

Intersectional Mental Health Stigma: Frameworks & Community-led Evidence for Understanding & Action



Who is See Me?

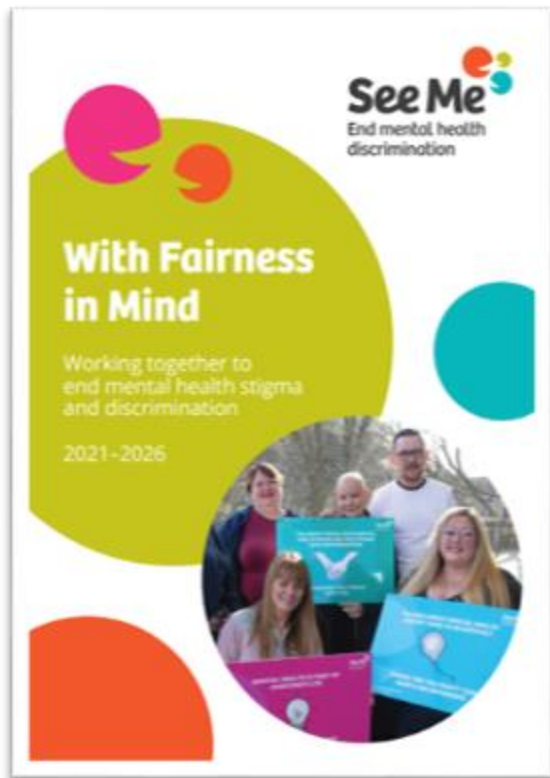
Scotland's national programme to tackle
mental health stigma & discrimination

Lived experience is at the heart of our work



Our vision

A fairer, more inclusive Scotland, free from mental health stigma & discrimination **(2021-2026)**



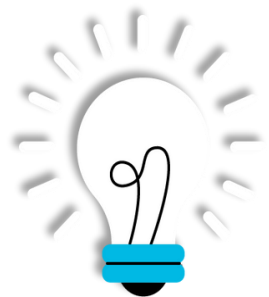
How, and what do we need to do differently?

- 'Universal' vs Targeted
- Siloed vs Intersectional

The need for an alternative frame.

Purpose of the session

- Introduce **intersectional anti-stigma interventions** as essential for reducing stark inequalities in mental health.
- Raise awareness of the legacy of the **historic roots of intersectional stigma and discrimination** and how these manifests in Scotland today, deepening inequalities.
- Explore **frameworks and community-led action at different levels** to counter intersectional stigma and discrimination.



Safer space agreement



***Content warning – throughout whole presentation**

Keep yourself safe

Share only information that is yours to share – take time out if you need to.

Respect

Everyone has different views and experiences. Treat people how you would like to be treated.

Confidentiality

What's shared here by people shouldn't be discussed outside.

Self-awareness:

Acknowledging there is different power dynamics in the room, and being mindful of what we are all bringing with us into the session

Language & terminology



We use terminology and language that communities of people use themselves.

Language and terminology that marginalised people use to describe themselves changes and evolves.

We adapt our language to mitigate harm and to accommodate inclusion.

Developing intersectional anti-stigma work



- Desk reviews
- Critical self-reflection / training
- Funding community-led partnerships
- Anti Stigma Arts Fund
- Critical reviews with community partners
- Local Areas Networking
- Events – platforming marginalised expertise
- Expert Group – structural discrimination
- Piloting materials – continually refining



Intersectionality

Intersectionality, originates in Black feminism and critical race studies, it is a lens through which we can seek to understand the complex nature of identity, health, social relationships, and power that plays out within human interaction and experiences (Crenshaw 1989).



Definitions

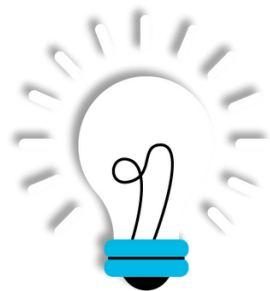
Stigma - a social process that involves the damaging labelling, stereotyping, and exclusion of individuals or groups based on perceived differences that deviate from dominant social norms.

