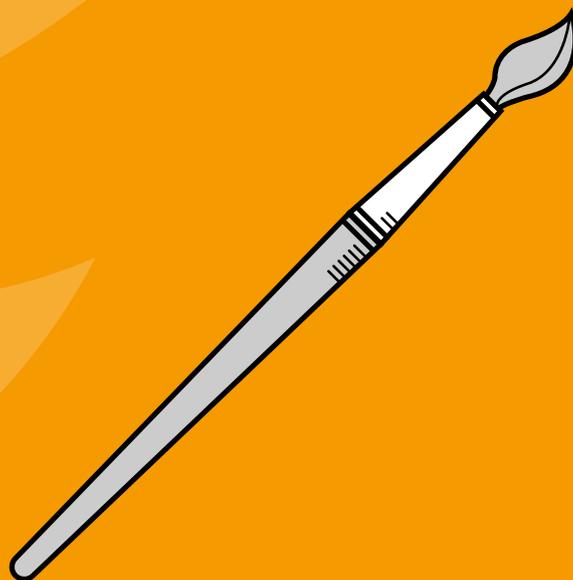




Building block 7

Case study: Stigma-free organisational culture and ethos

A case study from Dunoon Grammar School





In the summer of 2018 we carried out the See Me in Work staff survey in the school to capture a baseline of employees' attitudes and perceptions around mental health stigma and discrimination in work. The baseline survey told us that our employees felt confident to open up mental health conversations and thought they would be supported when returning to work following ill-health. They felt we needed to increase knowledge about what reasonable adjustments looked like in practice, clearer policies relating to wellbeing and more training on mental health stigma and discrimination. In relation to organisational culture we were not doing enough to encourage employees to talk openly about mental health problems and communicating the available support. In conjunction with See Me we have taken a whole school approach while implementing several improvements including training, procedures, and opening up spaces for good conversations.

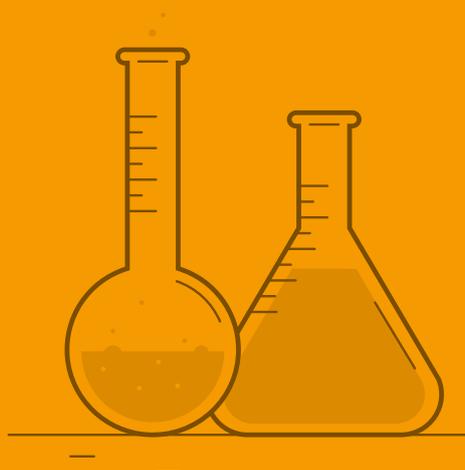
All of our support employees are now trained in Scottish Mental Health First Aid (SMHFA) and one of our Guidance Teachers is a SMHFA trainer to ensure sustainability. We hope to offer SMHFA training to all of our employees and have identified 'peer supporters' who will be available to speak to for support if necessary. All employees have been on Respect Me (<https://respectme.org.uk/>) anti-bullying training and have been trained in nurturing approaches with a focus on language and building relationships. We have also encouraged use of online resources looking at understanding and preventing suicide, and plan further training on positive mental attitudes and strategies for managing and coping with stress. We launched our Health and Wellbeing Policy and Mental Health Policy. They outline our procedures and signpost to support resources for all employees. Health and wellbeing is now standing agenda item number one for all departmental meetings. During return to work interviews there is more emphasis on reasonable adjustments and flexible working arrangements. We are also starting to look at the See Me 'Let's Chat' tool, giving line managers practical guidance, tips and scenarios to start open and honest conversations about mental health in the workplace, without fear of stigma and discrimination.

Providing time and space for employees to get together and talk to each other has been integral in changing the culture and ethos within the school. We have two school counsellors who work within the school available for employees to speak to in confidence if needed. We have a weekly support coffee morning, a Monday morning emotional check in and a daily check in for our support employees. We have also supported regular activities focusing on the importance of looking after our mental health such as a walking group, table tennis tournaments, football and the John Smith hour – where employees are encouraged to step away from their desks to participate in an activity with each other. We have linked all of this to our local community through litter picks and 'Walk a Mile' events, and to national campaigns such as 'Time to Talk Day', 'Mental Health Awareness Week' and 'World Mental Health Day'.

In November 2019 we ran the See Me in Work staff survey again to measure the impact of the improvement activities on employees' attitudes and perceptions around mental health in work, using a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree, 3 = neither agree or disagree). The results indicated a positive impact across all areas: recruitment, in work, returning to work and organisational culture, with overall scores increasing significantly and seeing the highest impact on 'organisational culture' (+0.5):

- Clear policies and procedures around mental health and wellbeing (+0.9)
- People's understanding of the importance of mental health and wellbeing (+0.6)
- People's confidence in discussing their mental health with their line manager (+0.4)
- Knowledge of where to get support and information in the organisation (+0.6)
- The organisation encouraging employees to open conversations about mental health (+1.0).

Our take-home message: Tackling mental health stigma and discrimination is foundational to driving mental health improvement in the workplace. Taking an organisational approach to creating an open and honest culture where everyone can talk about mental health leads to sustainable change. This requires investing in: strategic direction, effective and consistent implementation of policies and procedures, capacity building of line managers and employees, social contact activities and peer support approaches.





Contact:

Visit the See Me website

<https://www.seemescotland.org/workplace/>

for other case studies, helpful information and practical resources.

