



See Change

The National Mental Health Stigma Reduction Partnership



See Change Workplace

Information Handbook



Our vision is that of an Ireland where every person has an open and positive attitude to their own and others' mental health.

Mission Statement

"See Change is the national mental health stigma reduction programme working positively to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with mental health problems and to ensure that everyone enjoys the same rights on an equal basis."

About this booklet

This booklet is for organisations who want to take part in the See Change Workplace Programme. Taking part in the programme shows you are committed to reducing stigma and discrimination towards mental health problems and want to create a positive culture for mental health in your workplace.

The booklet guides managers responsible for leading the Workplace Programme. It also has information about how to speak about your own and other's mental health and signposts where to get help.

Since 2015, the Workplace Programme has helped over 100 organisations, and we hope that it helps you and your colleagues become a See Change Workplace where everyone is supported in starting a discussion about mental health.

Who we are

See Change is a project of Shine – Supporting People Affected by Mental Ill Health. We work together through the National Stigma Reduction Partnership to bring about positive change in public attitudes and behaviour towards people with mental health problems.

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Introduction: The See Change Workplace Programme

About the See Change Workplace Programme

See Change sees the workplace as a key venue for changing attitudes to mental health problems. Our goal is to help organisations change the culture in their workplaces, so that employers and employees are supported to discuss how mental health affects each of us.

This section will give you an overview of the programme. Our Workplace Programme Action Plan (link at end of this guide) will help you plan your organisation's programme and has more detailed information.

Creating workplace environments where people can be open and positive about their own and others' mental health:

**promotes overall organisational
and individual wellbeing**

reduces absenteeism

enhances employee stress management skills

**reduces cost associated with absenteeism,
issues with employee relations, talent retention and acquisition**

**assists employers in developing systems to support
the 1 in 4 employees who may experience
diagnosed mental health difficulties
at a given point**



Six-step pledge

This six-step pledge outlines how you can begin to change your culture and become a See Change Workplace.

1.

Train management

HR, senior leadership and line managers take part in See Change-led workshops that explore the topic of mental health and stigma.

Result: Managers are empowered to have better conversations about mental health with their team.

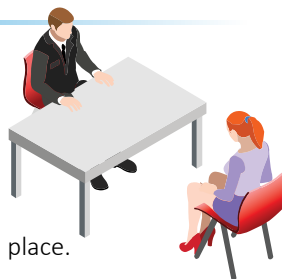


2.

Develop and put mental health policy in place

Develop a mental health policy and implement it across the organisation.

Result: Supportive mental health policy with clear procedures in place.



3.

Train and inform staff

Find a training organisation that suits your needs.

Host training and events for:

- **Mental health awareness**
- **Wellness workshop**
- **Green Ribbon Campaign to end mental health stigma**
- **Other mental health activities like Suicide Awareness Day**



Engage with mental health service providers in your area to promote events.

Inform staff by email, newsletter, noticeboard, canteen, intranet network about these opportunities.

Result: Staff are empowered to discuss mental health and feel supported by their organisation.

4.

Empower staff champions

Nominate, train and support staff champions to:

- **Promote wellness**
- **Challenge stigma**
- **Provide information for staff**



Result: Staff receive peer support and signposting.

5.

Engage your network: staff, board, clients and others

Encourage everyone across your organisation to promote mental health awareness with your external network.

For example, annual reports and the use of See Change email and social media banners.



Result: People outside your organisation are aware of the work you are doing to support good mental health.

6.

Earn your certificate and join our See Change Network

After the first 5 steps have been completed, we will award a certificate for your achievement. Your organisation will then become a See Change workplace and your name and logo will be displayed on our company's website.

Result: Officially celebrate that you are a See Change workplace.



Mental Health and Stigma

Explaining mental health and stigma



What is mental health?

We all have mental health. Being mentally healthy means you can cope with life's everyday challenges and understand your own general wellbeing. Being mentally healthy means a lot more than just the absence of mental health problems.

During our lives we all have ups and downs with our mental health. Most of the time these negative feelings pass, but if they begin to get in the way of your life, there are ways to help yourself and organisations like Shine, Aware and Samaritans can provide you with support.

What are mental health problems?

All of us experience problems with our mental health from time to time. This is nothing to be ashamed of. Mental health problems can affect our thoughts, feelings and behaviour. They can range from the worries we all experience as part of everyday life to serious long-term conditions.

Each person's experience of mental health problems is unique, even among people with the same diagnosis. At least one in four people will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives. The majority of them get better.

