Addressing Stigma: Organisational Handbook

A TOOLKIT TO SUPPORT
THE NOTTINGHAM CITY
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Nottingham
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> **Proactively addressing stigma can yield significant benefits**

Stigma can have profound negative impacts on individuals and organisations alike. Addressing stigma is not only a moral and ethical responsibility but also a strategic necessity for organisations aiming to foster inclusive, productive and innovative environments.

Organisations that fail to address stigma may have employees that feel less engaged and committed to their work, leading to lower morale and productivity. A stigmatised environment stifles creativity and innovation, as employees may fear judgment or rejection of their ideas. As a result, organisations may experience higher staff turnover.

Proactively addressing stigma can yield significant benefits:

1. **Enhanced Employee Wellbeing:** Creating a stigma-free environment promotes mental and emotional well-being, leading to happier and more productive employees.

2. **Improved Organisational Culture:** A culture of inclusivity and respect fosters collaboration, trust, and mutual support among employees.

3. **Increased retention:** Employees who feel valued and respected are more likely to stay with the organisation, reducing turnover and associated costs.

4. **Greater innovation:** An inclusive environment encourages diverse perspectives and ideas, driving innovation and competitive advantage.

The following framework has five questions that are designed for organisational leaders in Nottingham to reflect on what more they could be doing to reduce stigma and promote equality and understanding.

SELF-ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

This framework is designed to help organisations evaluate their current position in addressing stigma and identify areas for improvement. It is based on key prompt questions for system leaders and encourages a comprehensive and reflective approach.

The framework has five sections:

1. **Listening to Lived Experiences**
2. **Inclusivity in Policies, Processes and Culture**
3. **Investing in Sustainable, Long-Term Strategies**
4. **Modelling Inclusive Leadership and Fostering Psychological Safety**
5. **Measuring Impact and Ensuring Transparency**

Instructions: For each section, consider the provided criteria and rate your organisation's performance using the following scale:

- **1 - Not at all:** No evidence of addressing this area.

- **2 - Beginning:** Early stages of addressing this area, with limited implementation.

- **3 - Developing:** Some progress made in addressing this area, with ongoing development.

- **4 - Established:** This area is well-addressed and integrated into organisational practices.

- **5 - Exemplary:** This area is a model for best practice, with evidence of innovation and leadership.

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SECTION 1: LISTENING TO LIVED EXPERIENCES

Prompt: Are we truly listening to the lived experiences of those affected by stigma within our organisation and the communities we serve? Beyond data and reports, how are we creating safe spaces for authentic dialogue and ensuring their voices directly inform our strategies?

Strategic Leader Considerations: How do we ensure the lived experiences of those affected by stigma are not just heard but truly inform our decision-making processes at the highest level? What mechanisms do we have in place to gather this feedback authentically and safely? How do we overcome barriers to discussion?

CRITERIA	EVIDENCE / EXAMPLES	RATING (1-5)
Availability of safe and accessible spaces for individuals affected by stigma to share their experiences.		
Evidence of active and empathetic listening to lived experiences.		
Demonstrable examples of how lived experiences have directly influenced organisational strategies and decision-making.		
Use of diverse methods to gather feedback (e.g., focus groups, storytelling, surveys).		
Mechanisms for ongoing dialogue and feedback loops with affected communities.		

SECTION 2: INCLUSIVITY IN POLICIES, PROCESSES, AND CULTURE

Prompt: How inclusive are we within our organisation's policies, processes, and culture? Are we actively challenging assumptions and promoting equity at every level, from recruitment to service delivery?

Strategic Leader Considerations: How do our core policies and processes (e.g., HR, service delivery, communication) actively promote inclusivity and avoid perpetuating stigma? What steps are we taking to foster an organisational culture where stigma is challenged, and all individuals feel valued and respected?

