information that our colleagues could use for their on-going learning and development such as, 'What's on your Mind' cards, and 'It's Okay to Talk' cards, along with a wealth of other information and resources such as Wellbeing Action Plans. I think this was a very useful collaboration and I wouldn't hesitate to recommend See Me to colleagues and other organisations."* Mariclaire Day-Johnson, Colleague Development Facilitator at Police Scotland



## **National and local policy and decision makers resource, design and implement policies, systems and services that explicitly reduce mental health stigma and address discrimination**

### **Consultation advice and support to local areas to act on stigma**

See Me continue to provide advice and support to local area partnerships to embed action on stigma linked to their local area plans e.g. (Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Borders, Fife, Tayside, Renfrewshire, Ayrshire and Lothian). An example of this Stigma Free Lanarkshire (SFL).

SFL was originally funded by See Me to trial a local area – system wide approach to addressing mental health stigma and discrimination. Over several years the project developed and is now mainstreamed, has explicit commitments with in the local mental health strategy and receives local funding.

- See Me contributed to 12 local area conferences and strategic groups, engaging 396 lead officers to encourage ongoing prioritisation of action on stigma and discrimination as part of their broader approach to mental health.

*"As part of our programme, we have worked closely with our national partner organisation, See Me, which specialises in high-quality research and evidence on mental health stigma and its impact. Their insights into national experiences have helped guide our efforts to increase impact with targeted groups. This collaboration has been key in deepening our understanding of the challenges and opportunities within our areas of focus. Through shared learning, the See Me team regularly provides examples of good practice and innovative ideas that directly inform our programme, discussed through the SFL Board and other channels. These contributions offer valuable perspectives and promote ongoing reflection. While our approaches are tailored to our local context, See Me's expertise and feedback have consistently shaped and improved our methodology, strengthening our overall impact. Our relationship with See Me has been, and continues to be, invaluable to the success of our programme".* Audrey Bremner, Stigma Free Lanarkshire

- SFL is a great example of sustainability of a local area strategic, coordinated programme of work to tackle stigma and discrimination experience by people across Lanarkshire.

### **Successful collaboration to influence policy and legislation**

See Me worked with Voluntary Health Scotland to prepare a joint submission on the Multi-Agency Partnership Approach to Mental Health Distress – Framework for Collaboration.

- The submission emphasised the pervasive impact of stigma within mental healthcare and justice systems. It resulted in an explicit principle "free from stigma and discrimination" being added with action on stigma being foundational to its success. With the intention of anti-stigma action improving inclusion, quality of life and life expectancy. See Me is also cited within the resources section, with links to the SMISS report and the website for tools to tackle stigma.



## Effective influencing of the Mental Health Moratorium

**See Me worked with four partners to lobby for removal of a register of people placed on a mental health financial moratorium.**

- See Me used our collective voice and lived experience testimony to reduce potential for discrimination arising from the proposed legislation. As a result, this register is no longer publicly accessible, and the criteria for accessing the register has been expanded.

## Contribution made to the Scottish Government Equality & Human Rights Forum and Leadership Board

**See Me contributed significantly this year to the Mental Health Directorate's Equality and Human Rights Forum and co-represented this group at the Mental Health and Wellbeing Leadership Board with LGBT Health & Wellbeing.**

- *"See Me have been active members of the Mental Health Equality and Human Rights Forum, feeding into key pieces of work including engagement on priorities 4 and 7, the review of Psychiatric Emergency Plan's, and review of Leadership Board papers in the Forum's advisory group capacity. This includes feeding into the ongoing policy prioritisation exercise. See Me's contribution has particularly been impactful. Ensuring the Board receives direct advice and challenge from the Forum and working alongside Scottish Government policy leads to refine the feedback process and ensure that seldom heard voices are confident and able to feed into leadership Board discussions, contributing to the Leadership Board and implementation of the Strategy more widely."*  
Hannah Doherty, Mental Health Strategy & Co-ordination Unit, The Scottish Government

## Influencing policy change through expert groups

**See Me continues to influence mental health and wider policy priorities. See Me participated in five expert groups/strategic partnerships to call for data collection, prioritisation of stigma, and for lived experience leadership as central to the next mental health and wellbeing plan.**

- See Me influenced prioritisation of mental health stigma and discrimination as a member of: the Expert groups on the social determinants of mental health and evaluating Scotland's mental health and wellbeing strategy, the national stakeholder group looking at prioritisation of prevention and early intervention in rural areas, the Scottish Mental Health Partnership renewed position and manifesto asks. See Me also worked with Vox Scotland and Scottish Recovery Network to advocate for diverse lived experience leadership and engagement across all areas of the emerging action plan. Through these collaborations we have ensured data collection and action on stigma, guided by people with diverse lived experience are prioritised.

## Influencing change through the Global and UK alliance

**Through the Global Anti Stigma Alliance (GASA), we share research, evidence, approaches and learning on impact.**

**GASA facilitates knowledge exchange and partnership working between members and helps all avoid duplication of effort.**

**Through these alliances, we:**

- Contributed to 6 International events and 4 UK learning exchange sessions.
- Presented our learning and research in 14 sessions involving 39 countries.
- Hosted an international research seminar in Glasgow on stigma and mental illness.
- Published a [journal article](#) contrasting data collected through SMISS.
- Worked with Canadian experts to progress three projects with Alliance partners looking at structural stigma in mental health care services to inform our approach.

# Discussion

**This impact report and supporting case studies (appendix) highlight the significant contributions made by See Me in addressing mental health stigma and discrimination across multiple settings in Scotland as part of a whole-system approach. The report showcases the collaborative efforts and innovative approaches undertaken to create inclusive environments and empower individuals and communities to challenge stigma.**

## Intersectionality and a whole-system approach

We have learned that if we are to reduce mental health stigma and discrimination for everyone in Scotland, it is necessary to take an **intersectional approach** that considers the complex interplay of various forms of stigma, including those related to race, gender, and socioeconomic status, across structural, institutional, cultural, and personal levels.

Health stigmas, such as mental health stigma, are often addressed in siloes, however evidence shows that we can't understand or address health related stigmas in isolation from each other (Sievwright et al., 2022). Adopting a whole systems approach has enabled See Me to focus on understanding and addressing the full complexity of mental health stigma by considering all its interconnected parts rather than purely individual components. See Me has therefore sought to understand and address mental health stigma within the context of intersectional stigma, and at societal, institutional, cultural, and personal levels.

A key action this year has been the development of intersectional tools and workshops, delivered to 327 participants from 50 partner organisations. See Me also produced learning and creative resources which are embedded throughout the rest of the programme to reflect a wide range of intersectional lived experiences, concerns and recommendations for action.

Whole system approaches emphasise collaboration, shared understanding, and a long-term perspective to achieve sustainable change. This report demonstrates how See Me has sought to establish a variety of authentic community engagements and partnerships across the year.

See Me have worked with partners to share and gather insights, expertise and evidence to inform how barriers to inclusion can be dismantled. See Me's partnership with organisations such as the Runnymede Trust, Boots and Beards and Police Scotland exemplifies the commitment to addressing intersectional stigma and promoting racial justice in mental health.

## Creative approaches

There is growing international recognition of the arts as a tool to reduce mental health stigma and discrimination (El Halabi et al., 2024) across a wide range of settings. Evidence shows that the most effective arts programmes are those that involve active participation from individuals and communities. This report highlights the success of creative community-led initiatives at See Me, such as the Anti-Stigma Arts Fund and the Breaking the Stigma project with LGBT Youth Scotland. These projects have demonstrated the power of creative expression and peer-led approaches in fostering community connectedness, building confidence, and challenging stigma. The positive feedback from participants and the recognition of these projects at national levels further validate the impact of these initiatives.

## Lived experience

It is widely recognised that incorporating the voices and insights of people who have experienced mental health issues first-hand is fundamental to anti-stigma practice. People with lived experience bring authenticity and credibility to stigma reduction efforts, helping to design and implement projects that accurately reflect the needs and realities of those directly affected.

This report emphasises the role of people with lived experience at See Me in driving change, and the benefits of empowering individuals with lived experience to take action. The significant increase in volunteer-led events and the positive impact on volunteers' mental health and confidence are testament to the effectiveness of See Me's volunteer engagement strategy.



The Youth PhD project supported by See Me is a further example of lived experience driving change. The engagement of See Me Youth Champions as co-researchers throughout the PhD ensured that young people with lived experience of mental health stigma to contribute meaningfully to the development of youth stigma theory and measurement. The project has resulted in the development of a new conceptual model and measurement tool of Youth Mental Health Stigma, with significant opportunities for application and further research.

**Social contact** is widely evidenced as a key element of successful **educational** anti-stigma interventions, bringing stories and facts to life in a way that a simple knowledge exchange may not. The impact of social contact was demonstrated this year in the success of See Me's lived experience-based messaging for Time to Talk Day, and the Breaking the Stigma project with LGBT Youth Scotland.

**Social movements** such as See Us and Moray Wellbeing Hub, can play a crucial role in addressing and challenging stigma by harnessing the motivation and courage of people and communities and providing them with the knowledge, skills and resources they need to stand up, speak out and seek change in the issues that matter to them. Focusing on building meaningful connections with audiences by platforming people's lived and living experiences, See Me have successfully grown the reach of the See Us movement this year.

## Anti-stigma work in key settings

Anti-stigma work needs to focus on **settings** where people experience the highest levels of stigma and discrimination. The Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study (SMISS; 2022) highlighted that people with mental illness experience stigma and discrimination regularly within relationships and **communities**. Many people described the ways stigma and discrimination affected their ability to access and experience positive outcomes when engaging with **mental health services**. Many participants also described the negative impact of stigma and discrimination in the workplace.

See Me has played a crucial role in tackling stigma in workplaces, education, and healthcare settings. In **workplaces**, See Me has engaged with over

2,200 employers, providing information, advice, and support to create mental health inclusive working environments free from stigma and discrimination. The See Me in Work programme has helped employers better understand the experiences of their employees and identify areas for improvement. Initiatives such as Time to Talk Day have created space for open conversations about mental health and demonstrated the importance of challenging stigma in the corporate realm.

In **education**, See Me See Change has brought together pupils and staff to collaboratively create plans to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination tailored to their specific school environments. The initiative has been promoted across Scotland, with schools implementing action plans and engaging in activities such as assemblies, drop-in sessions, and mental health workshops. The partnership with Think Positive has further supported universities and colleges in embedding good anti-stigma practices and creating supportive environments for students.

In **healthcare**, See Me has worked with multiple partners to address mental health stigma and discrimination in mental health services. The collaboration with NHS Scotland and researchers at Abertay has explored the impact of stigma by association in the mental health nursing profession and influenced the National Mental Health Nursing Review. See Me has also delivered anti-stigma workshops to healthcare students and professionals, increasing their understanding of mental health stigma and empowering them to challenge discrimination.

## Campaigning

Time to Talk Day this year exemplified the benefit of taking forward a national level campaign to ensure the general public discourse surrounding mental health and mental health problems is positive and remains high in respect of reach. We understand from international evidence that this provides a supportive backdrop for more targeted campaigns including If Its Ok.

The calls to action in both campaigns have been evidenced by more people engaging and acting for longer periods of time. This has been particularly apparent within the settings and communities we have targeted.



## Conclusion

In summary, the 2024-2025 See Me impact report demonstrates the significant progress made by See Me in addressing mental health stigma and discrimination across various settings in Scotland. The collaborative efforts, focus on intersectionality, and empowerment of individuals with lived experience have all contributed to creating more inclusive and supportive environments.

We have continued to learn about the key ingredients required for good anti-stigma practice this year. It has become increasingly clear that tackling the inequalities created by mental health stigma requires an intersectional, multilevel approach to empower people and communities to influence system wide change.