(Ref: Shine- [shine.ie/information-on-mental-health/what-is-mental-health](https://shine-shine.ie/information-on-mental-health/what-is-mental-health))

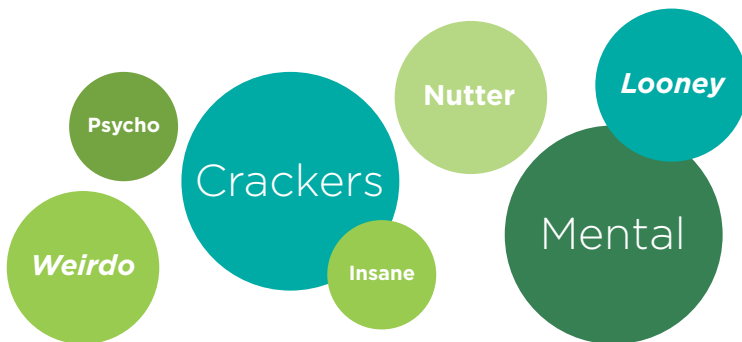


What is stigma and mental health?

Unfortunately, some parts of society can still see mental health problems as something to be ashamed about and treat people unfairly and label them with harmful names. These negative attitudes and discrimination are part of stigma, but a person can also internalise stigma and this can prevent them from getting help or leading a full life.

“Once you label me, you negate me*”

Have you ever used one of these words in a casual way?



Stigma can involve the use of these negative labels to identify people as different. This can result in a person feeling devalued and may lead someone to isolate themselves and hide their mental health difficulty.

While words like crazy, nuts and psycho may seem harmless and innocent, they are the building blocks of stigma that may lead someone to hide their difficulty. We suggest using the phrase ‘person experiencing mental health problems’ and being sensitive to the people around you.

Remember that mental health stigma thrives on lack of knowledge and understanding, negative attitudes and discriminatory behaviour.

By changing the language we use about mental health, we can create a bridge to understand and help others.

** Kierkegaard, S. & Dru, A. (1938). The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard, London, Oxford University Press*

Examples of where stigma and discrimination can occur



Employment

Not being offered roles or not applying for jobs



Education

Being labelled as different and not being offered opportunities to advance in school/university.



Media

Misrepresentating of mental health difficulties.



Community

Feeling shunned or excluded



Insurance companies

Making it more difficult for people with mental health conditions to get insurance.



Families

Rejecting and blaming them for their condition

How to help End Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination

What you can do	How you can do it
Educate yourself on mental health conditions and the recovery process	See the Further Information section in this guide.
Recognise the contribution of people with mental health conditions	Celebrate what people can do, not what they can't do.
Challenge stigma and discrimination when you hear or see it	Opening and engaging in conversation when you hear stigmatising language. For example: "commit suicide." The word "commit" is not used anymore and is seen as stigmatising.
Consider the language you use and how a simple change can show openness and acceptance	Pay attention to how you and others speak. Ask yourself: "How can I change my language to be more accepting?" "Do I know what language is stigmatising?"
Start a conversation with a friend, family member or work colleague about mental health.	To have a conversation you don't need to say: "How's your mental health"? Try making them a cup of tea and start a chat with: "How are you really"?

How to change your organisation's culture and reduce stigma

Information for you and your team as individuals

Looking after your own mental health

Before we can help others, we need to manage our own mental health needs. Below are some suggestions.



Getting support from your employer

If you or a colleague are finding work stressful or are struggling because of a mental health problem, your employer must take appropriate measures to help.

Under equality law, employees who have a disability, including people with experience of a mental health problem, have the right to access, take part and advance in employment.

How to tell your employer about a mental health problem (disclosure)

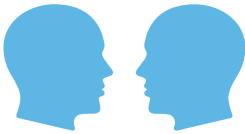
Deciding whether to tell your employer and colleagues about your mental health problem can be difficult. Below are some top tips to think about when disclosing to your employer.

Tips to help when disclosing



Think about what to share

Disclosure of mental health problems at work is your personal choice and you can say as much or as little as you want. If you need more support, being open can help you get it.



Request a private meeting

Request a one-to-one meeting with your manager to discuss your mental health. This gives you private time where you can discuss how it relates to your work, and what might help you manage so you can perform well.



You are an expert on you

Remember you are the expert on your needs. Agree a plan of changes with your manager and a time to meet again to discuss whether things have improved. If you are not sure what might help, start with small steps and see if they help or not.



You have rights, and can get legal advice

If your boss is unhelpful or dismissive, remember they have legal duties under the Equality Act to make a 'reasonable accommodation' (see next page) and not discriminate in recruiting, retaining or promoting staff. Mental health problems are a disability under the Act, so you are protected, but always seek legal advice.



Remember you are not alone

One in four of people experience a mental health problem in their lives. With a bit of practice, many people can balance their health with the demands of a job.