CRITERIA	EVIDENCE / EXAMPLES	RATING (1-5)
Review and revision of policies and processes to ensure they are equitable and do not perpetuate stigma.		
Practices in place to challenge assumptions and biases in decision-making.		
Diversity and inclusion initiatives across all levels of the organisation (e.g., recruitment, training, leadership development).		
Accessibility of services for individuals affected by stigma.		
A culture that values equity and actively addresses discrimination.		

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SECTION 3: INVESTING IN SUSTAINABLE, LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

Prompt: Are we investing in sustainable, long-term strategies that address the root causes of stigma, rather than focusing solely on short-term interventions? How are we building partnerships and fostering collaboration to create lasting societal change?

Strategic Leader Considerations: How is addressing stigma prioritised within our overall strategic objectives? Are we allocating sufficient resources (financial, human) to support long-term, sustainable initiatives aimed at reducing stigma? How are we ensuring continuity and building internal expertise in this area?

CRITERIA	EVIDENCE / EXAMPLES	RATING (1-5)
Strategic plans that outline goals and objectives for reducing stigma.		
Investment of resources (e.g., funding, staff time) in addressing the root causes of stigma.		
Initiatives that go beyond short-term interventions (e.g., awareness campaigns) to create systemic change.		
Partnerships and collaborations with other organisations and community stakeholders to address stigma.		
Advocacy efforts to promote broader societal change.		

SECTION 4: MODELLING INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND FOSTERING PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Prompt: Are we modelling inclusive leadership and fostering a culture of psychological safety where open conversations about stigma are encouraged and valued? How are we holding ourselves and our teams accountable for challenging stigmatising language and behaviours?

Strategic Leader Considerations: How do senior leaders actively model inclusive behaviours and challenge stigma publicly and within the organisation? What are we doing to foster a culture of psychological safety where individuals feel comfortable raising concerns about stigma (and other subject areas) without fear of reprisal? How are we equipping leaders at all levels to have confident and inclusive conversations?

CRITERIA	EVIDENCE / EXAMPLES	RATING (1-5)
Leadership commitment to addressing stigma and promoting inclusion.		
Leaders actively model inclusive behaviours and challenge stigmatising language.		
A culture of psychological safety where staff feel comfortable discussing stigma and raising concerns.		
Accountability mechanisms for addressing stigmatising behaviours.		
Training and development opportunities for staff on stigma reduction and inclusive communication.		

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Example Responses:

Rating 2 (Beginning):
Leaders generally support inclusivity, but there is limited visible action or explicit communication about addressing stigma. Psychological safety is not a specific focus.

Rating 3 (Developing):
Some leaders are actively championing inclusivity, and there are initial efforts to promote psychological safety through training or internal initiatives.

Rating 4 (Established):
Leaders at all levels actively model inclusive behaviours, openly challenge stigma, and promote psychological safety through their communication and actions. There are clear mechanisms for raising concerns, and leaders are equipped to handle these sensitively.

Rating 2 (Beginning):
We don't currently have specific metrics for measuring the impact of stigma reduction efforts. Data collection may not specifically focus on outcomes for those affected by stigma.

Rating 3 (Developing):
We are starting to explore potential metrics and data sources to assess the impact of our initiatives. We may share some data internally, but external transparency is limited.

Rating 4 (Established):
We have established metrics (both quantitative and qualitative) to track the impact of our stigma reduction efforts on individuals and the wider organisation. We transparently share our findings through reports and other communication channels to drive continuous improvement.

SECTION 5: MEASURING IMPACT AND ENSURING TRANSPARENCY

Prompt: How are we/How can we measure the impact of our efforts to combat stigma? Are we using robust metrics that capture the outcomes of those affected, and are we transparently sharing our findings to drive continuous improvement and learning?

Strategic Leader Considerations: How are we currently measuring the impact of our stigma reduction efforts? Are we using a range of metrics that capture both quantitative data and the lived experiences of individuals affected? How are we sharing our findings with stakeholders to promote learning and continuous improvement?

