



Stigma and Discrimination on Mental Health Grounds

"I feel reluctant to admit I've got mental health problems; the stigma and rejection are too hard to face."

Who is this for?

People affected by mental health problems, all those providing services for people affected by mental health problems, including primary care and voluntary sector staff, public, private and voluntary sector employers and service providers.

Key facts

- Stigma and discrimination can affect people long after the symptoms of mental health problems have been resolved. Discrimination can lead to relapses in mental health problems and can intensify existing symptoms.



- Over 80 per cent of respondents to the Social Exclusion Unit's consultation said that tackling stigma and discrimination should be a priority.
- Stigma and discrimination limit people's aspirations and can make it difficult to work, access services, participate in communities and enjoy family life.
- Fewer than four in ten employers say that they would consider employing someone with a history of mental health problems, compared to more than six in ten for someone with a physical disability. A third of people with mental health problems report having been dismissed or forced to resign from their job.
- In one survey, 44 per cent of people with mental health problems felt that they had experienced discrimination from GPs, while 18 per cent said they would not disclose their condition to a GP.

MYTHS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Myth 1: *People with mental health problems are dangerous and violent.*
 People with mental health problems are more likely to be the victims rather than the perpetrators of violence. Less than 5 per cent of people who kill a stranger have symptoms of mental illness.

Myth 2: *Mental health problems are rare.* Common mental health problems affect up to one in six of the general population at any one time. Almost everyone will know someone who has had mental health problems at some point in their lives.

Myth 3: *People with mental health problems are incapable of work.*
 US research found that up to 58 per cent of adults with severe and enduring mental health problems are able to work with the right support.

Myth 4: *People with mental health problems do not want to work.*
 35 per cent of people with mental health problems who are economically inactive would like to work, compared to 28 per cent of those with other health conditions. Many successful people have had mental health problems.

Promoting social inclusion

What works?

In May 2004, the National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE) published a review of what works to address stigma and discrimination on mental health grounds (see Contacts and Resources for more details). The key principles in tackling stigma were:

- Involving people with first-hand experience of discrimination and carers throughout
- National programmes that support local activity
- Targeting specific audiences
- Long-term planning and funding
- Monitoring and evaluation

The strategy

In June 2004, NIMHE launched *From Here to Equality*, a five-year plan to tackle stigma and discrimination. It is based on international evidence of what works and brings together agencies from the voluntary sector and government. This programme will be nationally co-ordinated but will be implemented at regional and local level. Initial target audiences will be young people, the media, health and social care, public sector organisations, and private and voluntary sector organisations (see www.nimhe.org.uk).

Early work

The brand for the NIMHE plan and early projects were launched in October 2004. For more information visit www.shift.org.uk.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

- **Mental Health Media**, in partnership with **Rethink**, has developed **Open Up**, an anti-discrimination toolkit of training, support and resources to enable people with mental health problems to take positive action against discrimination in local communities (020 77008171 or e-mail info@mhmedia.com).
- **Sanity Fair**, in Stoke on Trent, is an annual weekend carnival that aims to reduce stigma in a fun way. Entertainers attract people to stalls with information on mental health issues (James McAteer 01782 285800 or www.sanityfair.org.uk).
- The national charity **Shaw Trust** and the **Royal Navy** in Portsmouth work together to raise awareness of mental health issues. New navy recruits are involved in activities on placement at Shaw Trust alongside people with mental health problems. Evaluation has indicated a positive change in recruits' understanding of mental health problems (Shaw Trust 01225 716350 or www.shaw-trust.org.uk).
- The **Team for the Assessment of Psychiatric Services (TAPS)** conducted a study of local attitudes around a new community-based group home in South London. They found that there was willingness to help in the community but that people felt they needed some preparation – which is rarely provided. A public education programme took place. Compared with a control area, local residents were over three times more likely to have visited the home. 13 per cent (compared with none in control area) had invited people into their homes. Five out of eight of the people with mental health problems in the experimental area (compared with none in control area) said they had some contact with the local residents.
(020 7794 9724 or e-mail JLeff@rfc.ucl.ac.uk)

Further Information

The **Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA)** outlaws discrimination against disabled people in employment and education, the supply of goods, facilities and services, and contains measures to facilitate access to public transport. It includes a duty on employers and service providers to make 'reasonable adjustments' in order to enable disabled people to work and access services. To be protected by

the DDA, a person must have, or have had, an impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. 'Long-term' means that it has lasted, or it is expected to last, for 12 months or more. Impairments arising from mental illness currently have to be 'clinically well recognised', although the Government plans to remove that requirement in the Disability Bill. For more information see www.disability.gov.uk.