Partners often describe having to respond to several competing policy initiatives or improvement programmes – often with similar core outcomes. Lack of resource can restrict opportunities, and resultingly the scale of the work required to tackle stigma can feel overwhelming. We have been working to support partners to embed action on stigma as core to their business to maximise impact, ensure equity and fairness for more people over time. See Me provides tailored consultancy and support to a range of stakeholders. We have developed digital resources to help self-directed action to address this issue, however most partners seek guidance, support and leadership to help them deliver.

Reducing stigma and discrimination requires long term commitment, and we are able to track the benefit of longer-term engagement with See Me in progressing action in ways best suited to the organisation or community over time.

The success of community-led initiatives, the engagement with workplaces, education, and healthcare settings, and the Youth PhD project highlight the importance of creative and peer-led approaches in challenging stigma.

By continuing to build on these successes and sustaining and developing collaborative partnerships, See Me can further advance its mission to create a stigma-free Scotland.



▲ Time to Talk Day workshop in Peebles, February 2025.

# Key ingredients of anti-stigma practice

**Intersectionality:** Intersectional approaches recognise that people may face **multiple, overlapping forms of stigma** and discrimination. By acknowledging and addressing these complexities, anti-stigma work can be tailored to meet the unmet needs of diverse communities.

**Whole-system approach:** A whole system approach focuses on understanding and addressing complex challenges by considering all interconnected parts of a system, rather than just individual components. This means mental health stigma needs to be understood and addressed at societal, institutional, cultural, and personal levels.

**Education:** Evidence-based interventions are widely used in anti-stigma practice, and evidence demonstrates that they can successfully improve knowledge, understanding and attitudes towards mental health. Co-designed, contact-based educational interventions are shown to be the most effective.

**Focus on key setting:** Anti-stigma work needs to focus on **settings** where people experience the highest levels of stigma and discrimination, including **communities, mental health services** and **workplaces**.

**Meaningful involvement of people with diverse lived experience:** The voices and insights of people who have experienced mental health issues first-hand are vital for anti-stigma practice. Through social contact, people with lived

experience can bring authenticity and credibility to stigma reduction efforts, helping to design and implement projects that accurately reflect the needs and realities of those directly affected.

**Community engagement and partnerships:** Collaboration, shared understanding, and a long-term perspective are key to achieving sustainable change. Authentic community engagement and partnerships can help to identify and address gaps in knowledge and understanding, exploring the issues around stigma and discrimination while also highlighting experiences and community-led solutions.

**Creative approaches:** There is growing international recognition of the arts as a tool to reduce mental health stigma and discrimination (El Halabi et al., 2024) across a wide range of settings. Evidence shows that the most effective arts programmes are those that involve active participation from individuals and communities.

**Social movements:** Social movements play a crucial role in addressing and challenging stigma by harnessing the motivation and courage of people and communities to stand up, speak out and seek change in the issues that matter to them.

**Campaigning and media protesting:** Effective anti-stigma campaigns center lived experiences, utilize digital platforms, and encourage public dialogue. They should adopt an intersectional approach to avoid further marginalizing groups,

and co-design content with communities to reflect audience diversity.

**Advocacy:** Advocacy is essential in anti-stigma practice, raising awareness, educating the public, and promoting positive attitudes. It challenges negative perceptions, empowers individuals with lived experience, and fosters a more inclusive society.

**Policy and legislation:** Policy and legislation create a framework for protecting rights, promoting awareness, and ensuring equitable access to services. Anti-stigma policies and laws can help shift societal attitudes, reduce discrimination, and improve the lives of individuals with mental health conditions.





# ***Appendix: Illustrative Case Studies***



# Outcomes Matrix

This matrix maps the projects showcased in this report against See Me's six medium term programme outcomes.

## PROJECT TITLE

	<b>OUTCOME 1</b> People in the populations we target feel confident to talk openly about their mental health and their experience of stigma and discrimination.	<b>OUTCOME 2</b> People in the populations we target feel confident to have conversations with other people who are experiencing poor mental health.	<b>OUTCOME 3</b> People with experience of mental health problems feel more confident to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination.	<b>OUTCOME 4</b> People in the settings we work in recognise mental health stigma and discrimination, know how to challenge and take action against it.	<b>OUTCOME 5</b> Leaders in key settings and organisations create inclusive cultures and take action to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination.	<b>OUTCOME 6</b> National and local policy makers resource, design and implement policies, systems and services that explicitly reduce mental health stigma and address discrimination.
Creating tools for intersectional anti-stigma interventions				×	×	
Exploring intersectional stigma in Local Partnerships	×	×	×			
Embedding an anti-stigma approach within suicide prevention				×	×	
Anti-Stigma Arts Fund	×	×			×	
Tackling stigma through policy						×
Mental Health Nursing Stigma study				×	×	×
Time to Talk Day	×					
Growing the See Us Movement			×			
LGBT Youth Scotland	×					
Destigmatising mental health services				×	×	×
Partnership with Police Scotland				×	×	
Partnership with Scottish Ambulance Service		×		×	×	×
See Me in Work: supporting workplaces				×	×	
Moray Wellbeing Hub			×			
Youth Stigma PhD			×			
Tackling stigma in schools, colleges and universities				×	×	×
Anti-stigma education for mental health professionals				×		
Anti-stigma workshops for mental health professionals				×	×	
Empowering volunteers to take action	×	×	×			

# Creating tools to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination through an intersectional approach

Health stigmas, such as mental health stigma, are usually addressed in siloes. However, evidence shows that we can't understand identity and health related stigmas in isolation from each other and we need to tackle all levels (structural, institutional, cultural, or personal) concurrently (Pérez Portilla, 2016; Public Health Canada, 2019; Sievwright et al., 2022).

In addition, the existing equality and human rights legal frameworks also address identity groups in siloed protected characteristics (not intersectionally) and are often not adequately adhered to across the public sector (Scot Gov, 2024).

This means many communities and individuals fall through the gaps of services and project design and provision (CRER, 2025).

## We have focused our work this year on:

1. Supporting adherence to and **going beyond** the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty, taking an intersectional approach to understanding and addressing stigma and discrimination in a social justice driven, rights-based way.
2. Making the case for mental health problems and illness to be better understood as issues of intersectional justice and protected under equality and human rights legislation and through policy implementation and practice.

To address the identified need for an intersectional, system-wide approach to tackling mental health stigma and discrimination, See Me have used a combination of methods to create tools and resources for turning evidence into action.

We created a **Development and Support workshop** and two capacity building and planning tools designed for use across a range of settings, and which we are embedding in our own programme's work:

1. **Intersectional Anti-Stigma Intervention Core Competencies Self Reflection Tool.**
2. **System-Wide Intersectional Approach to Tackle Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination: Evidence to Action Tool.**

Building on our work last year with community and strategic equalities partners, we delivered capacity building workshops across community, third and public sector organisations and worked with senior leaders across all these settings. We also contributed to the Mental Health Directorate's Equality and Human Rights Forum and co-represented this group at the Mental Health and Wellbeing Leadership Board with **LGBTH&WB**.

See Me's work to understand and tackle the causes of consequences of intersectional stigma related to mental health has helped us to build trust with organisations and communities who represent equalities groups and interests. It is clear that a whole-system approach is necessary to tackling intersectional stigma.

This has culminated in our recent invitation from the Runnymede Trust (a research organisation dedicated to challenging structural racism) to co-chair a roundtable in April 2025 on racial justice and mental health, bringing our intersectional anti-mental health stigma approaches expertise.

This evidences the fact that we are working at all levels – individual, community, and national, to take action to address intersectional stigma.

## IMPACT

The demand for our intersectional resources and support workshops/ consultancy has grown throughout the year. The communities and priority groups team delivered **21 workshops to 327 participants from 50 partner organisations**. Across all workshops throughout the year there was a self-reported **increase in knowledge and understanding of intersectional stigma, its impacts, and actions needed to address it**. In every session delivered, feedback has highlighted that workshop participants have appreciated the critical approach to historic analysis in the materials, which illuminates the roots of inequalities in current data.

**More than 80% of participants who provided feedback (n=57) agreed that the intersectional workshops had increased their knowledge and understanding of intersectional stigma and how it relates to mental health.**

Following the workshops, participants indicated they would make substantive changes in their own work: **Participants told us that they would take the following actions after the workshops:**

- Ensure intersectionality/equality is built in from the start of policy development not an 'addition' at the end [SAMH Influence and Change Away Day Workshop Participant].
- *[I will] Revise the Changing Rooms session on stigma and discrimination. Challenge myself even more on stigma* [SAMH Influence and Change Away Day Workshop Participant].
- *[I will] Look at referral routes into our service with a view to ensure they are more inclusive* [Suicide Prevention and Self Harm workshop participant, COSLA offices 2024].

We are sharing learning from the development of resources and pilot workshops through our resources, blogs ([Amplifying voices: Highlighting health inequalities in the Gypsy/Traveller community](#). | [End Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination; Taking an Intersectional Approach](#) | [End Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination](#)), event reports, policy consultations and Scottish Government networks.

## PARTNER TESTIMONY 1

*"As a lecturer in Anti-discrimination law, the session was invaluable for several reasons including:*

- 1. It showed my students a professional and caring way to deliver workshops on what can be controversial and painful topics.*
- 2. [The team] have put a great deal of time, effort and commitment into their work, which is a valuable lesson for my students.*
- 3. From a legal point of view, the session demonstrated the need for a legal understanding of what is often seen simply as 'policy' issues or matters of 'good practice' or 'improvement'. The session spoke about rights and duties as, from my point of view, it should be. This was a key learning for my students. Their knowledge of equality and anti-discrimination law is central to 'EDI' work locally, regionally and internationally.*

*I look forward to future collaborations."*

Dr. Karla Perez Portilla, Lecturer in Law, Diversity and Inclusion Lead of the Glasgow School for Business and Society (GSBS)

## PARTNER TESTIMONY 2

*"As an organisation, the Senior Management team and Management team, who attended the session, will definitely be more mindful of taking an intersectional approach when engaging with communities on mental health related issues. This is something that we were already aware of, and practiced within WSREC, but the further learning, knowledge and awareness that we have gained from this session, will only serve to bolster this. The fact that a reputable organisation, such as See Me, have produced training material based around the principles of intersectionality will also add weight to our discussion with key stakeholders, across various sectors, when discussing mental health issues affecting BAME communities, living in the UK. I am sure that further changes will be implemented in the coming months as a result of this work."*

Aneel Singh Bhopal, Deputy Director WSREC



# Embedding anti-stigma and intersectional thinking and practice in Time Space Compassion



Taking forward focused action to address stigma and discrimination is central to the success of **Creating Hope Together** and the **Self harm Strategy and Action Plans**. See Me have worked with suicide prevention and self-harm leads this year to embed an intersectional anti-stigma approach within the **Time Space Compassion** approach to improving suicidal crisis.

Key activities have included reviewing action plans, facilitating workshops, producing self-reflection questions and resources, and building connections within the Suicide Prevention Scotland framework. Linda Hunter, Implementation Lead at the Suicidal Crisis Support Action Group explained the changes the group had made because of this collaboration. She said:

- They changed the language used in their project documentation and within settings from descriptions of risk that are based on a person or community's identity, to the societal constructs and experiences that drive the risk (e.g. from 'this group is high risk', to 'this group is at higher risk as a result of inequality').
- They have become more proactive and have dedicated structured time to work through

their thinking, plans and assumptions. They are investing time and resources in reviewing community sourced intelligence on lived experience and using this to shape their work – this involved widening their literature reviews from clinical and academic to a more expansive set of community sourced publications.

- Doing their work in ways that involves and offers something back to communities – helping people connect with each other through their engagement in the work.

