York Ending Stigma – Let's talk mental health at work

A framework for employers

We want York to be a city where everyone feels as mentally well as possible at work and where no-one feels ashamed to talk about their mental health. To help with this, we have created this framework free for you to use for your organisation, no matter how small or big

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How to use this framework to accelerate your journey towards a mental health stigma-free workplace

Step 1
Self Assessment

- Read through and familiarise yourself with this document
- Carry out your self assessment (see page 3)
- Be honest and realistic with where you currently are on your journey
- Be flexible in your approach and start small - if you are a small family run business your resources and measures of success may differ to those of a larger organisation

Step 2
Take Action

- Look at the suggested actions in the matrix tables for each of the 3 assessment areas depending on the results of your self assessment
- Implement one or more of our suggested actions (or develop your own)
- Pick and choose what works for you - don't try to change everything in one go

Step 3
Review and Share

- Creating a mental health stigma-free workplace is an ongoing process
- Keep going – implement more actions as you go
- Review – what works for your organisation today, might not be the thing that works tomorrow
- Share – if you are doing something that could benefit other organisations, share it yourself and/or let us know and we'll share it with our employer network

Suggested Areas for Assessment

We have suggested **3 areas for assessment** (feel free to develop your own to suit your business) and what we consider to be measures of success for your organisation to consider:

1. Recruitment, retention & promotion

- Candidates feel comfortable disclosing mental ill health without it impacting their employment
- Recruitment processes are free of unconscious bias, and inductions are tailored to individual needs
- Transparent performance management process
- Policies and benefits support employee wellbeing
- Employees with mental health challenges have equal access to promotion opportunities

2. Culture & behaviour

- Values of your organisation are inclusive
- Your organisation only works with suppliers and partners with like minded attitudes to removing mental health stigma
- Leaders are role models, make bold interventions and have zero tolerance to stigmatising behaviours and attitudes
- Employees feel listened to and heard at all levels
- Organisations actively promote externally how they are removing mental health stigma

3. Embedding equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

- EDI is much broader than mental health & we want everyone to be treated equally. EDI impacts mental health.
- Embed metrics relating to removing stigma
- Publish metrics and information on progress and policies in place
- Active sponsorship of colleagues with mental health challenges
- Qualitative and quantitative audits of EDI performance against metrics
- Identify, manage, and mitigate potential risks relating to inclusive culture

Step 1 Self Assessment

For each of the 3 assessment areas (recruitment, workplace culture, and EDI) on the previous page, self assess yourself as either emerging, developing, or leading. You may be emerging in one area and leading in another depending on the strengths and skills currently in your organisation. To be most effective, we believe that honesty is vital and this is why we don't ask you for your assessment results or give you a badge of recognition – we simply want you to assess your organisation honestly and take positive actions to reduce mental health stigma in your workplace.

Emerging

- At the start of your journey to remove mental health stigma
- Have no or only basic resources in place for supporting employees with mental health challenges
- Low awareness of mental ill-health issues and attitudes among employees
- Reactive in your support

Developing

- Your organisation has made progress, but recognise there is more to do to remove stigma
- You've added additional elements to support employees with mental health challenges
- Some awareness of mental ill-health issues and attitudes among employees
- Proactive in your support

Leading

- Your organisation is practically stigma free
- Broad range of support for prevention and intervention with good take up rates
- A culture of psychological safety where all colleagues are both supported and supportive
- Share best practice with other organisations

Step 2 Take Action

Use the matrix tables on the next few pages to find out what suggested actions you could take to help your organisation to become mental health stigma-free.

How to use the matrix tables

1. There is a matrix table for each of the 3 assessment areas (recruitment, workplace culture, and EDI) – go to the table for the assessment area that you want to look at first, e.g. the workplace culture matrix table. Note that there is no order to which you should look at actions.
2. For the assessment area matrix table that you have chosen to look at first (e.g. the workplace culture matrix table), you will have already determined through your self assessment as to whether your organisation is emerging, developing, or leading.
3. Let's suggest for example that your organisation is self assessed as developing for the workplace culture, you would look at the 'developing' row in the workplace culture matrix table.
4. Across the top of the matrix table are different sub-areas, e.g. on the workplace culture matrix table the sub-areas include role modelling and the actions that could be implemented for improving mental health anti-stigma role modelling for a developing organisation would be found in the box as per the image below below. Continue to look for actions in the matrix tables for the relevant areas to your organisation. You are also encouraged to come up with your own actions to suit your organisation and to ignore any of our suggestions that don't suit your organisation – you know your organisation best.

Workplace Culture – actions matrix table

	Purpose, values & beliefs	Role modelling	Networks & listening	Symbolism & story telling	External positioning	Organisational governance
Emerging	xxxxxx....	xxxxxx....	xxxxxx....	xxxxxx....	xxxxxx....	xxxxxx....
Developing	xxxxxx....	Your actions will be found here for the example given	xxxxxx....	xxxxxx....	xxxxxx....	xxxxxx....
Leading	xxxxxx....	xxxxxx....	xxxxxx....	xxxxxx....	xxxxxx....	xxxxxx....