Reasonable Accommodation



A reasonable accommodation is when your employer makes changes (reasonable adjustments) to help you with your work. These changes work best if you disclose your mental health difficulty, so the right accommodation can be found.

Ask to meet with your employer and discuss what changes may help you. And remember, all changes should be done in discussion with you and must also be reasonable for the organisation.

Examples of reasonable accommodation:

- Adjusting working hours
- Adjusting tasks
- Providing time off to attend counselling and or medical appointments
- Phased return to work after someone has been on sick leave

How to recognise if someone might be experiencing a mental health difficulty

You are not expected to be an expert in mental health and to have all the answers. You help when you encourage open discussion to create a supportive culture where people feel they can discuss if they are experiencing a mental health difficulty.

There is no simple way of knowing if someone has a mental health difficulty and sometimes you do not need to know. It is more important to respond sensitively to someone experiencing mental difficulties than to find out whether or not they have a diagnosis. We should all give our full support to others no matter the level and nature of the disclosure.

Starting the conversation with a colleague

Some tips to consider when speaking to a colleague about their mental health.



Start the conversation 

Sometimes the most helpful thing you can do is to let someone know that you are there for them and simply listen...

-  **Take your lead from the person**
As a first step, ask how you can help
-  **Talk, but listen too**
Simply being there means a lot
-  **Don't just talk about mental health**
Chat about everyday things
-  **Small things make a big difference**
Ask someone how they are doing, go for a coffee
-  **Avoid clichés**
phrases like 'Cheer up' won't help; being open minded and listening will

www.seechange.ie

Information for you as a team leader and manager

How to support your team

Supporting your team members along every part of their journey is a crucial part of your job. Here are some tips for steps along the way. For more details, you can read our Guide for Line Managers.



Download



Starting the conversation

- **Take time to talk to the person privately.** Ask them if something is wrong but take your lead from them.
- **Ask what would help them at work.** Find out if a reasonable accommodation can help them. Discuss it together and apply it.
- **Treat them with respect.** Use appropriate language and pay generous attention. Act as a model to encourage other colleagues to do the same.
- **Keep the dialogue going.** If the person goes on sick leave or is absent, make sure to keep in touch.



Making decisions and helping the person get support

- **Be honest** in assessing the employee's recent performance.
- **Include the person** in the decision making process.
- **Do not make assumptions** on what someone can and cannot do.
- **Be aware** that changes like restructuring or the risk of redundancy can be particularly difficult.
- **Suggest that the individual asks for advice** from their occupational health advisor or contact any support services the organisation uses. For example, the company's Employee Assistance Programme.

When the person is absent from work

- **Take** your lead from them.
- **Agree** together what colleagues/managers should be told.
- **Refer** to your company's policies and procedures.
- **Stay in touch** and keep them informed about what is happening in your organisation.
- **Invite** the person to staff social events.



Things that might help a person with their return to work...

- **Discuss** any reasonable accommodation needs.
- **Agree** tasks and hours of work in advance.
- **Cup of tea policy:** invite them in for an informal chat before the official day of return.
- **Meet** in a neutral venue before the day of return.
- **Offer** a gradual return to work.



Further information and signposting

We have further guides and resources for staff and managers to:

- help plan and introduce the Workplace Programme,
- learn more about the law and mental health, and
- help reduce stigma and discrimination towards mental health problems.

Guides and resources

Workplace Programme Action Plan

How you can plan to achieve the six-step pledge

[Download](#)

See Changes's mental health policy template

Ask your organisation for a copy

Mental health and wellbeing A line manager's guide

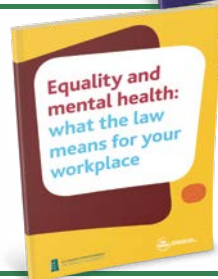
(Produced with IBEC)

[Download](#)

Equality Authority guides

- For employers
What the law means for your workplace

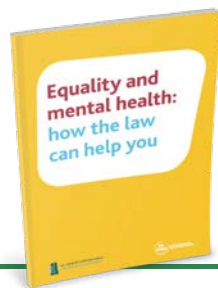
[Download](#)



Equality and mental health: How the law can help you

- For employees

[Download](#)



Support Services

If you or your staff are experiencing mental health distress and are in need of support, please contact the following services:

SAMARITANS	11 61 23
your mental health.ie	1800 111 888

You can also contact:

Your Employee Assistance Programme

Your GP

See Change is working positively to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with mental health problems and to ensure that everyone enjoys the same rights on an equal basis.



For more information,
contact See Change
E: workplace@seechange.ie | T: 01 541 3715

www.seechange.ie

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Connecting for Life

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