Discrimination - a key part of stigma. It is the inequitable or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups based on their stigmatised identities. It can be intentional (explicit prejudice) and unintentional (underlying in organisations and systems).



Intersectional stigma - *multiple forms of stigma mutually shape the lived experiences and opportunities of groups who are marginalised, and create distinct disadvantages, which cannot be understood in isolation from one another.*

(Sievwright et al., 2022).



What is the purpose of stigma?



Purpose of stigma



- Keeping people "in," - enforcing preferred social norms and values
- Keeping people "down," - maintaining one's group advantage in society
- Keeping people "away," - to avoid 'disease' or a perceived threat

[stigma-eng.pdf \(canada.ca\)](#)

Intersectional nature of mental health stigma



- It intersects with identity-based prejudice.
- It intersects with stigmatised health and living conditions.
- Deeply stigmatised mental health conditions are often linked to discrimination against people with marginalised identities.

Lived experience accounts

"[...] my counsellor did not understand my family culture or religion and wanted to attribute parts of my condition to my parents' behaviour although I didn't feel particularly affected by those aspects. She also didn't have any sympathy or awareness about racial trauma and how micro aggressions work or how we experience everyday racism which has an impact on our wellbeing."

Racial Inequality in Scotland, MWC (2021)

“Many mental health services...have implied that all of my issues link back to my trans identity and that if I fully transition, they will no longer be an issue for me. This is a misunderstanding and has caused me many frustrations when trying to access services.”

Life in Scotland for LGBT young people, LGBT Youth Scotland (2022)

Inequality in diagnoses, treatment & outcomes



- Black men 10 times more likely to **receive a diagnosis** of a psychotic disorder than white men [UK-wide] (Frazer-Carrol, 2023).
- Disproportionately high incidence of mental health problems (not severe and enduring mental illness) experienced by LGBT people **due to 'minority stress' not being** LGBT (Equality Network; LGBTH&WB; LGBT Youth Scotland, Scottish Trans; Stonewall, 2018).
- “Black [particularly women] and mixed-race people are more likely **to be seen** as a greater risk to ‘self and others’ than to themselves” (MWC, 2021).
- Disabled people often experience diagnostic overshadowing (GDA, 2022).
- People living in poverty, more likely **to be diagnosed** with mental illness – conflating symptoms – process is racialised and gendered (Mills, 2015).
- People with severe and enduring mental illness experience stigma and discrimination across 14 life areas (SMISS, 2022).



Impacts of stigma

The impacts of mental health stigma and discrimination

Anxiety, depression and depressive symptoms

Adverse [mental and physical health] outcomes

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Suicidal ideation and behaviours

Self-harm

Low self-esteem and self-worth

Poor cardiovascular health has also been linked to discrimination, and chronic stress and is a major cause of morbidity and mortality

Consequences of stigma

"I am genuinely traumatised due to stigma, discrimination and abuse that I have faced in mental health services and am reluctant to continue to reach out."



Experience

Anticipation

Withdrawal

Panel Question 1

Historic context of stigma



- **Systems of supremacy and power** – Capitalism and white supremacy.
- **Enlightenment** – average as 'normal' and normal as 'good'.
- **Colonialism** – relies on the shared belief that certain groups are inherently morally, physically and intellectually "inferior".
- **Eugenics** – provided the pseudo-scientific rationale for colonial violence and the idea of "socially undesirable."
- **Scientific racism (misogyny, homophobia for example)** – was embraced by the psychiatric establishment of 19th and early 20th century.

Intersectional nature of stigma throughout history



- **'Hysteria'** diagnosis has pathologised women resisting patriarchal inequality since 2nd century BC (Carta et al., 2012).
- **Homosexuality** cited as mental illness in the DSM until APA declassification in 1973.
- World Health Organisation re-categorised being **transgender** in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) in 2019.
- Non-consensual sterilisation of people with **learning disabilities and mental ill health** into the latter half of the 20th-century.
- The 'Great Confinement' conflated **poverty and mental ill health** and positioned people as moral failures with degenerate behaviour.

