Empowering young people to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination

Wendy Halliday, See Me
About See Me

• Scotland’s programme to end MH stigma and discrimination
• Changing Minds, Changing Policy and Changing Practice
• Knowledge, attitudes and values but now **behaviour change**
• Focus on the settings where people face most stigma and discrimination
**Outcomes**

- We live in a society where we don’t need to feel ashamed of a mental health problem.
- We are valued and enabled to contribute fully to society and our rights are realised.
- We are not stigmatised nor discriminated against as a result of our mental health.

People who have experience of mental health problems play an active part in all that we do.

[www.seemescotland.org](http://www.seemescotland.org)
Why we need action to end mental health stigma

• We all have mental health: it changes
• 1 in 4 of us have a mental health problem
• 9 out of 10 with MH problems experience stigma and discrimination
• Reaction of others often more damaging than diagnosis
Stigmatising attitudes

- Social attitudes study - Almost half feel that they would not want people knowing about their mental health if they were experiencing a problem.

- 17% of people report they would find it difficult to speak to someone with a mental health problem.

- Almost a quarter of people believe people with mental health problems are dangerous and 28% believe the public should be better protected from them.
Young people

• 37% said they would tell someone if they were finding it difficult to cope with their mental health, compared to 78% who would tell someone if they were physically ill.

• When asked how they cope with negative thoughts and feelings 21% said they would speak to someone who supports them. 46% would rather keep it to themselves

• 74% of young people do not know what mental health information, support and services are available in their local area

• 27% of young people do not feel supported to talk about mental health in their school, college, university, or workplace

• Only 23% of young people felt comfortable talking to a teacher about their mental health
Impact of stigma

People that experience mental health problems:

- Face unacceptably high levels of stigma and discrimination – peer influence significant.
- Can have their rights limited as a consequence of poor mental health.
- Are often excluded from decision making processes that affect their lives.
- Are often denied access to timely acceptable, information, care and support

STIGMA

- Prevents people from talking about mental health and seeking help
- Prevents people achieving their full potential – placing them, at risk of poorer social, educational, employment and health outcomes.
Context

Getting it right for every child

- Also a review of CAMHS inappropriate referrals
- Commitment to national approach to teacher training in mental health (survey)
- Review of mental health specialist support in schools....
Education and YP Programme

Our schools project aims to empower young people to play an active role in helping other young people to understand the importance of good mental health, recognise how it affects them, build their confidence to talk openly about mental health and seek support.

The project supports teachers and other staff to address mental health stigma and discrimination within the school.
Developed with and by young people

Youth Sessional workers (5) – previously youth champions – training and working with next cohort of youth champions (21)

Youth champions (8) - trained as peer educators – train peer leaders and school staff

Peer leaders (61) - school based - trained in MHFA/ classroom delivery / support in school

Knowledge (MH and support), confidence, power, activism and optimism

Skills, talents and empowerment
What’s on your Mind? / It’s OKAY

- Create an environment for open conversations
- Leadership - culture and ethos
- Staff mental health and wellbeing
- Common language - mental health literacy
- Teacher training – with young people supporting delivery of the pack
- Mental health first aid – training for trainers (students and staff)
- Peer led workshops – curriculum and beyond
Phase one of a whole school approach

• 7 Pilots across Scotland (5 progressed) including 1 looked after and accommodated unit
• 5000 + Students involved - 61 trained in SMHFA
• 1000 + Staff involved - 80 trained in SMHFA
• See Me in work – staff mental health and wellbeing
• Adult workforce support
• 686 What’s on your mind packs downloaded
• Its OK campaign launched at the same time
Next steps

• Write up of evaluation of the pilots
• Follow up pilot schools - support extension of approach (parents and communities)
• Test local authority roll out – embed as part of a whole school approach to mental health promotion prevention and early intervention and extend to youth work settings
A Youth champion…

“It was fantastic; it was great meeting people in similar situations to me …particularly because I have had issues with my own mental health so it’s been great meeting people who have had similar issues. Some of my closest friends now are See Me volunteers. It has had a really positive impact on my own life”
A pupil after peer input

“It used to be like, ‘they will get over it, pat on the back and they will be fine’. But now that we have this better understanding I think we know that it is more serious than we thought. Not simply one day they are sad and the next they are totally fine, it might take time. But if there is support, it helps a lot. I think it can really help”
A teachers reflection

…fewer people judge now…being more aware that it is not just you that may be struggling, there are a lot of other people out there that may be struggling too.

…more pupils are coming forward from the lessons saying that they found it useful and this is how they are feeling, the struggles they are going through.

They are realising that they can speak out about it and they don’t need to keep it to themselves…., they all seem to know someone (who has a mental health problem) and I think it definitely helps to be able to talk about it.”
Nothing about us without us
Our Youth Volunteers

- Speakers
- Media speakers
- Influencers – Health and Social care, workplace, universities and colleges

Social Movement Campaigns
- Pass a badge
- It’s OK
- Power of OK
- Start talking - digital pass a badge
Thank you.

Wendy.halliday@seemescotland.org