On top of this, Linda explained that their learning partners (NHS Boards, HIS, NES) got time to refresh and update their understanding of intersectional impacts of stigma individually and together. They also had a chance to test and experience the See Me workshop and feedback on how they could integrate that content into their improvement work.

Moreover, Linda said that over the next year:

*"We'll partner with See Me to test and develop intersectional stigma resources, that Boards can embed in the improvement work, in ways that reduce stigma and increase community's access to timely, effective and compassionate care."*



▲ CPG Team with Linda Hunter, Implementation Lead – supporting the work of the Suicidal Crisis Action Support Group; and Haylis Smith, National Delivery Lead Suicide Prevention at the NCISH Improvement Group after delivering intersectional stigma workshop and introducing support tools.

# Building meaningful partnerships



▲ See Me's Communities and Priority groups' team with Boots and Beards staff at their offices.

**Building meaningful partnerships with organisations with equalities expertise and working alongside racially marginalised groups is fundamental to our understanding of the intersectional nature of mental health stigma, and our ability to tackle it.**

Taking an intersectional approach has highlighted gaps in our knowledge and understanding of stigma and discrimination. We know that building and maintaining relationships with communities which have and continue to be marginalised is key to addressing these gaps, and to tackling the underlying causes of intersectional stigma and its manifestations.

Over the past year, we have worked to build meaningful partnerships with organisations working with racialised communities and with anti-racist expertise, strengthening existing partnerships with community groups such as **WSREC** and **Pachedu**. We have worked alongside community partners to review our existing materials, and to develop and pilot new resources and workshops, to address mental health stigma.

We have also built new partnerships with **Boots and Beards** and the **Coalition for Race Equality and Rights**.

## Boots and Beards

**Boots and Beards** work with people from a diverse range of communities to improve physical and mental wellbeing and aim to increase outdoor opportunities from under-represented minority ethnic groups. They do this through physical activity, art sessions, carers' fortnightly meet-ups and aim to increase opportunities for people to participate, especially among under-represented groups.

Senior leaders at Boots and Beards attended the Intersectional Stigma and Mental Health workshop. They reflected on the challenges racism, patriarchy, gender norms and other forms of discrimination present for community members, and some shared their own lived experiences.

They also highlighted the importance of continuing mental health awareness work in communities but also the need for structural change and need for equality. In discussions about history of mental health and diagnosis, – people reflected how colonial tools such as stigma are still used to divide and rule (under capitalism). Their reflection helped us to be more confident about the workshop content and provided real anecdotes to support our evidence base.



# Creative approaches and the Anti-Stigma Arts Fund

## ANTI-STIGMA ARTS FUND

This year, the Fund supported **six community-led participatory arts projects** to explore experiences of intersectional mental health stigma.

The project evidence shows that through participation, participants experience greater levels of community connectedness, capacity building and confidence and find new ways through creative exploration to express and understand difficult experiences of intersectional mental health stigma.

The work created through these projects has gone on to reach audiences across Scotland through exhibitions, workshops and events. A poster created for the Empower Women for Change exhibition '**Beyond the Canvas**' was part of an award-winning exhibition.

As a result of this work, See Me has a better understanding of the distinct experiences of intersectional mental health stigma faced by specific groups and how to challenge it in key settings. We also have new resources to use to challenge this.

Wider audiences have also been engaged with this work, and we have built relationships with partners in key settings. For example, See Me have been invited to work with **The Alliance**, which may open up opportunities to influence other funders.

**Through funding the arts projects, community members came together to explore understandings and experiences of mental health stigma in a safe, supported, empowering environment. As a result, participants were able to express themselves more freely in a way that was most safe and meaningful for them.**

We are addressing gaps in intersectional engagement in the programme through the arts fund, by purposefully engaging participants with specific intersecting identities and experiences.

The experiences that are explored and creatively shared through the funded projects give us and wider audiences insight into experiences of intersectional stigma and how to tackle it without necessarily requiring participants to publicly describe or write down their experiences. This means the arts fund projects can capture the experiences and reflections of individuals not always well-represented through 'mainstream' interventions.

**"The overwhelming interest and avid participation far exceeded our expectations, underscoring the high demand for culturally sensitive mental health support among minority ethnic communities."**  
(Empower Women for Change report)

The learning from the arts fund continues to teach us that the process of how people are engaged is crucial to a project's overall success. The See Me Arts Fund is designed **using intersectional principles at every stage** (naming and dismantling systems of oppression, meaningful engagement with communities, emphasising community strengths as opposed to deficits). By also funding organisations that take this approach we can see that each year community connectedness, capacity building and confidence are all increased, as participants find new ways through creative exploration to express and understand difficult experiences.



▲ Beyond the Canvas' (Empower Women for Change) exhibition at Byres Road Community Hub.



## KEY SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

**Reflections captured from participants through conversations with project leads clearly demonstrate increased confidence of participants to talk about mental health, on their own terms due to the particular elements of trauma informed safer spaces, creative freedom, peer support, community connection and strong facilitator support.**

Each project was completed as planned, delivering intended outputs. Despite several groups having challenges around participant availability they were all able to sustain work with consistent group of between 5 and 15 participants depending on the project. This represents a huge achievement for each organisation and participants.

Through reflecting on the shortlisting process we identified a need for a more detailed decision-making framework which helped to more easily identify and score the key elements of an intersectional approach, and a methodology which allowed the panel to reflect on how structural barriers may impact different groups at the application process. In response we created a new shortlisting framework tool and used learning about **epistemic injustice** to enhance our critical reflection in our decision making.

## OUR NEXT STEPS

The Arts Fund has built on learning year on year. After data analysis of the 2023/24 applications coupled with evidence from other organisations (including Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Mental Health Foundation) we were able to identify the intersections of experience that we needed to prioritise in the 2025 fund. As a result, this year we emphasised that projects needed to meaningfully engage with experiences of poverty and 45 applications (out of 70) highlighted the impact of poverty in detail in their proposed projects. This is compared to around 20 (out of 72) applications last year that 'mentioned' poverty but many of which lacked any detail.

Comparing the applications between years also shows who we are reaching through our work to build specific networks. This year we received 20 applications which prioritised the experience of adversely racialised communities compared with 11 last year.

This year the fund received 70 applications. We funded 3 projects exploring adverse racialisation and gender, addictions and homelessness and poverty and how each intersects with poor mental health. We also established a separate partnership with a fourth applicant exploring experiences of people in the asylum system accessing mental health support.

*"Participants enjoy feeling part of the group and seeing other people's work. The trauma-informed space helps people feel relaxed and encourages conversations about difficult subjects. In conversation, clients say they find the sessions cathartic and feel part of a group. This evidences reduced loneliness and increased socialisation."*

Rowan Alba report

▼ Sarah's Sanctuary workshop session.



*"Mental health stigma awareness sessions generally allowed us to build our knowledge and understanding about all the stereotypes and share experiences to apply the strategies and practices in our life. As well as the collaborative artwork it was really relaxing and enjoyable where we had a lovely chat with each other allowing us to build good friendships."*

Empower Women for Change report

## BREAKING THE STIGMA VIDEO PROJECT WITH LGBT YOUTH SCOTLAND

### LGBT Youth Scotland and See Me collaborated with young people and Queer Film Night to produce video resources

LGBTQI+ individuals often face unique forms of stigma and discrimination due to systems of power and oppression, such as homophobia and transphobia, which intersect with mental health stigma. This can lead to experiences of bullying, rejection, minority stress, and mental health problems. The “Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People 2022” report by LGBT Youth Scotland showed that many young people experience mental ill health conditions, including anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and eating disorders. Recognising a lack of mental health resources on their website, LGBT Youth Scotland collaborated with See Me to develop video resources. These videos provide a space for young people to explore intersectional stigma related to mental health, support others with similar experiences, and promote understanding among health professionals.

Over six online sessions via LGBT Youth Scotland Pride and Pixels Discord channel, See Me and LGBT Youth Scotland staff and volunteers met up with LGBT Youth Scotland young people. Together, they planned and developed video resource content for three short videos. The young people involved were particularly passionate about having the voices of LGBTQI+ young people front and centre and safely sharing lived experiences. They worked on a safer spaces agreement together, and See Me facilitated discursive sessions on intersectional stigma and discrimination, including discussions on safe ways to share lived experiences within

a trauma-informed approach. This process supported the young people to share in ways that worked for them, were not retraumatising, and kept them safe once the resources were produced. They used an asset-based approach, focusing on the strengths of the young people involved.

By the end of the project, two young people, Pea and Skye, led the development and creation of the films with support from Queer Film Night, who provided storytelling training and guidance on how to self-film the content. Queer Film Night then edited these three final videos. This demonstrates ongoing work around key principles for an intersectional approach to tackling stigma and discrimination, including meaningful engagement, lived experience leadership, collective action, naming the systems of power that negatively impact the lives of queer young people, and using the videos as a resource to mitigate that harm.

### KEY INSIGHTS AND NEXT STEPS

The project trialled an intersectional approach with a group of young people, which received positive feedback. The videos created were co-produced with young people who wrote the scripts, filmed the content, and provided voiceovers. This process helped the young participants build skills and confidence. Additionally, a strong partnership was built with LGBT Youth Scotland, and the videos are being used in their work sessions as well as on their website.

We learned that in future, we should build in more time for editing videos and ensure that someone from See Me attends every session.

The sustainability of the project is promising, with a strong partnership built on shared intersectional values. There is hope to continue working together in the future.

The videos on LGBT Youth Scotland's information hub were viewed over 800 times!

Click here to watch:

[Breaking the Stigma – LGBT Youth Scotland.](#)



[New resources explore mental health stigma for LGBT young people | End Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination.](#)



## TESTIMONIALS FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED

### Skye

*"Being involved in this project has been such an amazing experience that I will remember it for the rest of my life. Being a part of such an amazing team working on such an important subject will forever be at the forefront of my mind."*

*My biggest takeaway from this project is that even if you're working in a small team, you can achieve such a positive outcome. This project put young people at the centre of the videos and that is the most important thing you can do when discussing young people's mental health. The videos are going to be such an important stepping stone in breaking down the stigma with young people, especially in the young queer community, there is so much stigma going around and I hope that queer young people look at the videos and see themselves in it because they were made with their views in mind."*

*It's not just important to break down stigma and discrimination around mental health, it's a must. If queer young people face stigma and discrimination because of their mental health, then that will just contribute to their mental health worsening, especially in political times like this, we need messages of hope and comfort otherwise the world will seem bleak and meaningless."*



### Pea

*"Being involved with breaking the stigma has been an eye-opening project, I've learned a lot and felt privileged to have the opportunity to create videos that are so very important. It met so many interesting people (virtually), everyone ensured the project was completely accessible to me a young disabled member of the LGBT+ community..."*

*These videos are extremely important to me not just as a young queer woman but also as an individual with a disability. It's very difficult to have your voice heard never mind considered but on this occasion working alongside See Me and LGBT Youth Scotland I was given that opportunity to not only have my voice heard but projected with the most important part being that there is now materials out there to help others that may feel a similar way*

*The only way we can break stigma is by understating and uniting together, we already experience heightened discrimination due to our age and the fact we are LGBT our voice is just as important as anyone else's"*



**See Me**  
End mental health  
discrimination  
**Proud**

### Alan – Worker at LGBT Youth Scotland

*"These videos can and will be used by other professionals as well as our own youth work and Charter teams. The more these videos are made visible and shown widely, young LGBTQ+ people dealing with stigma and discrimination will know they are not alone and that there is support out there for them."*



# Influencing structural, behavioural and cultural change in key mental health services

This year we continued to deliver projects and activities aimed at addressing issues identified in the **Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study** regarding access and experiences of care for people with mental illness across various levels, from national policy and senior leadership engagement to service delivery and workforce development.

