

# **Mental health campaign calls for change in behaviour**

**Scots are still afraid to have a conversation with someone with a mental illness, according to a new survey.**

See Me, Scotland's national programme to end mental health stigma and discrimination, has called for a change in behaviour.

A new campaign is aiming to get Scots, including people in the Lothians, thinking about how they react to someone living with a mental illness, after polling found there is still shame associated with these conditions.

The "If It's Okay" campaign is challenging mainstream mental health campaigning, and the phrase "it's okay to not be okay", after finding that for many people the reactions of others make them feel as if their diagnosis is not okay.

Polling found that 15% of Scots would not be willing to have a relationship with a person who has a mental illness (17% across the UK).

The survey also found that nearly one in 14 Scots would feel afraid to have a conversation with someone who has a mental illness.

This comes despite the same poll finding that 54% of Scots think that the level of stigma around mental ill health has decreased in the last five years.

To change this, the UK Anti-Stigma Alliance – a partnership between mental health charities across the UK, See Me in Scotland, Mind in England, Inspire in Northern Ireland, and Time to Change Wales – is highlighting the impact of shame on how people with mental illness can feel.

Individuals from all over the UK and Ireland have outlined their experiences and the partnership is sharing these on billboards in 150 sites in Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland, as well as on social media.

Wendy Halliday, See Me director, said: “This campaign shows us what it is really like for someone when they feel judgement from others for their illness. So, we need to go further than mental health campaigning previously has to stop people experiencing shame and stigma.

“We want the people in Edinburgh and the Lothians to find out more about what it is like to experience a mental illness, and for us all to be more educated, so people experience less discrimination.”