The **Disability Rights Commission** (DRC) was established in 2000 to work towards the elimination of discrimination against disabled people, and to promote equality of opportunity for, and good practice in, the treatment of disabled people. The DRC issues codes of practice that give practical guidance on DDA legislation, publishes leaflets targeted at particular sectors, and runs an information website. The DRC also runs a helpline that advises disabled people about their rights, and advises employers, service providers and educationalists about their responsibilities. The DRC also provides information and advice regarding the responsibilities of employers in relation to employing people with experience of mental health problems. This can be accessed through their helpline or website (see Useful Contacts and Resources below).

The **Mental Health National Service Framework** Standard 1 aims to ensure that health and social services promote mental health and reduce discrimination and social exclusion.

Ofcom is the regulator for television, radio, telecommunications and wireless communications services. It includes an Advisory Committee on Older and Disabled People, which covers mental health issues (see www.ofcom.org.uk).

THE SOCIAL EXCLUSION UNIT REPORT ACTION POINTS

- A strengthened and sustained programme of work to challenge stigma and discrimination will be led by the National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE). NIMHE will also monitor trends reported by Ofcom in mental health portrayal by the broadcast media, and will make recommendations to Ofcom on the case for further research in this area. (NIMHE to launch programme by autumn 2004.)
- Resources to raise the awareness of stigma and discrimination towards people with mental health problems, including a focus on ethnicity and gender, will be made available by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) on Teachernet for use within Personal, Social and Health Education in schools. (NIMHE with DfES by September 2005.)

- The issue of stigma and discrimination towards people with mental health problems will also be addressed through the Healthy Schools Programme led by the Department of Health (DH) and DfES. (DH/DfES by September 2005.)
- NIMHE will work jointly with the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) to raise awareness among individuals and employers of the rights of people with mental health problems under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). (NIMHE with the DRC from 2004.)
- The Government will continue to monitor the impact of the DDA, including in relation to people with mental health impairment. (DWP/DRC.)
- The DRC code of practice relating to the new public sector duty to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people in the draft Disability Bill will need to ensure that issues in relation to people with mental health problems are clearly reflected. (DRC following the Disability Bill's passage through Parliament.)
- Central government departments will review their employment practices in light of the Cabinet Office's new toolkit on employment and disability, which will include a section on mental health. (All government departments during 2004.)
- DH will review international evidence on the role and efficacy of pre-employment health assessments, in order to devise an evidence-based system for use in the NHS (with potential application for other employers). DH is also monitoring implementation of its guidance on Mental Health and Employment in the NHS. (DH review to report by spring 2005.)

Useful Contacts and Resources

For information on mental health policies and the new anti-stigma programme contact the National Institute for Mental Health in England at www.nimhe.gov.uk. For information on what works see NIMHE's *Scoping Review on Mental Health Anti-stigma and Discrimination – Current Activities and What Works*, 2004 at www.nimhe.org.uk/antistigma/whatworks.

Mindout for Mental Health has a Line Manager's pack (downloadable from the internet) which can provide guidance to employers on reasonable adjustments in the workplace (www.mhmedia.com).

The Employers' Forum on Disability is a member organisation that also provides advice on mental health in the workplace, including guidance on reasonable adjustments for people with experience of mental health issues (www.employers-forum.co.uk).

The Mental Health Foundation provides support for employers to create a healthy workplace and create positive mental health policies. They have produced guidance that provides information on stress, triggers and supporting people back into work. This can be accessed through their web-site at www.mentalhealth.org.uk

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has produced an anti-stigma programme called *Changing Minds* (www.rcpsych.ac.uk).

The Disability Rights Commission's helpline is 08457 622 633 or visit www.drc-gb.uk

NIMHE has a Knowledge Community where people can exchange information and experiences relating to mental health. This can be found at KC.nimhe.org.uk.

Scottish Executive – for information on mental health policy and services in Scotland contact the National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-Being (part of the Scottish Executive) at www.show.scot.nhs.uk

www.socialexclusion.gov.uk

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Published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

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Printed in the UK on paper comprising 75% post-consumer waste and 25% ECF pulp.

Product code 04SEU02593/A