The **Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study** (2022) found that almost three quarters (74%) of people with severe, complex and/or enduring mental illness experienced stigma and discrimination in mental healthcare. SMISS identified that repeated experiences of stigma and discrimination can lead to people expecting to be treated unfairly in their contact with mental healthcare services, and ultimately avoiding getting help and/or revealing the severity of their mental illnesses.

Additionally, data and lived experience testimony from SMISS and other sources describe how prejudice, marginalisation and oppression lead to poorer mental health outcomes overall due to layering of stigma, inequity and discrimination within services and systems. This year See Me continued to deliver projects and activities aimed at addressing access and experiences of care for people with mental illness across various levels, from national policy and senior leadership engagement to service delivery and workforce development.

A key focus of our work this year has been on developing information, advice, tools and resources to help mental health services and other settings to understand and take forward an intersectional whole system approach to tackling mental health stigma and discrimination.

## Key activities undertaken this year include:

- 1 Strategic partnership work** with Police Scotland, Scottish Ambulance Service and other public sector and third sector partners to address mental health stigma and discrimination in core business and improve access and experience of care for people with lived/living experience of mental health problems/illness.
- 2 Identified and shared existing good practice** around tackling mental health stigma and discrimination in mental health services (MWC, NES and See Me webinar).
- 3 Supported partners Moray Wellbeing Hub** to share their local learning and guidance around "Harnessing the power of lived experience to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination in healthcare".
- 4 Advised Stigma Free Lanarkshire in their pilots** of influencing behaviour change in GP practices and community based mental services.
- 5 Influenced** the National Mental Health Nursing Review using findings from our research into mental health stigma by association in the mental health nursing profession.
- 6 Supported Ayrshire leadership** to reflect on how they plan for, embed and evaluate action of stigma and discrimination.
- 7 Provided ongoing support** to Distress Brief Intervention gatherings.
- 8 Planned** a National Anti-stigma and Discrimination Collective.
- 9 Influenced** SIGN guidelines.

# Anti-stigma education for healthcare professionals

Two projects this year sought to develop mental health professionals' knowledge and understanding of mental health stigma and discrimination, and anti-stigma approaches.

## EMBEDDING A FOCUS ON STIGMA IN UNIVERSITY CURRICULA

See Me continued to work in partnership with universities across Scotland this year to develop and trial an approach to embed a focus on mental health stigma and discrimination in pre-registration curriculums across mental health related disciplines. See Me delivered five anti-stigma workshops to 230 undergraduate and postgraduate students within Pharmacy (Strathclyde University), Mental Health Nursing (Robert Gordon University, Abertay University), and Global Mental Health disciplines (University of Glasgow) to increase their understanding of intersectional mental health stigma and discrimination, the impact it has on people with lived/living experience, and awareness of actions they can take to challenge it.

*"I think [the See Me session] provides an accessible space for students to explore themes which are critical to mental health and can impact patient outcomes positively, as more considerations will be given to patients circumstance than a standard biomedical approach."* Lecturer

*"I think the See Me content allows students to examine/re-examine their role in and knowledge of bias, stigma and discrimination. It also introduces*

*students to topics such as intersectionality. It links politics and health, which is essential for mental health nurses to be knowledgeable about. It also introduces students to thinking about their position of power as a future nurse, in a profession that has a lot of potential power imbalances within it."* Lecturer

These workshops positively increased pre-registration healthcare students' understanding of intersectional mental health stigma and discrimination, the impact it has on people with lived experience and awareness of actions that can be taken to challenge it. Students reported that following the session they were more mindful of their personal biases, and that their approach to providing care would be more inclusive, non-judgemental and supportive. They further reported an increased confidence to challenge stigma and to advocate for anti-stigma measures in mental health services:

*"I can now approach patient consultations with more empathy, and I now fully understand how difficult it can be for people to admit their mental health struggles."* Student

See Me is currently drawing all the learning together into a resource that will be published in early summer.

## GOOD ANTI-STIGMA PRACTICE SESSIONS

See Me worked with partner organisations including the **Mental Welfare Commission** and **NHS Education Scotland (NES)** to identify and share existing good practice around tackling mental health stigma and discrimination in mental health services. As part of this work, See Me conducted a critical review of NES Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination and Inequality eLearning Module. Two Good Anti-Stigma Practice Sessions were also delivered to 68 mental health practitioners.

Post-session evaluations showed that participants reported an increased understanding of mental health stigma, an increased understanding of good anti-stigma practice in mental health services, and increased confidence in their ability to undertake anti-stigma practice in mental health services.

Attendees reported their intentions to confront and challenge discrimination within mental health services, to advocate for non-judgemental approaches in service delivery, such as using inclusive language and encouraging the same in others.

# Stigma by association in mental health nursing



Scotland is facing a critical shortage of mental health nurses, which has the potential to severely impact access to and quality of care for people experiencing mental health problems, and lead to a deterioration in staff wellbeing and morale.

Many factors are responsible for the issues with recruitment and retention, including stigma by association – stigma experienced by mental health nurses due to their association with people experiencing mental illness. See Me worked with Mental Health Nursing Leads at NHS Scotland, and researchers at Abertay to explore this issue.

The project kicked off with a research study which looked at the scale and nature of how stigma association impacts on the mental health nursing profession in Scotland, and whether this is a barrier to entering and staying in the profession. We conducted a mixed-methods study, including an online survey using the Clinician Associative Stigma Scale (CASS) and open-text questions, alongside focus groups and interviews with a subset of survey respondents (n=14).

## FINDINGS

Our findings showed that 44% of participants felt they had experienced stigma at work or university. A much higher proportion (87%) report stigmatising experiences such as being told their work must be scary or that they don't know what they're doing. As a result, 9% have taken time off or left a mental health nursing job.

### We identified five key drivers of stigma by association:

- Stigma towards people with mental health conditions.
- Lack of parity between mental and physical health.
- Toxic workplace culture.
- Pervasive intersectional stigma.
- Lack of knowledge and understanding regarding mental health conditions and mental health nursing role.

### Stigma related to the profession can lead to a range of negative outcomes:

- Increased stress and anxiety.
- Feeling isolated, undervalued and de-motivated.
- Feelings of frustration or irritation.
- Negative impacts on people's identity or self-esteem.
- Experiences of trauma, feeling unsafe and unsupported.

### The consequences of stigma and its psychological impacts can be huge, and include:

- Career choices – taking a break, changing roles, changing career.
- Impeded learning and development.
- Self-limiting behaviours e.g. avoiding talking about work with friends & family.
- Hiding mental health challenges.
- Burnout/compassion fatigue.

A small number of positive impacts were also reported, included feeling more driven to make a difference and feeling more motivated to advocate for patients.

**The findings and recommendations from this study are being used by Scottish Government to influence the Mental Health Nursing Review**

We heard from  
**393**  
current or former  
mental health  
nurses and 293  
students.

**87%**  
of respondents  
reported  
experiencing  
people telling them  
that their work  
must be 'scary'.

*"They would diminish the role that you did. They didn't understand the impact of mental illness on people. There was a perception that I babysat people; that's what they thought that I did."*



## IMPACT

Through this project See Me has developed positive relationships with the Mental Health Nurse Leads Group Scotland and researchers at Abertay and influenced Scottish Government's National Mental Health Nursing Review to include explicit action on tackling stigma within the profession.

The research will be published on the See Me website and will be launched at an event in the summer, with further targeted engagement and dissemination activity taking place in 2025-26, including working with key Scottish Government leads to influence national policy and practice developments.

The next phase of the project will involve designing and trialling anti-stigma intervention(s).



## NEXT STEPS

See Me will work with the Mental Health Nursing Review Implementation Group and wider colleagues to consider the survey findings and develop, test, and evaluate stigma-reduction recommendations and interventions, drawing upon learning and evidence of what works.

## REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

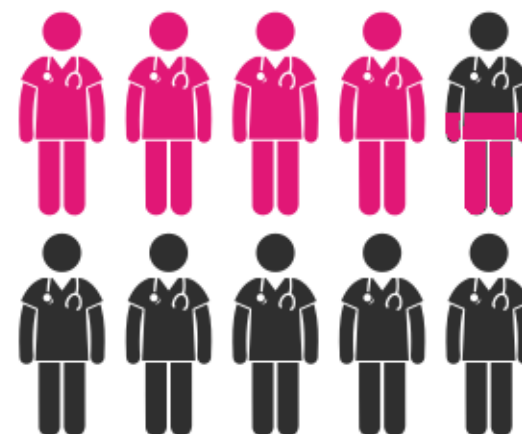
This study provides strong evidence of stigma by association as experienced by student and qualified mental health nurses, highlighting the significant impact of stigma by association, the influence it has on mental health nurses' perceived value, job satisfaction and ultimately their career choices. This report highlights the need to do more to address public and personal perceptions of mental illness. Moreover, the data shine a light on structural, cultural, and organisational factors that need to be addressed within health and mental health care services.

To address the pervasive stigma faced by mental health nurses, three recommendations were proposed, focusing on education, policy changes, and raising the profession's profile.

- Public education is essential to improve understanding of mental health and the role of mental health nurses.
- Policies should promote a supportive workplace culture and address intersectional stigma.
- Raising the profile of mental health nursing can attract more individuals to the profession and reduce stigma.



**9%** of mental health nurses have left a job, placement or course because of stigma by association.



**44%**

**of mental health nurses have experienced stigma related to their profession at work or university.**

*"The Mental Health Nurse Leads Group Scotland is a key strategic group providing leadership and direction for mental health nursing. The unseen impact of stigma by association has been a significant concern for the group and we are delighted to have had the opportunity to work in partnership with See Me and the Mental Health Foundation on this research project. This important research brings the experiences of stigma by association into focus, and we are fully supportive of the recommendations set out in the study."* Keith Russell, Nurse Director and Karen Ozden, Nurse Director, on behalf of the Mental Health Nurse Leads

# Capacity building with Police Scotland

We have continued to support Police Scotland to take a whole system approach to addressing mental health stigma and discrimination. This partnership has involved various initiatives aimed at creating inclusive environments and empowering police officers to challenge stigma and discrimination.

- **Policing Together Mental Health Reference Group:** See Me participated in this group, tasked with taking forward recommendations from the HMICS thematic report on policing and mental health. We attended meetings, presented on inclusive mental health language, and provided feedback on a mental health glossary designed to support police officers and call handlers in using inclusive language.
- **Workshops and Service Design Partnership:** We shared learning at workshops facilitated by the Mental Health Unscheduled Care Service Design Partnership to help redesign services and ensure they are free from stigma and discrimination.
- **Equality Outcomes Feedback:** See Me responded to Police Scotland's Equality Outcomes for 2025-29 feedback survey to influence a stronger focus on taking an intersectional approach to addressing mental health stigma and discrimination.
- **Anti-Stigma Intervention:** We co-developed and co-piloted an anti-stigma intervention with Police Scotland's Wellbeing Team and CPD Team to upskill their Wellbeing Champions in having supportive conversations about mental health with peers. Consideration is now being given to adapting the workshop to other key public-facing roles.
- **Workforce Plan Development:** Provided advice and support to the Wellbeing Team leading the development of Police Scotland's Workforce Plan to ensure that a focus on addressing intersectional mental health stigma and discrimination is embedded across all priority areas of work.
- **Health and Wellbeing Partner Forum:** Provided advice and support via their Health and Wellbeing Partner Forum.