Diagnosis as social control - resistance as a constant!



- “Drapetomania” diagnosis invented to pathologise resistance of enslaved people who **escaped** and ‘justify’ enslavement in 1851 (Frazer-Carrol, 2023).
- Schizophrenia - coined ‘**protest** psychosis’ during Civil Rights movement. White doctors associated schizophrenia with African American men (Metzl, 2009).
- “Hysteria” - pathologised women **resisting** the patriarchy since 2nd century BC (Carta et al., 2012).



Panel Question 2

Social movements, resistance and change



- Scottish Union of Mental Patients 1971-72
Hartwood Hospital North Lanarkshire
- A Gay Psychiatrist's 1972 Speech/community social action agitated for change to remove homosexuality from the DSM
- Mental Health Act 1983: Amendments to the Act, influenced by advocacy from the disability justice movement, have aimed to improve patient rights, ensure better safeguards, and promote more humane treatment practices



Social movements, resistance and change



- 2019 - Trans advocacy groups pressured WHO to re-categorise being transgender in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as no longer a 'disorder' (WHO, n.d.)
- 2021 & 2022 - Black Lives Matter movement pressured American Psychiatric Association and Royal College of Psychiatrists to apologise for institutional racism





What works?

Community connectedness

Peer support

Social contact

Protest

Community leadership

Education

Collective action

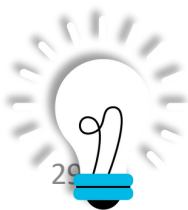
Panel Question 3

Frameworks for Understanding and Action



Intersectional stigma reduction intervention principles

1. Recognise and name how systems of power intersect to affect individual experiences and fuel stigma
2. Aim to dismantle systems of power and oppression, and mitigate the harms
3. Ensure community leadership and meaningful engagement
4. Support collective action, cohesion, and resistance to address the intersecting axes of inequities



SCIP Framework

Stigma and discrimination operate at multiple levels and involve complex social processes



Panel Question 4

Panel Discussion

Comfort break



What Works – Community-led Case Studies

In breakout rooms, look at the case study with a community strength and action lens.

Think about what they offer around:

- Protective factors and benefits to the person
- Creating the conditions for safe experiences
- Methods

What Works – Community-led Case Studies



Questions for breakout rooms:

- What are the positive elements of this experience?
- What enabled the positive experience?
- Could you replicate any of this?

Case Study 1

"Creating art has an unexplained phenomena effect that **allows me to SILENCE the thousand thoughts per second** I tend to experience, allowing me to **focus on one single thought** or one single feeling. The art creation process **offers me an escape** period and instead of thinking of all that troubles me at once, I can focus on one single pain and let it go in the art piece... Beyond the Canvas seemed to offer me a **space to create and be in touch with that part of me that allows me to find and embrace myself again...** But Beyond the Canvas was more than art.... **it offered true HEALING.** It offered a **SAFE space** where I could be **free of the burden of masking** and I could **SHARE the troubles**, the sorrow, the pain, and use **art as a therapy tool to heal and cope** with all the things we go through, especially as women of minority who are in many ways fish out of water. I have always felt like I don't belong like no one could get me or understand me because no one could truly see me... But **I BELONGED HERE...**"

(Empower Women for Change 'Beyond the Canvas' report



[Beyond the Canvas —
Empower Women for Change](#)

Case Study 2

"SM' has waited many years for refugee status and is still navigating the asylum system. He has now surpassed working age and at times expressed that many of his best years were spent unable to work which for him meant leading a fulfilled life. In his case the group and exhibition functioned as a space for him to participate in society, and to share knowledge and skills that he was unable to use due to his status and this long, indefinite wait. At times, he shared that he was feeling extremely depressed due to the situation he continues to endure, though during the same sessions, he was able to connect with others, using the subject matter in whatever way he liked in his artwork... participants needed space to reclaim the subject matter entirely, transforming our original framework...