CRITERIA	EVIDENCE / EXAMPLES	RATING (1-5)
Use of data and metrics to track the impact of stigma reduction efforts.		
Metrics that capture both quantitative data and the lived experiences of those affected by stigma (e.g., qualitative feedback, narrative data).		
Mechanisms for transparently sharing findings with stakeholders (e.g., reports, presentations, community forums).		
Use of data and feedback to drive continuous improvement and learning.		
Evaluation of the effectiveness of stigma reduction initiatives.		

OVERALL SUMMARY

Overall Rating: (Calculate an average rating across all sections)

Overall Rating	

Key Strengths: (Identify 2-3 key areas of strength)

CRITERIA	KEY STRENGTH

Areas for Improvement: (Identify 2-3 key areas where improvement is needed)

CRITERIA	AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

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OVERALL SUMMARY

> **An inclusive environment encourages diverse perspectives and ideas** "

OVERALL SUMMARY

Action Plan: (Outline 2-3 specific actions that will be taken to address the areas for improvement, including timelines and responsibilities)

AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT	ACTION PLAN

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FACILITATING A REFLECTIVE SESSION ON STIGMA: A USER GUIDE FOR LEADERS

This guide provides an example framework for organisational leaders to facilitate a reflective session on stigma. The aim is to encourage reflection, open dialogue, and the development of actionable steps to reduce stigma and promote equality within the organisation.

Purpose of the Reflective Session:

- To raise awareness among leaders about the profound negative impacts of stigma on individuals and the organisation.
- To encourage leaders to critically examine current organisational practices and their own behaviours in relation to stigma.
- To foster a culture of psychological safety where open conversations about stigma are encouraged and valued.
- To identify concrete actions the organisation and its leaders can take to proactively address and reduce stigma.
- To promote a more inclusive, productive, and innovative environment.

Target Audience:

Organisational leaders at all levels within the organisation.

Suggested Structure and Activities:

This is a suggested framework and can be adapted based on the specific needs and context of your organisation and can be facilitated using an internal member of staff or the use of an external facilitator. Aim for a session lasting approximately 1.5 - 2 hours.

> " encourage reflection, open dialogue, and the development of actionable steps to reduce stigma "

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Phase 1: Setting the Stage (15 minutes)

1. **Welcome and Introduction** (5 minutes):
   - The facilitator (ideally a senior leader or a designated facilitator with expertise in this area) welcomes participants and briefly explains the purpose and importance of the session, referencing the organisation's commitment to inclusivity and the potential impacts of stigma as highlighted in the document.
   - Emphasise that this is a safe space for open and honest reflection, with no judgment.

2. **Brief Overview of Stigma** (5 minutes):
   - The facilitator provides a concise overview of what stigma is and its potential negative impacts on individuals (e.g., wellbeing, engagement) and the organisation (e.g., productivity, innovation, retention), drawing directly from the introductory paragraphs of the provided document.

3. **Establishing Guiding Principles** (5 minutes):
   - Collaboratively establish ground rules for the session to ensure a respectful and productive environment. Examples include:
     - Listen actively and respectfully to others.
     - Share airtime and be mindful of speaking too much or too little.
     - Speak from personal experience and avoid making assumptions about others and biases.
     - Maintain confidentiality of personal stories shared (if any).
     - Focus on learning and growth.

Phase 2: Guided Reflection (45 - 60 minutes)

This phase will centre around the five key questions presented in the document. Facilitate a discussion around each question, encouraging individual reflection followed by group sharing.

1. **Question 1:** "To what extent do we truly understand the diverse lived experiences of individuals affected by stigma within our organisation and the broader Nottingham community?" (15 minutes)

   - Individual Reflection (5 minutes): Ask leaders to silently reflect on this question. Encourage them to consider different forms of stigma (e.g., related to mental health, disability, background, etc.) and how these might manifest within their teams and the wider organisation.