## IMPACTS

- **Guidance and Tools Development:** See Me were invited to support the development of guidance and tools around inclusive language, particularly in public-facing roles, and develop learning bites on mental health stigma and discrimination, intersectionality and inclusive language, to support police officers to provide stigma-free inclusive response.
- **Influencing Pilot Initiatives:** See Me were invited to help shape a number of various pilot initiatives around Transfer of Care, which are being reviewed for implementation.
- **Forum Contributions:** See Me's presentation and contributions to forum discussions (these include the Policing Together Mental Health reference group and the Health and Wellbeing Partner Forum) helped firm up a focus on exploring solutions to how culture and stigma might be preventing people in the organisation from seeking help early:

*"Great input today. Thank you for taking the time to prepare and attend. Your input to the discussion was also really valuable."* Email sent to See Me after session

*"Police Scotland are committed to work with partners to ensure better outcomes for individuals in mental health crisis or distress. As part of this work, the Mental Health Taskforce have been engaged with See Me in order to ensure our officers are aware of the best way to engage with those experiencing mental health crisis/distress, the importance of understanding stigma and how use of language can affect an individual. See Me are working with us to ensure the voice of lived and living experience is incorporated fully into this learning. This is an ongoing piece of work which will be delivered in 2025."*

Inspector Suzanne Kelsey, Police Scotland



## LIVED EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT

We supported our See Me volunteer Gary (retired from police workforce) to share his lived experience of mental health at work in the police through videos, inputs and stalls at webinars and wellbeing conferences/days alongside See Me staff input.

Gary provided social contact opportunities across the organisation, including Specialist Crime Division and Operational Support Division, illustrating good practice around inclusive culture, line management and reasonable adjustments, and reaching 207 people.

## SUPPORTING POLICE SCOTLAND'S WELLBEING CHAMPIONS

Police Scotland's partnership with See Me has been instrumental in creating a supportive environment for Wellbeing Champions to address mental health stigma and discrimination effectively.

Police Scotland's Wellbeing Team recently undertook a drive to recruit more Wellbeing Champions into the organisation, growing their number from around 130 to 248.

*"We recognised that new Wellbeing Champions needed support and help in how to have conversations about mental health, and to know how and where to signpost colleagues to for support. This included understanding stigma surrounding mental health and the impact that stigma has on people with mental health problems at work."*  
Carol Brown, Police Scotland

Police Scotland's Wellbeing and CPD teams worked with See Me to co-develop a 2-hour workshop addressing how to have confident conversations about mental health, and understanding mental health stigma. Social contact was provided via short videos in which a See Me volunteer shared their lived experience perspective around the fear of opening conversations about mental health, what helps and tips for Wellbeing Champions.

- Improve understanding of what works to create the optimal environment for having conversations.
- Improve understanding of the barriers and enablers to having conversations (about mental health).
- Improve knowledge of tools, resources and signposting that can be used to support conversations (about mental health).
- Increase opportunities to network and share learning with peers.

The workshop was piloted with 54 new and existing Wellbeing Champions across four sessions in May 2024. Feedback from participants was used to review and amend workshop content.

Participants were asked to rate the session they attended using a 10-point scale (1 being poor, 10 being excellent); over 50% of respondents rated the session very highly (between 8 and 10, returning an average score of 7 and a median score of 8. When asked about actions they were going to try to put into practice as a result of this session, participants shared:

*"Approaching someone I feel may need support, rather than waiting for them to speak to me."*



▲ Volunteer Gary (right) delivering a presentation about mental health stigma in the workplace with Specialist Crime Division (Police Scotland) Nov 2024.

*"To focus on being a good listener and not putting too much pressure on myself to know everything."*

In addition to the training See Me delivered to Police Scotland Wellbeing Champions, See Me have delivered several inputs to Police Scotland divisions and champions groups on the topic of mental health stigma and discrimination. This includes a webinar in April 2024 with 98 attendees and two Time to Talk day sessions in February 2025 with over 35 attendees. From these sessions participants have stated they feel more prepared to support people with mental health problems within their teams and feel more aware of lived experience of mental health stigma and discrimination within the workplace. These sessions have supported capacity building and knowledge sharing within the organisation.



# Parents and carers' key role in reducing stigma in relationships

42% of parents and carers reported that their young person rarely or never speaks to them about their mental health.

28% of parents and carers reported that they could not often open up a conversation about mental health with their young person.

As part of our **See Me See Change** approach to addressing mental health stigma and discrimination in schools, participating schools across Scotland have been keen to do more to involve parents and carers within their school's community in the work.

Through our education and young people's work, particularly our **Feels FM** and **Feels FM 2.0** research, we have learned more about some of the barriers that young people experience in relation to having conversations about mental health within families as well as what adults can do to support having these conversations with young people.

This year we invited parents and carers of young people aged 11-18 to share their thoughts and experiences via an online survey, so that their valuable feedback can be used to inform the development of an anti-stigma intervention that schools and others can use to engage parents and carers and support reducing mental health stigma and discrimination across the school community. The survey ran for 10 weeks during June and August 2024 and was disseminated online via e-mail,

social media, stakeholder networks, etc. We received 130 responses in total. We learned further about some of the barriers parents and carers experience when having supportive conversations about mental health such as:

***"My child is anxious and I don't want to say the wrong thing and make them more anxious."***

Findings from the survey enabled us to learn more about the parent and carer experience when having mental health conversations with their young people.

We learnt how often parents and carers are engaging in mental health conversations with their young people, and how confident they feel in having supportive conversations. Survey responses taught us about parents and carers' expectations around conversations, and what barriers they experience along the way.

Parents and carers also told us what support they need, and what they feel would make a difference in their ability to have mental health conversations with their young people.

Alongside this research, we also engaged with a parent and carer group within See Me in Work partner Burness Paull LLP, delivering an interactive session to 10 parents and carers. Evaluation showed that the session increased participants' understanding of mental health stigma and discrimination and increased participants' knowledge of resources to support mental health conversations with their young people.

One participant said ***"the hosts were great and from the offset made it feel comfortable and a safe space for us all; they were very knowledgeable, great at sharing information, interaction and listening"***.

This work has also enabled us to inform other parent and carer resource development led by Suicide Prevention Scotland and Children in Scotland and we will be supporting them going forward to think about the stigma element of their project.

The learning so far has been invaluable for shaping the next stage of the project, which will be to develop and test the approach further. We are currently mapping other parent and carer organisations we can engage with as well as engaging with See Me Volunteers to support with the development of the approach.

## Top 3 barriers to mental health conversations:

- **Fear of saying the wrong thing (45%).**
- **Fear of not having solutions to the problems raised (42%).**
- **Fear of young person not wanting to engage in the conversation (40%).**

# See Me See Change promotion

We have continued to promote the See Me See Change (SMSC) whole school approach for schools across Scotland this year, and in June launched the **See Me See Change Network newsletter**. The newsletter, published termly, raises awareness of SMSC resources and tools and shares good practice from across participating schools.

The newsletter has proved an effective way of raising awareness of key See Me campaigns such as Time to Talk Day (TTTD). Promotion of the Education and Young Peoples pack resulted in 278 downloads, making it one of the most downloaded TTDD resources on the website. These newsletters will continue to be sent out to the network and will also include some schools network webinar sessions for the academic year ahead.

We are also in the final stages of submitting the See Me See Change train the trainer approach to NHS Education for Scotland (NES) to be hosted on their webpages, supporting promotion and reach of the resources across Scottish secondary schools.



## DUNFERMLINE HIGH SCHOOL

In June 2024, staff leads from the Fife Health and Wellbeing team co-delivered See Me See Change training with senior pupils from Dunfermline High School to 25 senior secondary pupils from across Fife.

The pupils shared some of the incredible things that they have implemented from their action plan at Dunfermline over the last few years since becoming trained in SMSC. This has included speaking at assemblies, hosting drop-in sessions for their peers and delivering mental health sessions to Primary 7 pupils from across their cluster who benefited from enhanced transition.

They also held parent sessions for Primary 7 cohorts across the cluster to provide information about the support they offer at DHS. Feedback suggests that parents found this beneficial and alleviated some of the concerns and anxiety they may have had about their young person transitioning to secondary school.

Fife Health and Wellbeing team continue to promote and support engagement in See Me See Change and have a new Health

Promotion Officer who has been tasked with creating a mental health training pathway for secondary schools across Fife, which will include the support and promotion of See Me See Change for more schools to engage and develop action plans to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination.

*"We've been using the See Me See Change programme in some of our Fife schools over the past few years. What inspires me most is seeing the pupils deliver the interactive training to their peers with such passion and enthusiasm, particularly around issues such as stigmatising language. Pupils at Dunfermline High School have been speaking at assemblies, hosting drop-in sessions for their peers, and delivering mental health sessions to primary 7 pupils across the cluster, as well as parent sessions for these primary 7 pupils."*

*It's incredible to see young people leading and encouraging a whole school approach to challenging mental health stigma. Over the next year, we plan to support several further schools in Fife to develop action plans within their school communities."*  
Louise Stean, Fife Council



# Partnership with Think Positive

In April 2024, See Me and **Think Positive** came together to identify and share best anti-stigma practice in universities and colleges and support achievement of Action 3. of the Scottish Government Student Mental Health Action Plan: Facilitate and enhance access to mental health resources and training for all university, college, and PBSA staff to continue to become mental health aware.

## Embedding good practice

Through the partnership with Think Positive, See Me has been able to connect with more colleges and universities across Scotland to gather feedback and insight into some of our anti stigma resources. To promote, support and further embed good anti-stigma practice, See Me worked with Think Positive to identify existing examples of good practice universities and colleges were taking forward in their mental health action plans.

## Adapting See Me See Change

In August, feedback sessions were conducted across Scotland for students and staff at colleges and universities to discuss the See Me See Change initiative. Participants highlighted the need for adaptations to the initiative in educational settings, focusing on upskilling staff regarding stigma, discrimination, and intersectional issues. The sessions revealed both barriers and opportunities for future work, emphasizing the importance of capacity building in mental health stigma awareness. These findings and work so far was presented at the

Think Positive Forum in January 2025, engaging 22 representatives from various institutions.

## Building awareness

Helen Brown at Think Positive shared: *"Tackling Stigma is a priority in the Scottish Government's Student Mental Health Action Plan and since April 2024 Think Positive has been collaborating with See Me on their See Me See Change pilot programme. The programme builds on the work undertaken in schools, aiming to address mental health stigma and discrimination in Scottish colleges and universities. The engagement with student and staff feedback groups and the learning from those has been invaluable in helping dismantle the barriers that students face. See Me presented at our January Forum and as a result more colleges, universities and students associations are participating in the next stages of the pilot. This valuable work is creating cultures where mental health can be discussed openly in a supportive and affirming environment, embedding resilience and a commitment to emotional and psychological well being into all aspects of our colleges and universities."*

## Next steps

This learning has helped to inform the next stages of the project: piloting two capacity-building approaches for university and college staff. The pilot will aim to support university and college staff (regardless of role or profession) to take an intersectional systemwide approach to tackling mental health stigma and discrimination across their setting.

## WALKING A MILE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH

In June 2024, over 100 delegates attended an event for the Highland Youth Parliament conference in Inverness. Supported by See Me, part of the event involved an organised 1 mile walk around Queens Park to promote good mental health and make space for conversations about how young people can support each other with their mental health.

The event brought together delegates from the Highland Youth Parliament, and professionals who work with young people in a range of settings. Keynote speaker Nicola Killeen, Children and Young People's Commissioner emphasised the importance of peer support and having access to information and activities as key in promoting good mental health for young people. Highland Youth Parliament event in June 2024. Read more at: [Young people show their support for mental health at Highland Youth Parliament – High Life Highland](#)

► Highland Youth Parliament event in June 2024. Read more at: [Young people show their support for mental health at Highland Youth Parliament – High Life Highland.](#)





# Successful completion of See Me supported PhD

For the last four years, See Me supported partners Glasgow Caledonian University to recruit and involve former See Me volunteers (including two Youth Consultants) as Co-researchers in a PhD research project that resulted in the development of a new conceptual model and measurement tool of Youth Mental Health Stigma Experience.

