

# Reduction in mental health discrimination

3 May 2012

Findings from a new study led by King's College London's Institute of Psychiatry (IoP) show improvements in behaviour towards people with mental health problems in England, during the first year of the national anti-stigma programme, Time to Change.

The research, published in *Psychiatric Services*, shows a four per cent increase in the number of people reporting no [mental health](#) discrimination, and a 20 per cent reduction in the levels of discrimination across 22 identified life areas, including employment, relationships, medical health, education and safety amongst others. This is the first time that a national mental health anti-stigma programme has been evaluated against targets to reduce discrimination.

Dr Claire Henderson and Professor Graham Thornicroft from the Health Services and Population Research (HSPR) Department at the IoP at King's led the research.

Dr Henderson says: 'These are very promising early findings and suggest less discrimination in several important aspects of the people's everyday lives, such as their relationships with friends and family, socialising and employment. People with mental health problems are often unfairly treated and we now want to see whether these improvements are sustained in the long-term, and whether we can identify any improvements in other areas of people's lives.'

The research was undertaken between 2008 and 2009. People aged between 18 to 65 years using mental health services were selected at random from National Health Service records to take part. In addition to the overall four per cent reduction in discrimination, there was a seven per cent reduction in the amount of people who said they experienced discrimination from their families. When looking at discrimination from friends, this improved by 14 per cent after the year and discrimination when finding employment dropped by eight per cent. Finally discrimination

experienced during employment reduced by four per cent.

While a positive result was found within some audiences and groups, experiences of discrimination from health professionals in mental health and primary care services didn't change significantly.

Sue Baker, Director of Time to Change, says: 'It is tragic that nine out of ten people with mental health problems in England report discrimination. Stigma and discrimination are life limiting for millions of people and, for some, life threatening experiences.

'However these encouraging early findings, from the first year of the Time to Change programme, show that by working together we can start to improve the way people think and behave. Tens of thousands of people with mental health problems have spoken out to tackle stigma and improve understanding, and hundreds of organisations have done their bit. We still have a great deal of work to do before people with mental [health problems](#) can lead lives free from [discrimination](#), and be full and active citizens able to contribute their talents to society.'

Provided by King's College London

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