Recruitment, Retention & Promotion – actions matrix table

	Outreach & applications	Interviewing	Policies	Support services	Performance management	Learning & development
Emerging	Application forms are accessible, e.g. easy to read, jargon free, and are concise. Consider developing a statement on EDI for your recruitment process.	Give equal opportunity to all candidates and assess on their suitability for your job role.	Look at policies used by other organisations and develop your own wellbeing policy / policies.	Signposting to public support/charities for mental wellbeing, e.g. NHS, York Mind, and others as per the Healthwatch York Mental Health guide	Consider developing a transparent and fair performance management strategy so that your employees are clear of what is expected of them and how you will treat them.	Consider undertaking basic mental health awareness training for staff in a staff management role
Developing **See page 6**						
Leading **See page 7**						

Recruitment, Retention & Promotion – actions matrix table

	Outreach & applications	Interviewing	Policies	Support services	Performance management	Learning & development
Emerging	See page 5	See page 5	See page 5	See page 5	See page 5	See page 5
Developing	Include mental health in your ED&I policy/statement. Make it clear that candidates with mental health challenges are welcome to apply to work at your organisation. Use of alternative application methods, such as the option of easy read forms and being able to submit an audio or video file rather than a written application.	Health questionnaire for successful employees once they have been recruited so that you can have early conversations about how best to support their wellbeing to keep them as well as possible at work.	Wellbeing policy. Flexible working arrangements available to meet needs. Flexibility with methods for calling in sick (e.g. many organisations want employees to phone their line manager by a certain time if they are off sick. Someone who has social anxiety may struggle to pick up the phone to ring in sick so other methods such as a text message or allowing someone to ring on our behalf would help).	Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP). Effective communication strategy to signpost employees to support. Consider training staff as Mental Health First Aiders in your workplace and letting all your employees know who they are.	Regular supervision conversations with employees, not just at 'crisis' point. Checking in on employee wellbeing is first priority of one to ones / supervision / appraisal meetings. Implement reasonable adjustments.	Optional mental health awareness training for all employees. Encourage staff to undertake mental health awareness training and promote this as a positive thing for everyone to do. Investing in training for management on how best to approach mental health conversations and openly talking with employees.
Leading	See page 7	See page 7	See page 7	See page 7	See page 7	See page 7

Recruitment, Retention & Promotion – actions matrix table

	Outreach & applications	Interviewing	Policies	Support services	Performance management	Learning & development
Emerging	See page 5	See page 5	See page 5	See page 5	See page 5	See page 5
Developing	See page 6	See page 6	See page 6	See page 6	See page 6	See page 6
Leading	Roles are advertised with inclusive language, and in places where those with mental health challenges may look. Applications are actively encouraged from people with diverse needs. Share with prospective new employees how many current employees (e.g. as a percentage) are mental health first aid (for example) trained.	Interview process is tailored to meet needs of those with mental health challenges (please contact yes@yorkcvs.org.uk if you would like to hear from our Champions as to what works well for them at interview).	Implement a mental health policy. Offer a generous length of company sick pay to support mental ill health absence and a positive return to work. Having policies in place can be preventative in people needing to use them as we (YES Champions) feel more psychologically secure working for you due to your positive policies.	Company funded access to mental health intervention AND prevention support (e.g. EAP, Mindfulness apps, counselling). Engage with our York Ending Stigma – Let's talk #SuicidePrevention 'WHY' campaign www.whysuicideprevention.co.uk	Colleagues who are discriminatory are appropriately performance managed and educated to remove bias. Clear and transparent career progression framework in place which is fair and equitable for all employees.	All employees expected to complete mental health awareness training. People leaders receive more in-depth training, e.g. suicide awareness, neuro-diversity training. Training opportunities are inclusive and delivered in a variety of formats. Employees are given the time during their work duties to attend training.

Workplace Culture – actions matrix table

	Purpose, values & beliefs	Role modelling	Networks & listening	Symbolism & story telling	External positioning	Organisational governance
Emerging	Inclusion built into organisation mission, purpose or values.	Manager discusses mental health in team meetings / in front of staff but adds no personal element.	Self started mental health groups Ad hoc anonymous all employee listening surveys to understand culture. Learn from other local organisations.	Take a look at the York Ending Stigma conversation 'concertina card resource' and the suicide prevention conversation starter for how to have safe and effective conversations.	Your organisation could make a public statement showing support for removing stigma. Engage with York Ending Stigma.	Create a clear and fair reporting structure where employees can report mental health stigma without fear of negative consequences.
Developing	Public articulation of organisation inclusion values and beliefs. Your organisation's purpose is embedded in day to day operations and is felt by employees.	Manager(s) share their vulnerabilities / mental health challenges within their team (which, for larger organisations, might have an impact on the culture within the team, but maybe not the whole organisation).	Mental health groups with senior leadership engagement and sponsorship. Groups engaged in development on policy and practice. Annual all employee listening surveys.	Senior Leadership openly sharing stories of their mental wellbeing. Encourage purposeful sharing of experiences of working whilst living with poor mental health. Contact yes@yorkcvs.org.uk for our help with this.	Organisations expect partners and suppliers to remove stigma around mental health and take action if progress is not made.	Anonymous reporting process available to colleagues who see non-inclusive behaviours.
Leading	See page 9	See page 9	See page 9	See page 9	See page 9	See page 9