All four of the researchers involved were anti-stigma activists with See Me, who between them have been instrumental in driving forward change in children and youth settings for several years. Their understanding, experience, leadership and dedication towards anti-stigma work has been extended as Co-researchers on this project.

It allowed the research to critique adult-centric literature and adult biases across the research process, prioritising and uplifting youth voice and needs in respect of stigma.

As well as producing a stigma scale, the project is a great illustration of the value of experience-led peer research, a process that was designed by young people for young people and exemplifies how to create the conditions for inclusive participation where participants can flourish.

*“Being the expert in the room is empowering and contributing my voice as a young person to a field that has the facilities to create change, demonstrates that we can find these spaces if we put in the work.”*

*“I never considered myself capable of further education, never mind active research. I wasn’t the smartest in the class, or confident enough to share my ideas – but I have learnt through this research project that I am capable.”*

Kirsty, Co-researcher

► Co-research team members  
Rebecca, Kirsty, Jess and Rhi.



**The research findings have already been disseminated to over 300 attendees at national and international conferences (see photo) and via the Youth Voice Blog:**

*"Being the expert in the room is empowering and contributing my voice as a young person to a field that has the facilities to create change, demonstrates that we can find these spaces if we put in the work. I never considered myself capable of further education, never mind active research. I wasn't the smartest in the class, or confident enough to share my ideas – but I have learnt through this research project that I am capable."* Kirsty, Co-researcher.

See Me will continue to support dissemination and will use the learning in various ways, including to take forward participatory research. See Me will support wherever possible further testing of the tool to measure youth mental health stigma experiences.

*"This project would not exist without you [Co-researchers Jess, Kirsty and Rhi] and every single week working with you over the last three years has been a privilege and a joy. Your continued resilience, passion, determination, and enthusiasm has consistently inspired me and enabled me to find motivation, even on the hardest days [...]. Your contribution to this research is immeasurable, so I hope this helps illuminate the power of participatory research and of including young people in research and decision-making. It's far more than just a methodology, it's an act of resistance and a way*

*to ensure our future is more inclusive and more prepared to support young people wherever they may go and whatever that may do."*

Dr Rebecca Johnson, Glasgow Caledonian University

This illustrates the impact that See Me had on individuals from their initial volunteering and consultancy roles in the programme to continuing to create opportunities for them to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination in other ways and spaces, as well as continue to develop other knowledge, skills and abilities:

*"I think one of my biggest learning points as I reflect in the last four years, it's just how much can be achieved when you have a strong support network around you. Particularly in kind of more formal academic settings, which can often feel so isolating. You know, doing this project has really helped me grow, not just in my studies, and being able to graduate and considering doing a PhD myself. It's also, giving me so much confidence to just trust my perspective, and it's made me feel a lot more at home within myself and within this field. I am so thankful for all 400 plus hours [put into the project] and we've been able to share together because I mean, just look at how much we've done!"*

Kirsty, Co-researcher



▲ Co-research team with Professor Simon Hunter at the Transdisciplinary Research for the Improvement of Youth Mental Public Health (TRIUMPH) conference.

*"My biggest take away is just to trust myself that my voice is equal to everybody else isn't through that I was able to do amazing things like I went on, did an amazing chesing job that I wouldn't have had the confidence to do if it wasn't for this project. And I know that there's so many other little things that I've learned throughout this just from the three other amazing people on this project."*

Rhi, Co-researcher

*"For me it's, you know, the true meaning of asking for help and having it answered. To have three people brought together with common values and a common goal means you can create a group where each and every one of you has the best interests at heart for the others, and I would not have grown in myself and kept going or achieved my degree."*

Jess, Co-researcher



# See Me in Work

This year See Me continued to provide information, advice and support to employers in Scotland wanting to take action to create mental health inclusive working environments, free from stigma and discrimination.

In total we directly engaged with over 1,750 employers.

This has included:

- In-person workshop delivery.
- See Me in Work Portal.
- Webinar sessions.
- Partner events.
- Consultancy advice and support meetings.
- Direct engagement with See Me resources.
- National Learning Network for Employers sessions.
- Involvement in campaigns.
- E-learning.
- Peer Learning Network.

## SEE ME IN WORK WEBINARS

At least 120 employers attended our See Me in Work webinar sessions. This covered topics such as men's mental health, good practice in healthcare services, normalising conversations about mental health in the workplace, and mental health stigma and discrimination of long term and complex mental health conditions.

Following our webinar on Men's Mental Health Stigma, participants self-reported increased confidence having conversations about mental health in their workplace. Similarly, following an input on mental health stigma at work with NHS Tayside, respondents reported they had more knowledge about mental health stigma and discrimination in the workplace, and were more aware of the resources they could use to support them to have more open conversations about mental health at work.

**1,479+ visits to the See Me in Work webpage this year which has included visits to our workplace resources with over 900 downloads of workplace specific resources.**

## TIME TO TALK DAY EMPLOYER SESSIONS

A range of organisations in different settings got involved with the Time to Talk Day campaign on social media in February this year, including: sports groups; employers; health and social care organisations; charity partners; community groups; schools, colleges, universities and youth services; and arts organisations.

We saw a range of in-person events too, including a Time to Talk Day-themed touch rugby activity from Dalziel Rugby Club in North Lanarkshire, a coffee and chat event for colleagues at Scotrail, a drop-in session in the outdoors from Erskine Community Garden hosted, and a coffee morning for colleagues from Clark Contracts in Paisley.

Several Time to Talk Day sessions were also hosted for employers Turner and Townsend and Police Scotland to promote conversations about mental health in the workplace. These sessions aimed to encourage employees to reflect on their practices and consider changes to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health in professional environments.

Feedback from Turner and Townsend highlighted the positive impact of See Me's support in fostering open conversations about mental health and challenging stigma in the corporate realm. They also appreciated the resources provided to enhance their Wellbeing Champions Network. A participant at these sessions stated *"Because of this session I am better prepared to listen and support others"*.



## SEE ME IN WORK PORTAL

21 employers are actively engaged with the See Me in Work Portal with a reach of over 24,800 employees within Scotland. Employers working through this portal are currently assessing the needs of staff, forming an improvement plan with a focus on addressing mental health stigma and discrimination across their organisation holistically, and implementing these improvements.

*"We are in the early stages but availability of resources has been catalyst for corporate management team to adopt the programme, appoint a steering group to oversee the process and commence a series of engagement activities with workforce. See Me in Work has been seen as an opportunity to co-ordinate wellbeing activity and make a positive difference to respond to the identified concerns over the wellbeing of staff working in social care."* CrossReach

*"ScottishPower have been delighted to work alongside See Me as we continue to improve how we as an organisation support good mental health. This is the second time we have participated within the See Me in Work Programme. The structure of the programme, along with the supporting resources on the Portal have been invaluable in helping us better understand the experiences of our people and identifying which areas we need to be focusing on to ensure that people are treated fairly when they come to work. In addition to See Me in Work, we also take part in Time to Talk Day every February, using the packs and guidance developed by See Me. They contribute to making Time to Talk Day one of the most recognised campaigns that we deliver each year."*

ScottishPower

## CONSULTANCY AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

We directly supported 186 employers, providing tailored advice, support and access to resources to support their anti-stigma and discrimination approach.

We have been providing consultancy advice and support to employers including Police Scotland, ScottishPower, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal and Ministry of Defence to help them embed a focus on tackling mental health stigma and discrimination within their organisation, their core business and, where appropriate, support to members.

We have been working in partnership with **Scottish Union of Supported Employment**, **Citizens Advice Scotland** and the **Law Society of Scotland** to promote See Me advice, tools and resources to help their members take action to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination in employment.

*"At the Law Society of Scotland, we frequently signpost See Me's resources to our member firms and organisations looking at how they can positively support mental health, as we find the workplace-specific focus to be particularly valuable as it's more specific to our needs. We are aware that some of our member firms have recently used See Me in Work to form the basis of a wellbeing strategy, by gathering benchmark data and developing an action plan."* Law Society Scotland

## BESPOKE ANTI-STIGMA SESSIONS

We have also delivered several input sessions to national networks including SUSE Inclusive Workplace Week, The National Rural Mental Health Forum, and the National Learning Network for Employers.

Through these sessions we have engaged with over 900+ employees to share lived experience and give advice on addressing mental health stigma.

## E-LEARNING

A further 224 employees engaged with our e-learning module focused on mental health stigma and discrimination this year taking the total number of people who have completed the e-learning module to **996** since the start of our strategy in April 2021.

Data from 2024-2025 participants of our e-learning course shows a significant increase in participants knowing their rights about disclosing a mental health problem when applying for jobs (increased from a median of 3.8 to 4.9) and feeling more comfortable discussing their rights (increase from 3.7 to 4.8) and their own mental health in the workplace following completion of the e-learning course (increase from 3.8 to 4.6).

## ENGAGING EMPLOYERS IN RURAL INDUSTRIES

See Me has been developing new relationships which will support our engagement with rural employers.

This year, we delivered a session at the National Rural Mental Health Forum that has over **260 membership organisations** within Scotland and a **reach of 500,000 people**, to build understanding about mental health stigma in rural settings and how See Me can support.

Resultant meetings with RSABI, Change Mental Health, and Penumbra have focused on increasing engagement in rural settings. Additionally See Me have been working with **Farmstrong Scotland** to showcase how See Me resources and support can aid those within the farming and crofting industry to take anti-stigma action.

A blog promoting See Me in Work advice and resources to their network is in progress. It's Okay to Talk cards will be distributed at Farmstrong events, increasing reach and potential engagement with the most marginalised communities.

## SUPPORTING ANTI-STIGMA ACTION AT SCOTTISHPOWER

ScottishPower joined the **See Me in Work** programme in 2019 and conducted a needs assessment in early 2020, which identified strengths in 'returning to work' and areas for improvement in 'pre-employment' and 'organisational culture'.

The assessment highlighted that while ScottishPower is generally perceived as a good employer, there were mixed experiences reported by participants, indicating a need for better balance between customer needs and staff wellbeing.

*"I think that Scottish Power's intentions are good and really praiseworthy, but the prejudice against ill mental health is so embedded in our society that it will take a generation to change that."*

See Me supported ScottishPower to draw an improvement plan targeting key areas and provided ongoing advice and support. In 2024, ScottishPower moved to the **See Me in Work Portal**, allowing them to self-manage their improvement journey and capture follow-up data.

## IMPACT

Evaluation has shown modest improvements in how the organisation is perceived by employees in relation to mental health, with significant improvements in management support and recruitment processes. For example compared to 2020, in 2024 substantially more staff agreed that people applying for positions would feel safe and able to disclose a mental health problem during the recruitment process. This indicates improvements in the disclosure process and perceptions around people's openness to disclose mental health conditions.

Perceptions of the quality of Scottish Power's mental health training for managers have also improved substantially, following renewed commitment and investment in this area. **19%** of respondents in 2020 said the organisation had good mental health training for managers compared to **42%** in 2024.

ScottishPower continues to champion anti-stigma action and has shared their journey and learning across various platforms and events.

*"ScottishPower have been delighted to work alongside See Me as we continue to improve how we as an organisation support good mental health. This is the second time we have participated within the See Me in Work Programme. The structure of the programme, along with the supporting resources on the Portal have been invaluable in helping us better understand the experiences of our people and identifying which areas we need to be focusing on to ensure that people are treated fairly when they come to work. In addition to See Me in Work, we also take part in Time to Talk Day every February, using the packs and guidance developed by See Me. They contribute to making Time to Talk Day one of the most recognised campaigns that we deliver each year."*



## PARTNERSHIP WITH SCOTRAIL

**ScotRail** have continued to work with See Me to end mental health stigma and discrimination. Here, Louise McKee, ScotRail's Wellbeing Advisor reflects on the impact of this partnership.