The making of the soap connected his present situation with memories and knowledge he cared about and was able to share. The framework and dialogue around time contributed to foundations of solidarity and openness and provided space for him to voice his experience openly."

Maryhill Integration Network 'Monuments for the Present' project report



[Arts project challenging traditional Western imperial values launches in Glasgow | End Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination](#)

Case Study 3

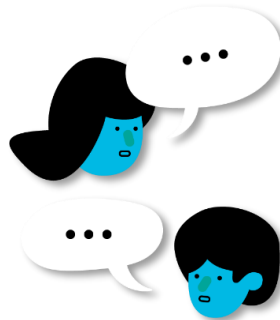
We (worked with) young women accessing SAY Women who self-identified as survivors of sexual abuse and recent homelessness. The key outcome from this work was a Public Information Comic, which we titled 'Impacts of Stigma' as this was the focus of the participant's contributions.

Creating the comic enabled us to talk about the different forms of stigma. The comic featured examples of how the survivors experienced stigma in its many forms. Interestingly, structural stigma was identified by many, and the diagnosis of EUPD influenced how they saw themselves, and how others saw and treated them. This was **an unexpected theme**, which ran through the comic and highlighted the hidden ways stigma can affect women in our society.

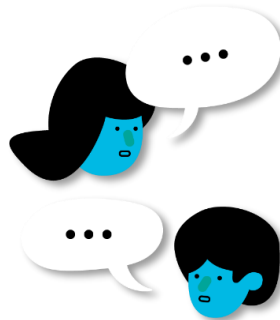
Another reflection was the clarity of the young women's voices and **ability to articulate how stigma had affected them through their engagement with the comic book making.** The messages they shared and imagery they created were really powerful. The participants have reported that the digital images created by Nic to represent their experiences and hand sketches were as they had hoped, **and empowering to see their ideas rendered in such a professional publication.**

SAY Women 'Impacts of Stigma' project report

Breakout Discussions



Whole Group Debrief



Community of Practice?

Key Takeaways



- Mental health stigma and discrimination are intersectional by nature - Not experienced in silo
- Embedded in systems by default, need to design out
- What works: look to communities and social movements and work must be continual
- Interventions must be multi-level (**SCIP**) incorporating the evidence base of what works
- Evidence to Action Tool / Self-reflection Tool

Thank you for your time and input!



Signposting - support links

Qwell: qwell.io/samh

Free and anonymous online emotional wellbeing and mental health support from qualified mental health professionals.

Breathing Space:

breathingspace.scot

Shout: 24hr Text at 85258

Samaritans: 24hr Phone 116 123

Email: jo@samaritans.org

LGBT Health and Wellbeing

LGBT+ helpline 0800 464 7000
lgbthealth.org/services-support/mentalhealth/

BLAM (Black Learning Achievement and Mental Health)

blamuk.org

Offers mental health support to people from Black British communities, including racial wellness workshops.

Muslim Community Helpline

[020 8908 6715](https://02089086715) or [020 8904 8193](https://02089048193)
muslimcommunityhelpline.org.uk

Women Supporting Women (WSW)

[Women Supporting Women - Pilton Community Health Project](https://womensupportingwomen.org.uk)

See Me www.seemescotland.org **SAMH** www.samh.org.uk (training available)



Glossary

Anti-racism/Anti-racist: Anti-racism is a concept which goes beyond non discrimination or general support for equality and diversity, to actively tackle all forms of racism (e.g. personal, social and institutional). It requires action to identify and address the factors that create racist impacts, for example unequal policies and practices, or racist attitudes and behaviours. People can be anti-racist in their own lives, and organisations can use anti-racist approaches within their work. [Source: SBPI-00344 - CRER glossary for interim closing submissions - June 2023.pdf \(shekubayohinquiry.scot\)](#)