Workplace Culture – actions matrix table

	Purpose, values & beliefs	Role modelling	Networks & listening	Symbolism & story telling	External positioning	Organisational governance
Emerging	See page 8	See page 8	See page 8	See page 8	See page 8	See page 8
Developing	See page 8	See page 8	See page 8	See page 8	See page 8	See page 8
Leading	Your workplace culture is felt and embedded externally, such as your suppliers and the wider public through employee interactions and behaviours.	Promote work life balance, host regular 'wellbeing days' to raise awareness of mental health, and offer workshops so employees learn more. Promote the five ways to wellbeing. Senior leaders speak sensitively, appropriately, and openly about their own vulnerabilities and mental health challenges (do not 'compete' or expect your experience to be the same as someone else's)	Well established, funded employee mental health listening and support group with engagement and sponsorship by senior leaders. Volunteer Mental Health/Wellbeing Officers - employees trained to talk/listen to staff and provide counselling. Employees actively encouraged to share their experiences of mental health challenges and what helps to keep them well at work.	Forums and case studies where employees feel comfortable to share their story to help others. Share our York Ending Stigma case studies and podcasts. Request York Ending Stigma Champions to share their experiences of ending mental health stigma in their workplaces, at yours, either in person or remotely by contacting yes@yorkcvs.org.uk	Organisations are thought leaders in York regarding ending mental health stigma in our workplaces. Your organisation actively encourages others to learn from you and to follow your lead to end mental health stigma at work. Participate and speak at the York Ending Stigma (YES) Employer Network events. Regularly engage with YES.	Cultural audits to evidence psychological safety in your organisation.

Embedding Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) – actions matrix table

	Ambition & strategy	Accountability	Engage & inspire	Track & maintain	Manage risk
Emerging	People from marginalised groups often experience poorer mental health. High level plan and targets to remove ED&I stigma, including mental health stigma in your organisation.	Managing director/CEO level accountability for mental health inclusion.	Forums to foster debate. Join external networks advocating for change.	Absence management processes that identify mental health absences.	Think about implementing wellness action plans, e.g. Mind WAP, to reduce the risk of staff reaching 'crisis' before speaking out to their manager(s).
Developing	Removing the stigmas as an explicit strategic goal for the company with appropriate supporting business case.	ED&I council with representation from business areas/employees to challenge progress against targets/ambition.	Partner with ED&I experts/consultancy to review your organisation's practice.	Presentism insights (surveys, focus groups) that seek to understand the wellbeing challenges of the workforce.	Risk management framework and support plans for employees that identify and mitigate mental health absence and stress related activity in the workplace.
Leading	Annual targets on inclusivity and intersectionality for all business areas.	Permanent role, with budget available, to embed and develop ED&I engagement at all levels and all employees responsible for ED&I.	Increase and maintain access to up to date ED&I resources, including mental health resources, and promote them frequently, e.g. via monthly newsletters.	Health and Wellbeing strategy that proactively addresses the wellbeing challenges of the workforce.	Proactively identifying within the organisation or employee life cycle areas of stress and anxiety and proactively working to mitigate.

Step 3 Review and Share

Creating a mental health stigma-free workplace is an ongoing process and not everything will be achieved in one go. Don't worry about the speed of your progress, it's important that you make a start and keep going. You can implement more actions as you go, and importantly stop doing any actions that aren't working for you and your organisation.

Review – what works for your organisation today, might not be the thing that works tomorrow. Continually review your progress and actions by getting feedback from your employees and engaging with York Ending Stigma and our employer network.

Share – if you are doing something that could benefit other organisations, share it yourself and/or let us know and we'll share it with our employer network so that we can more quickly end mental health stigma in all our workplaces.

Produce a case study - consider producing an anonymous case study for us to share – we anonymise all case studies as it is your actions and learning points that are most valuable and we find that removing any potential 'competition' and 'risk adversity' of saying something publicly helps us to share the true messages of what works well from your personal experience perspective.

York Ending Stigma Resources

We believe that ending mental health stigma in our workplaces comes from sharing of real life personal experiences, and learning and growing from them.

In addition to the information in this pack, we recommend that you take a look at our York Ending Stigma experiences, such as reading our blogs and listening to our podcasts which are 100% produced by people with lived experience of mental ill-health with the positive purpose of ending mental health stigma and keeping as mentally well as possible.

York Ending Stigma support for you – our Champions (people with lived experience of mental ill-health) and our steering group members (local businesses, charities, and other organisations) want to share their experience with you. To find out more about how we can support your organisation to end mental health stigma, please email us at yes@yorkcvs.org.uk

YES Let's talk mental health
York Ending Stigma

To find out more about our work and to join us to end mental health stigma in York, please refer to our website
www.yorkcvs.org.uk/york-ending-stigma/