*"ScotRail have had a longstanding relationship with See Me to work together to end mental health stigma and discrimination. Being a part of the national employer's network, newsletters and platforms allows us as an organisation to identify what we could improve for our colleagues, collaborate on awareness campaigns and introduce proactive support."*

*See Me are specifically a Scottish built programme therefore have relevant information, statistics and support that can support colleagues."*



### Because of the partnership with See Me, this year ScotRail:

- Celebrated Brew Monday and Time to Talk Day by hosting conversation cafes across the country to connect with staff, provide a space for mental health discussions, and highlight the support that is available for staff members.
- Launched a campaign to encourage people to get comfortable and talk about mental health.
- Launched an internal survey in line with Time to Talk Day to assess their wellbeing initiatives and review if these are accessible for everyone in the organisation.
- Have sought to review the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) programme completed by 118 colleagues, and explore common themes in the conversations held by Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs).
- Trained our HR team in MHFA to support them in their role supporting employees.

*"ScotRail also launched a wellbeing partnership with Andys Man Club in 2024 which is continuing into 2025/6 to promote the peer to peer support available for males. As a male dominant organisation we recognise the need for support, and by partnering with AMC we work together to reduce the stigma associated around talking about mental health."*

*Through this there have been mental health awareness and suicide prevention sessions delivered across the ScotRail network."*

## IMPACT

*"We are seeing a shift in culture and attitude in talking about mental health amongst teams and people reaching out for further support."*

*Feedback gathered from conversation cafes and wellbeing and inclusion roadshows has been positive. ScotRail colleagues have used the roadshows a useful way of learning about the range of internal and external support available to them."*

## NEXT STEPS

*"Mental health stigma is still around. We will continue to grow our MHFA network in areas that require support across the business."*

*We are currently reviewing mental health training specifically designed to support line managers to give them the best tools in supporting their employees and themselves."*





# Growing the See Us movement

**Building on previous years, the See Us movement is continuing to grow a community of people who are inspired to take action to challenge stigma and discrimination at every level. As we continue to reach more people, we are creating a ction on stigma and discrimination.**

Our website acts as a central hub where people can access change making resources and get involved in campaigns. Time to Talk Day polling tells us that people are not feeling empowered, confident or resourced to take action to address stigma, but that providing people with knowledge and tools can help change this. The aim of the See Us Movement is to provide a vehicle for change by increasing our reach to more people who are then inspired to get involved and take action on stigma and discrimination.

We do this by building meaningful connections with our audiences by platforming people's lived and living experiences. Whether people see our content in the media, across social media or through community and other events, the outcome should be the same: they feel part of something and feel inspired to take action.



See Us is underpinned by simple messaging that our audiences understand and which makes them feel part of a bigger story. This is tag-teamed with a clear call to action. Our content has been designed to help our audiences feel a human connection to the story. Curating the stories of our volunteers and other lived experience data including SMISS is central to the movement. And for our call to action, we make it easy for people to get involved by giving them a variety of tools they can use.

## IMPACT

Our social media channels have been gradually increasing and they are instrumental in growing the movement and empowering people to take action. Sharing lived experiences stories across our channels has helped us to build meaningful connections with our existing and new audiences.

This in turn has encouraged footfall to the website which acts as a central hub where our resources are hosted, and people are taking action.

Our analytics are telling us we're reaching new audiences and that people are taking action on the website. This year, we know that people on social media saw our content **4.14m times**.

**96%** of views of our content across social media were by non-followers, meaning our social channels are vital in gradually increasing our reach to new people.

This drove traffic to the website, with **34,390 visits** and **126,000 page views**, where our resources were downloaded **19,605 times** showing that people were inspired and moved by the content they saw to click into the website and take action to tackle stigma and discrimination.

**The Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study (SMISS) was downloaded 1,206 times.**

# Empowering volunteers to take action

**Strengthening capacity building and community action approaches within our cohort of lived experience volunteers allows us to expand the programme's reach and scope. The key ambition for the volunteering programme in 2024/25 therefore was to increase the number of volunteer-led projects.**

In 2023/24, there were 11 volunteer-led events and activities, and we believed there was the potential to increase that number this year. We sought to do this by enhancing the skills and confidence of volunteers through targeted training and development sessions, community building and increased staff support. This approach was designed to empower lived experience volunteers while broadening our reach, enabling us to connect with a wider and more diverse range of communities and audiences. In order to achieve this, we focused on expanding opportunities for social contact and skill development for volunteers.



## PROCESS

We developed and delivered several new training sessions on topics such as intersectionality, community action and utilising lived experience. These sessions equipped volunteers with practical tools and techniques, including community mapping and self-reflection, to help them make informed decisions about how and where to take action to tackle stigma. This approach empowered them to develop impactful projects in the areas that were most meaningful to them.

We intentionally created more spaces for volunteers to connect with one another and foster a sense of community within our volunteer group. Monthly online catch-up sessions, introduced in July 2024, have facilitated ongoing interaction, with eight sessions held to date and positive feedback from participants.

Lastly, we made it a priority to meet volunteers in their local communities, supporting them in delivering in-person events. From the initial concept to planning, development, and final delivery, we worked closely with volunteers throughout the entire project lifecycle to ensure their contributions were fully supported and their ambitions realised.

## IMPACT

In 2024/25, See Me volunteers successfully planned and delivered 18 diverse events and activities within their local communities, groups, and areas of interest, marking a 64% increase in volunteer-led events compared to the previous year. These events spanned across nine local authority areas, from the Scottish Borders to Glasgow, Inverclyde, Ayrshire, and Lanarkshire, reaching all the way to Orkney and Shetland.

Many volunteers led projects for the first time and events ranged from conversation cafés and creative writing workshops, to Walk a Mile events and spoken word nights, presentations in workplace settings to coffee mornings and other local community gatherings, delivered in partnership with other organisations.

The results of our annual survey reveal that volunteers feel empowered by the activities they take part in (87% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed). When asked what they felt they had gained through their volunteering, common themes included increased confidence, stronger connections with others and developing new skills. Notably 93% of respondents found the training and development sessions they attended valuable.



Volunteers also told us that the opportunity to share their experiences and being supported to talk openly about their mental health through public speaking had an impact on reducing self-stigma and combating feelings of being alone in their experiences. Some volunteers reported improved self-acceptance as a result of these experiences.

The survey also highlighted the positive impact of volunteering on the volunteers' own mental health. A strong 88% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their volunteering experience had contributed positively to their mental health.

Volunteers noted that See Me's focus on relationship-building and the tailored support provided by staff fostered trust in working relationships, enabling them to take forward initiatives that highlighted their unique skills and expertise. This approach not only benefited volunteers but also made a meaningful impact to the individuals and communities they served. As one volunteer reflected:

*"Being able to use my lived experience and qualities in areas where I can make a difference, and always being supported by See Me in whatever I want to contribute to."* (respondent to the annual survey to a



question around what they felt has been going well with their volunteering experience)

The benefits of the volunteer-led initiatives also extended to the communities, groups, and individuals who participated in the events and workshops. Many participants reported that the sessions were not only insightful but also encouraged them to consider their own and others' experiences in a new light. The workshops and events helped to raise awareness and build capacity within the community, fostering deeper understanding and empathy. In many cases, these events were delivered within volunteers' local communities and, in some instances, in partnership with local organisations. This collaborative approach strengthened community ties and facilitated connections between people with lived experience, partner organisations, and the wider public.

The success of our approach to volunteer engagement this year is evident in the significant increase in volunteer-led events. This growth suggests that volunteers feel more equipped, confident, and empowered to take forward their own anti-stigma initiatives and events. Feedback from our annual volunteer survey, along with other evaluation tools, highlights the positive impact volunteering with See Me has had on the mental health of our volunteers. They also report that the work we have supported them in delivering is both meaningful and person-centred, and within the areas that matter most to them.

The broader impact of this project can be seen in the communities, groups, and individuals who have attended the various events. They have benefitted from increased social contact and gained a deeper awareness of mental health stigma and discrimination, and how to tackle this.

Looking ahead, we will continue to build on this approach by enhancing our communication and engagement strategy for lived experience volunteers. This will include setting up a working group where volunteers can share their feedback and help to shape future developments. We will also focus on targeted recruitment to ensure a more diverse range of lived and intersectional experiences, while improving the on boarding journey for new volunteers through the integration of newly developed tools into the induction process.

One the next pages, read more about the volunteer journey of three of our amazing volunteers, Gary, Antje and Paul, and how volunteering with See Me has made a positive impact to their lives, in the next section.

# 87%

respondents feel empowered by the volunteering opportunities they take part in.

# 88%

agree volunteering has had a positive impact on their mental health.

*"I consider See Me to be the authority on mental health stigma and discrimination and as a volunteer I like to play my part in achieving their goals."*

# Gary's making a difference through volunteering

When Gary joined See Me as a volunteer in 2023, he was keen to use his experience to show others that they weren't alone. He's made a big impact so far – in his community, his family, and for himself.

*"Helping others was a big factor for getting involved," he says. "I wanted to push mental health forwards. I wanted to tackle stigma discrimination, especially in the workplace. I also wanted to share my own lived experience for the benefit of others."*

Since joining the programme as a volunteer, Gary's been involved in a range of workplace wellbeing events, sharing his experiences – something he describes as "liberating" – with workers across Scotland. One event in particular stands out.

"I delivered a 45-minute presentation at a wellbeing conference in February 2024," Gary reflects. "I was totally buzzing after that. The reaction from the audience was humbling. I had a standing ovation,

I had people in tears, people personally thanking me. I was approached by people who thought they were the only ones seriously struggling. And then when they heard my journey and my struggles, they felt they were no longer alone."

It's not just the people hearing his story who have been impacted. Gary says that volunteering has been beneficial for him too, both personally and professionally.

He says: "It's allowed me to fulfil an ambition to speak, hopefully and frankly about mental health. It's given me the opportunity to present at events I previously wouldn't have been able to do.

*"I have gained in confidence with the help of See Me staff. I've learned how not to share certain stuff that I'm not comfortable talking about. I've learned how to address audiences, take questions. I can help people in organisations with a variety of things – I've learned data, facts, figures, including information around stigma and discrimination, and I've learned new people skills along the way."*

**Read more about Gary's experiences on the See Me website.**

*"I was introduced to Gary who as an ex-Police Officer spoke about his lived experience of Mental Health which I found very poignant and influential. Gary told his story from the Heart, and it really hit home, and he was extremely passionate also about helping other people. I arranged a Webinar and a Wellbeing event [with See Me] [Gary and other See Me team member's] presentations were... extremely well received and feedback from those who attended was very positive and appreciative on what was covered and all agreed the subject matter was extremely important, they learned from it and were happy to pass details on to others who were not present. Bryony and Gary have been a credit to See Me and will be a benefit going forward. I have had different persons from various parts of the service request See Me and Gary's services to give presentations in the future."*  
DC James Archibald, Specialist Crime Division, Police Scotland



▲ Volunteer Gary (right) at the police wellbeing conference 2024.



# Opening up the mental health conversation with Antje

Antje started volunteering with See Me in 2021. Antje has lived experience of selective mutism (SM), related to anxiety, and has been involved across the programme in the last three years. Here she shares the impact that volunteering has had on her.

For published author and assertiveness coach Antje, having a place to get your views and opinions seen and heard is important.

Volunteering with See Me has provided her – and helped her to support others – with a platform to share experiences and tackle the stigma connected to mental health.

Since joining See Me, she's been a part of nationwide campaigns like Time to Talk Day, taken part in Walk a Mile events, participated and led on creative writing workshops, performed her own poetry at spoken word nights, and helped to create a resource on SM for workplaces.

She says: *"I am interested in mental health, awareness and support, and work to reduce stigma and discrimination in communities, and*

► Antje at her creative writing workshop in Hamilton, October 2024.