   - Group Sharing (10 minutes): Facilitate a discussion, inviting leaders to share their initial thoughts and insights. Encourage them to consider:

     - What do we know about the lived experiences? What are the sources of this knowledge?

     - What are the gaps in our understanding?

     - How can we better understand these experiences?

2. **Question 2:** "How effectively are our current policies, practices, and communications addressing and challenging stigma? Where might there be unintended consequences or blind spots?" (15 minutes)

   - Individual Reflection (5 minutes): Ask leaders to reflect on existing organisational policies (e.g., HR, diversity and inclusion), practices (e.g., recruitment, performance management), and communication strategies (e.g., internal newsletters, leadership messages). Encourage them to consider if these inadvertently perpetuate or fail to address stigma.

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> ❝ Facilitate a discussion around each question ❞

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- Group Sharing (10 minutes): Facilitate a discussion, prompting leaders to share examples and consider:
  - Are our policies and practices explicitly designed to be inclusive and anti-stigmatising?
  - Are there any areas where stigma might be unintentionally reinforced?
  - How do we ensure our communications use inclusive and respectful language?

3. **Question 3**: "Are we modelling inclusive leadership and fostering a culture of psychological safety where open conversations about stigma are encouraged and valued? How are we holding ourselves and our teams accountable for challenging stigmatising language and behaviours?" (15 - 20 minutes)

- Individual Reflection (5 minutes): Encourage leaders to reflect on their own leadership style and how they model inclusive behaviours. Consider how they create psychological safety and address stigmatising language or behaviours within their teams.

- Group Sharing (10 - 15 minutes): Facilitate a discussion focusing on:
  - What does inclusive leadership look like in practice when it comes to addressing stigma?
  - How effectively do we encourage open conversations about sensitive topics?
  - What mechanisms do we have in place to challenge stigmatising language and hold individuals accountable?
  - How can we better foster a culture of psychological safety?

Phase 3: Action Planning and Commitment (30 minutes)

1. **Creating Actions** (15 minutes):
   - Based on the reflections and discussions, facilitate an open thoughts session focused on concrete actions the organisation and individual leaders can take to reduce stigma and promote equality. Encourage participants to consider the "Additional ideas for action in your area" provided in the document, such as creating a local language guide or integrating stigma considerations into Equality Impact Assessments.
   - Capture all ideas on a whiteboard or shared document.
2. **Prioritisation and Commitment** (15 minutes):
   - Guide the group to identify 2-3 key actions that are feasible, impactful, and can be championed by the leadership team.
   - Encourage individual leaders to identify one specific action they will personally commit to implementing or advocating for within their sphere of influence.
   - Discuss how progress on these actions will be tracked and reviewed.

Phase 4: Wrap-up and Next Steps (10 minutes)

1. **Summary of Key Takeaways** (5 minutes): The facilitator summarises the main insights and agreed-upon actions from the session.
2. **Next Steps and Accountability** (3 minutes): Clearly outline the next steps, including who is responsible for what and timelines for follow-up. This might include scheduling a follow-up meeting to review progress.
3. **Closing Remarks** (2 minutes): Thank participants for their open and honest engagement and reiterate the organisation's commitment to creating a stigma-free and inclusive environment.

Facilitator Tips:

Focus on Solutions: While acknowledging the challenges, steer the conversation towards identifying actionable solutions.

Document Key Outcomes: Ensure that the key insights, agreed-upon actions, and individual commitments are documented and shared with participants.

By facilitating such a reflective session, your organisation can take a significant step towards understanding, addressing, and ultimately reducing the harmful impacts of stigma, fostering a more inclusive and thriving environment for everyone.

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Developed by Nottingham City Public Health Team.

This Organisational Handbook supports the Nottingham City Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2024/25 and is accompanied by another toolkit that looks at language.

All documents are available to download from: www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/information-for-residents/health-and-social-care/public-health/

Nottingham City Council