Community Engagement: Community engagement is a way to build and sustain relationships between public services and community groups - helping them both to understand and take action on the needs or issues that communities experience. [National Standards for Community Engagement | SCDC - We believe communities matter](#)

Critical thinking: As defined by the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking (1987), critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualising, applying, analysing, synthesising, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breath and fairness'. For our purposes, critical thinking is a way of approaching information in order to decide what to believe and what to do. It requires us to make a conscious effort to seek to identify whether a claim is true, partially true or false in the light of all available information. Critical thinking cannot, of course, gain access to all available information and is thus always to an extent subjective. However, being aware of this allows us to at least recognise the limits of our understanding of the world. 'Defining Critical Thinking' [Online] Available at: [Defining Critical Thinking](#)

Intersectionality originates in Black feminism and critical race studies. It is a lens through which researchers seek to understand the complex nature of identity, health, social relationships, and power that plays out within human interaction and experiences ([Crenshaw 1989](#)).

Intersectional approaches to understanding and designing interventions, which take account of every form of discrimination (e.g., racism, homophobia, mentalism) individuals and groups face, are therefore recommended to improve health outcomes ([Turan et al., 2019](#)).

Intersectional stigma describes how social identities and structural inequities shape and influence each other ([Sievwright et al., 2022](#)). This means we cannot understand any one stigma (more often discussed in terms of prejudice when related to other protected characteristics) in isolation from another, which might simultaneously be at play, compounding negative experiences, e.g. of services as well as health outcomes.

LGBTQ+: [List of LGBTQ+ terms \(stonewall.org.uk\)](#)

Minoritised: The term minoritised, coined by Yasmin Gunaratnum in 2003, provides a social constructionist approach to understanding that people are actively minoritised by others rather than naturally existing as a minority, as the terms racial minorities or ethnic minorities imply. The term racially minoritised confirms that so-called minoritisation is a social process shaped by power. Predelli LN, Halsaa B, Thun C, Sandu A. Majority-minority relations in contemporary women's movements: strategic sisterhood. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012

Marginalisation: a process of social exclusion in which individuals or groups are relegated to the fringes of a society, being denied economic, political, and/or symbolic power and pushed towards being 'outsiders' [Marginalization - Oxford Reference](#)

Race and Racialisation: Racialisation is the process whereby people are divided into racial groups based on stereotypes and pseudoscience. Historically, racialisation has been carried out in order to justify and maintain systems of oppression. It creates advantages for groups classed as white (white privilege) and disadvantages for those groups negatively impacted by racialisation (racism and racial inequalities). The current use of the terms 'race' and 'racial' have developed because disproved notions of racial difference have become embedded in the beliefs and behaviours of society. Groups of people who are viewed in ways linked to race are sometimes described as racialised groups (although it is important to note that the process of racialisation also shaped whiteness and cemented notions about the supposed superiority of Western and Eurocentric ideologies). This social construct of race has continuing impacts today on institutional, personal and social behaviours, underpinning all forms of racism (CRER, 2023) [Source: SBPI-00344 - CRER glossary for interim closing submissions - June 2023.pdf \(shekubayohinquiry.scot\).](#)

Whiteness: "Whiteness and white racialized identity refer to the way that white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups are compared. Whiteness is also at the core of understanding race in America. Whiteness and the normalization of white racial identity throughout America's history have created a culture where nonwhite persons are seen as inferior or abnormal.

This white-dominant culture also operates as a social mechanism that grants advantages to white people, since they can navigate society both by feeling normal and being viewed as normal. Persons who identify as white rarely have to think about their racial identity because they live within a culture where whiteness has been normalized. [Whiteness | National Museum of African American History and Culture \(si.edu\)](#)