*wider society. I enjoy volunteering and wanted to help, meet like-minded people and learn something new."*

As well as bringing her own unique insight and experience to the See Me programme, Antje has seen the benefits of volunteering herself.

*"Volunteering with See Me has improved my confidence, communication, interpersonal skills, presentation skills, public speaking, leading workshops, organising events, resource writing, teamwork and collaboration," Antje says. "I have grown personally and professionally. I learned new things and had a chance to try new activities out. I use themes like positive mental health in my poetry. I founded Assertive Voices to support others with finding their voice and provide SM training for organisations."*

**Read more about Antje's experiences on the See Me website.**



▲ Creative writing workshop, October 2024.

# Centering lived experience in our communications

See Me's communications work aims to promote the programme across different media to help a wide audience understand the impact of mental health stigma and discrimination and how to tackle it. This is achieved through day-to-day communications like social media content and PR, as well as larger campaigns.

One key campaign is Time to Talk Day, a UK-wide initiative led by Mind in England and delivered in Scotland by See Me. The campaign encourages conversations about mental health and took place on Thursday 6 February this year.

This marked See Me's eighth year running the campaign in Scotland, providing an opportunity to boost the programme's presence and encourage more people to join the anti-stigma efforts.

The campaign's positive impact is evident through increased website traffic, digital downloads, social media engagement, and engagement in health and social care, workplaces, and education.

In spring 2024, tailored media training was provided to seven new volunteers, including Paul and Lisa, who shared their mental health experiences for Time to Talk Day. Their stories were used in press releases and media coverage, significantly increasing the presence of lived experience voices in the campaign. This year's campaign saw a 93% increase in lived experience voices in media coverage, reaching a potential audience of 27 million across print, online, and broadcast. Engagement with the campaign was strong, with increased website visits, resource downloads, and social media interactions.

Lived experience input had a positive impact on this year's media activity, with **lived experience voices appearing in 64% of media coverage** (83 of 129 items of coverage featured lived experience quotes), compared to 32% in 2024 (43 out of 132) – a 93% increase in lived experience voices overall.

Pre-recorded audio from Lisa was used on Heart Scotland news bulletins on Time to Talk Day itself, and she also participated in a follow-up interview with BBC Scotland. According to our media monitoring, **content with a lived experience voice reached a potential audience of 27 million across print, online and broadcast.**

**We saw increased engagement with the Time to Talk Day this year:**

- **Organic social media impressions:** 43,076 with 1,721 engagements.
- A video post featuring Lisa's story had an **engagement rate of 9.89%**, well above the campaign average of 3.99%.
- We also saw an **increase in visits to the website and downloads**, showing that the campaign inspired people to take action. The campaign home page was visited 4,722 times in the campaign period (**3,226 in 2024 – a 46% increase**), while 4,529 resources were downloaded (an 11% increase from 2024). The **most downloaded resource was the activity pack** for employers, followed by posters to promote the day.
- On Time to Talk Day itself, we saw engagement on social media from charities, community groups, health and social care providers, sports clubs and groups, employers, youth groups and education settings, and MSPs.
- A parliamentary motion raised by Paul Sweeney MSP gained **support from 32 MSPs** across the political spectrum.
- We saw strong engagement on our paid advertising too. Sponsored posts on Meta (Facebook and Instagram) reached over **400,000 people**. One Facebook post received over **700 engagements** and almost **90 comments**, with users sharing experiences, offering support, and calling for change.



## Paul, one of our amazing volunteers, recently attended media training with See Me:

He said: *"The training was great, really informative and the practical sessions were fantastic as it allowed us all to put our skills into practice. It taught me how to handle different aspects of the media and what to expect when sharing my story with them."*

*"The trainers from See Me were really supportive throughout. The media training was really helpful in preparing me for sharing my story for the Time to Talk Day/If It's Okay campaigns. It was a big step going from just doing training to actually sharing my story in the media but I felt supported by See Me throughout. I felt like it really was my voice being heard and hopefully it has helped others who have seen my story."*

### Charity volunteer invites Scots to reduce stigma and join biggest mental health conversation

Time to Talk Day is the UK's biggest conversation on mental health, helping to break down barriers and reduce the stigma.



IN YOUR AREA By **Andrea Lambrou**

11:25, 07 Jan 2025



*"To be honest I was very apprehensive, more than I imagined I would be. I was so worried about getting negative reactions, nasty comments online, that sort of thing. But it is something you have to be prepared for if you're sharing your story so publicly. And the negativity all stems from stigma and that is what we are trying to challenge and change."*

*"Overall though I'm glad I did it and hope that it helped at least one person, challenged someone's stigmatising attitudes or gave a voice to those in similar positions as me but who don't have the opportunity to speak out."*

He said the response to people around him (family, friends, colleagues) was *"overwhelmingly positive, I'm very lucky to have such a great support network"*. *"It has pushed me out of my comfort zone which I think we should all do once in a while! It's shown me that I can speak up publicly for what I believe in and given me a bit more confidence in doing so,"* Paul said through the experience he gained *"a bit more self-confidence and realisation of the impact that the media can have on the public narrative around mental health conditions"*.

*"I thinking using our lived experience to challenge the narrative around the stigmatisation of mental health, in particular poor mental health/mental illness. I also think it is important that our voices are not used in a tokenistic way and that our impact is meaningful. I feel See Me are very good at addressing this and put their volunteers at the heart of everything they do, including in their media work."*

◀ Daily Record article from January 2025, featuring volunteer Paul. Read more [here](#).

The increased presence of lived experience in this year's Time to Talk Day campaign has significantly boosted engagement and reach. With 129 items of media coverage, the campaign saw strong participation across various platforms, including social media, website visits, and resource downloads.

The lived experience element played a crucial role in the campaign's success, allowing for deeper exploration of anti-stigma messaging and encouraging more people to join the conversation about mental health. Despite a reduced budget, creative approaches to digital advertising helped reach over 400,000 people, further enhancing the campaign's impact.

Looking ahead, See Me plans to continue prioritizing lived experience in future campaigns, ensuring it remains central to their efforts. Time to Talk Day has proven to be a valuable opportunity for promoting anti-stigma messages at scale in Scotland, linking with existing partners, reaching new supporters, and providing a platform for volunteers to share their voices.

The campaign's success highlights the importance of lived experience in driving meaningful change and inspiring action against mental health stigma.

# Towards a stigma-free Moray

**Moray Wellbeing Hub's social movement, a collective action led by peers in Moray locality, emerged from a need for change at a local level. Moray Wellbeing Hub (MWH) creates community and virtual spaces that welcome everyone to live more mentally healthy lives.**

Peer-values led, they host a social movement where their champions use their life experiences to better understand and self-manage their wellbeing but also provide support for others. MWH is made up of people with direct experience of mental health challenges who want to prevent others from experiencing the pain and distress that stigma and discrimination has brought upon them.

Between 2018 and 2025, See Me supported Moray Wellbeing Hub (MWH) through partnership working and modest funding resources. The partnership between MWH and See Me aimed to tackle stigma, with a focus on self-stigma, using social movement approaches to deliver evidence-based resources and interventions in Moray. It included focus on health and social care, young people, workplaces and lived experience individuals themselves.

Over the following years MWH have used these partnership resources to leverage further funding and commitment toward building a peer-led organisation that can maintain a social movement for change in Moray as a central part of the local landscape in mental health impact. With funders such as LEADER and National Lottery they have moved from one part-time paid activist in 2018 to a social enterprise with employability supporting the equivalent of 8 full-time employees. The movement has supported hundreds of community members in training and events, powered by volunteering of social movement members.

*"I don't need to give a solution, just need to be there and to let them know they are worthy enough to receive it."* Teacher at Speyside High School

## MORAY WELLBEING HUB CHAMPIONS

MWH employs a Champions model to empower people with lived experience to affect change within their communities. MWH Champions have received ongoing support from MWH team as peers, aiding their recovery from self-stigma and their ability to make impact in intersectional communities such as LGBTQI+, alcohol and drug recovery and neurodiversity.

The current **248 Champions** can now draw on an array of physical and digital resources to reflect on their individual journey, to promote and sustain their passions for change. We have seen Champions now running their own organisations locally and getting involved nationally for example with **Vox Scotland**. Others have gone on to gain employment or further education because of our training. Through the MWH website, social media and regular mailing list, **over 1,000 people a month** have access to tools that put lived experience at the heart of their choices in service access.

*"I don't feel that my abilities are in question anymore, to myself or from others. I feel it is imperative to thank (MWH), in empowering an individual who had very little self-worth or hope for the future, into someone who has far more confidence and self-worth."* Champion

## KEY OUTPUTS

The project produced resources such as the **"Turning the Tide: Influencing change in HSC"** pack, launched with the ALLIANCE to a national audience. This resource compiles insights and learning from the last six years of activity. In 2024 MWH secured a £1million pound investment for project 'Collaboration for Mental Wealth in Moray' as hosts to a Moray community research network through UKRI administered by the Young Foundation, as the only successful applicant in Scotland.



► Alliance blog post written in November 2024. Read here: **Harnessing the power to tackle stigma in healthcare** – Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland.

By 2025, MWH have built a network of contacts they can build on toward a stigma free Moray in education (local schools and college), health & social care (continued strategic partnership working in mental health, recovery and justice), and workplaces (3rd sector and local employers such as Johnstons as well as farmers). Looking to the future, See Me and MWH can look to leverage these with projects such as the community research network as mutual partners.

*"Without the early support of See Me, their confidence in us as a forming social movement and the investment of start-up funds for projects and support to deliver their tools and interventions, MWH would not be where we are today. It is amazing to feel like an equal partner, able to share resources and contacts – us using a local perspective and See Me nationally – for the benefit of Scottish communities, and now with the network of community research across the UK we can influence even further. It shows that See Me's approach to funding can build sustainability – modest funds, trusted relationships and a shared vision for a stigma-free Scotland – are the way forward and should be celebrated."* Heidi Tweedie, Social Movement & Enterprise lead at MWH

## 2024-25 MORAY WELLBEING HUB IMPACT

- **Volunteers Engagement:** 45 volunteers with lived experience participated in events, contributing to a total of 176 activities, with 51 new volunteers recruited.
- **Workplace Partnerships:** The project engaged 11 employers and developed partnerships with local organisations to enhance mental health awareness and support in workplaces.
- **Health & Social Care Involvement:** MWH reached 28 health and social care workforce members and engaged 89 patients during ward visits. MWH also engaged in three HSC strategic partnerships with various health departments.
- **Community Impact:** The MWH delivered 30 capacity-building sessions, engaging 50 participants and fostering 6-10 community partnerships for mental health advocacy.

## Harnessing the power to tackle stigma in healthcare

Written by: **Heidi Tweedie** – Moray Wellbeing Hub CIC – Social Movement & Enterprise Lead and **Dr Patty Lozano-Casal**, Programme Manager (Settings), See Me and **Jane Miller**, Programme Manager, Health and Social Care Academy, the ALLIANCE  
Published: 28th November 2024



## KEY ACTIVITIES DURING MWH PARTNERSHIP

- Developed and tested workplace inclusion resources to tackle stigma.
- Created an HSC influencers training kit for empowering staff.
- Engaged Community Champions to drive peer-led initiatives.
- Collaborated with local and national partners for broader impact.
- Focused on open conversations to change attitudes in the workforce.
- Emphasised sustainability by adapting to regional needs.
- Leveraged lived experiences to empower individuals and communities.



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► Volunteers Chik, Alex and Bridget at Walk a Mile event Peebles. August 2024.





# See Me

End mental health  
discrimination

[www.seemescotland.org](http://www.seemescotland.org)

▼ Volunteer Brian at a Suicide Prevention event in Glasgow, September 2024.



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