

SAMH'S VIEW:

STIGMA & DISCRIMINATION

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ABOUT THE SAMH'S VIEW SERIES

SAMH's View statements set out SAMH's position on a particular policy topic. They are internal documents but are not confidential: they can be used to inform responses to queries or other pieces of work. They are produced by the Public Affairs team.

Context

It is illegal to discriminate directly or indirectly against people with serious mental health problems in public services and functions, access to premises, work, education, associations and transport.¹ However, over a third of people in Scotland with a mental health problem say they have experienced the effect of stigmatising attitudes.² The existence of stigma and discrimination around mental health can prevent people from seeking help, getting a job or keeping a job, and reduce the quality of life of people with mental health problems.

Key points

- SAMH is a proud managing partner of the See Me anti-stigma campaign, along with the Mental Health Foundation.
- Stigma about mental health problems is a barrier to employment. Forty-eight per cent of Scottish workers would be unlikely to tell their employers about mental health problems for fear of losing their job, and 55% think that disclosing a mental illness could result in being passed over for promotion.³
- See Me provides an [e-learning programme](#) for managers and staff.
- Public opinion tells us that education about mental health needs to start with young people.⁴
- The new [See Me What's On Your Mind?](#) schools pack is designed around Curriculum for Excellence and addresses outcomes in the Health and Wellbeing Curriculum.
- GPs generally do not discuss the issue of stigma with patients at diagnosis or during treatment.⁵
- The way that mental health is reported and portrayed in media has a significant impact on public attitudes towards mental health, both positive and negative.⁶
- Since 2002, the percentage of people who believe that people with mental health problems are often dangerous has reduced from 32% to 9%.⁷



SAMH calls for:

- Continued funding of See Me.
- Healthy Working Lives, Fit for Work Scotland and other public bodies to promote See Me's workplace e-learning programme
- Healthcare qualifications and healthcare employment inductions to include teaching and training about the impact of attitudes towards people with mental health problems.
- The media to adhere to the NUJ's mental health reporting guidelines.⁸

Further detail:

- [See Me](#)

Notes

- 1 [The Equality Act 2010](#)
- 2 Scottish Government, [Attitudes to Mental Health in Scotland: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2013](#), p.20.
- 3 See Me, YouGov poll, 2015
- 4 Scottish Government, [Curriculum for Excellence: Health and Wellbeing](#)
- 5 The Social Marketing Gateway, [Pushing back](#), 2011
- 6 Time to Change, [Making a Drama out of a Crisis](#), 2014
- 7 Scottish Government, [Attitudes to Mental Health in Scotland: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2013](#)
- 8 NUJ, [Responsible Reporting on Mental Health, Mental Illness and Death by Suicide](#), 2014