References

- Adekola, J.U., Chia, R., 2024: [Stakeholder Theory, Public Engagement, and Epistemic Injustice: The Case of Covid-19 Vaccine Hesitancy in Scotland's African, Caribbean, and Black Communities](#)
- American Psychiatric Association, 2021. [Psychiatry.org - APA's Apology to Black, Indigenous and People of Color for Its Support of Structural Racism in Psych](#)
- Bond.K.T. et al., 2021. 'Race-Based Sexual Stereotypes, Gendered Racism, and Sexual Decision Making Among Young Black Cisgender Women' doi.org/10.1177/10901981211010086
- Carta et al., 2012. 'Women And Hysteria In The History Of Mental Health' Available at: [Women And Hysteria In The History Of Mental Health - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)
- [Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights, 2023. SBPI-00344 - CRER glossary for interim closing submissions - June 2023.pdf \(shekubayohinquiry.scot\)](#)
- Crenshaw. K., 1989. 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8. chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8
- Croft, 2023. [A Rare Case: Black Women and Hysteria \(kleiohistoricaljournal.com\)](#)
- Equality Network; LGTBH&WB; LGBT Youth Scotland, Scottish Trans; Stonewall, 2018: [LGBTI- Populations-and-Mental-Health-Inequality-May-2018.pdf](#)
- Frazer-Carrol, 2023. Mad World, The Politics of Mental Health. Available at: [About 5 — micha frazer-carroll \(michafrazercarroll.com\)](#)

- Fricker, M., (2007) Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing <https://academic.oup.com/book/32817>
- Gallagher, 2017. [From asylum to action in Scotland: the emergence of the Scottish Union of Mental Patients, 1971-2 - Mark Gallagher, 2017 \(sagepub.com\)](#)
- Galton, F 1908. Memories of My Life
- Glasgow Disability Alliance, 2022. 'Disabled People's Mental Health Matters' [Disabled People's Mental Health Matters Glasgow Disability Alliance \(gda.scot\)](#)
- Goffman. E., 1963. Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity: Penguin. London
- Jackson. I. et al., 2022. 'Suicide ideation – experiences of adversely racialised people". [Experiences of Adversely Racialised People In Scotland Related to Suicide Ideation \(www.gov.scot\)](#).
- Kapadia, 2023: [Stigma, mental illness & ethnicity: Time to centre racism and structural stigma - Kapadia - 2023 - Sociology of Health & Illness - Wiley Online Library](#)
- MacPherson, W. 1999. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Report of an Inquiry. Re-port of an Inquiry by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny. Available at: 4262.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Marius T, 2022. 'Exploring the Legacies of Eugenics in Psychiatry – Part I [Online] Available at: [Exploring the Legacies of Eugenics in Psychiatry – Part I \(rcpsych.ac.uk\)](#)
- Mental Welfare Commission, 2021: [Racial inequality and mental health services in Scotland – new report calls for action | Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland](#)

- Metzl, J.M. (2009). *The protest psychosis: How Schizophrenia became a Black disease*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. Available at: [Metzl, Jonathan. The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease | Disability Studies Quarterly](#)
- Mizocket L., et. al. 2015. 'Intersectional stigma and the acceptance process of women with mental illness'. doi.org/10.1080/02703149.2014.978211
- Public Health Canada: [stigma-eng.pdf \(Canada.ca\)](#)
- See Me, 2022. 'The Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study' Available at: [The Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study | End Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination \(seemescotland.org\)](#)
- Siewwright. K.M., et al., 2022. 'An Expanded Definition of Intersectional Stigma for Public Health Research and Praxis' [An Expanded Definition of Intersectional Stigma for Public Health Research and Praxis | AJPH | Vol. 112 Issue S4 \(aphapublications.org\)](#)
- Turan. J.M., et al., 2019. 'Challenges and opportunities in examining and addressing intersectional stigma and health'. Available at: [10.1186/s12916-018-1246-9](#)
- Tyler.I., 2018. Resituating Erving Goffman: From Stigma Power to Black Power [Resituating Erving Goffman: From Stigma Power to Black Power - Imogen Tyler, 2018 \(sagepub.com\)](#))
- Uyeda. L..R., 2021 [How LGBTQ+ Activists Got "Homosexuality" out of the DSM - JSTOR Daily](#)