

## A FIVE PART SERIES ON STIGMA AND ITS IMPACTS

### THREE APPROACHES TO STIGMA REDUCTION INITIATIVES

The last few decades have seen an influx in stigma reduction activity. These activities usually aim to improve individual attitudes and reduce discrimination towards people with lived experience, but may also aim to increase awareness, promote recovery, encourage help-seeking, and boost pride and connection.<sup>1,2</sup>

Stigma researchers often refer to three overarching categories of public stigma reduction approaches: **educational, contact, and protest.**<sup>3</sup> Initiatives may also incorporate elements from multiple approaches. It is important to note that meaningful stigma reduction activity requires **ongoing work and multiple strategies**, and not a once-off activity.

This Implementation Brief compares and contrasts these three approaches to reduce public stigma, a [priority to action](#).

*“... reducing the stigma of mental health in the community without resorting to separating people with a lived experience from people without one. Being inclusive rather than exclusive.”*

Perspective of a person with lived experience in the ALIVE National Centre Priorities Database

## 1. EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES

<p><b>About</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational approaches aim to reduce public stigma through informing or upskilling their audience</li> <li>• Messaging often relates to recognising signs or symptoms of mental ill-health, normalising psychological distress, challenging stereotypes, and reducing stigma associated with help-seeking</li> <li>• They often involve workshops, training sessions, and/or media campaigns</li> <li>• Meta-analyses<sup>4</sup> have found evidence supporting their impact on reducing stigma</li> </ul>
<p><b>Examples</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Time to Change</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Mental Health First Aid</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Mindframe Media Reporting Guidelines</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Emotional CPR (eCPR)</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Considerations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typically, educational approaches are easier to scale compared to other approaches (see page 2)</li> <li>• Many campaigns have used messaging based in biogenetic models of mental illness, which can reinforce stigmatising beliefs. Consider using alternatives, such as trauma-informed, inclusion-focussed messaging</li> <li>• Some campaigns use ‘myth-busting’ approaches which can have unintended negative consequences. Repeating myths can increase the audience's familiarity with the myth, and <a href="#">unintentionally reinforce the myth</a>. Thus, care needs to be taken; consider presenting factual statements without focussing on myths</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lived experience perspectives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational messages may be simplistic, failing to account for systematic issues such as human rights, social determinants of mental ill-health, and accessibility of appropriate and timely mental health support</li> <li>• It is essential to involve people with lived experience in the design and delivery of educational approaches</li> </ul>

## 2. CONTACT-BASED APPROACHES

<b>About</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact-based approaches involve direct or indirect contact between audience members and people with lived experience, such as through in-person speaking engagements, documentaries, podcasts, or media campaign videos</li> <li>• They typically involve personal storytelling</li> <li>• They are believed to reduce stigma through increasing empathy, challenging stereotypes, and reduce a sense of 'othering'</li> <li>• Meta-analyses<sup>4</sup> have found evidence supporting their impact on reducing stigma</li> </ul>
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Batyr's storytelling initiatives</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Roses in the Ocean's Speakers' Hub</a></li> </ul>
<b>Considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact-based approaches are most effective at reducing stigma when they involve direct contact between audience members and people with lived experience, opportunities for active interaction, and include diverse voices and stories</li> <li>• Indirect contact (such as short videos) are easier to scale, and can reach more people than direct contact</li> </ul>
<b>Lived experience perspectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important to support the wellbeing of people with lived experience who are involved, and facilitate informed consent</li> <li>• Stigma reduction requires meaningful and ongoing lived experience input, collaboration, and leadership across all levels of an organisation – not just in the delivery of a contact-based initiative.</li> </ul>

## 3. PROTEST-BASED APPROACHES

<b>About</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protest-based approaches involve public objections to negative representations or human rights violations towards people with lived experience</li> <li>• Activities may involve petitions, letter-writing, boycotts, peaceful protests, with direct requests for reform</li> <li>• Protest-based approaches are often reactive and grassroots</li> <li>• They have not been studied to the same degree as education and contact-based interventions, and less is known about their impact on stigma<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">SANE's StigmaWatch program</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Not Before Time: Lived Experience Led Justice and Repair</a></li> </ul>
<b>Considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compared to education and contact-based approaches, there are fewer guidelines for how to effectively implement protest-based approaches.</li> <li>• It can be difficult to systematically evaluate the impact of protest-based approaches on individual attitudes, at scale; however, if they result in systematic reform, it can be easier to understand their impact on discriminatory processes (such as changes to media representations, or changes to legislation)</li> <li>• Some protest-based activities are met with controversy, conflict, or negative media attention</li> </ul>
<b>Lived experience perspectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protest-based approaches can be empowering, and enable people with lived experience to lead and influence change</li> <li>• It is important that people engaged in protest-based activities have access to supportive networks</li> </ul>

**SCALABILITY:** Decisions around which stigma reduction approaches to implement should be made after careful consideration. Which approaches matches the aims, available resources, and key messages of the planned stigma reduction initiative? How will people with lived experience be involved and championed in the design and delivery of the initiative? Will the impact be [measured](#)?

### KEY REFERENCES

1. Clement S, Jarrett M, Henderson C, Thornicroft G. Messages to use in population-level campaigns to reduce mental health-related stigma: consensus development study. *Epidemiol Psychiatr Sci.* 2010;19(1):72-79.
2. Walsh D, Foster JLH. A call to action. A critical review of mental health related anti-stigma campaigns. *Front Public Health.* 2021;8:1-15. doi:10.3389/fpubh.2020.569539
3. Corrigan P, Penn DL. Lessons from social psychology on discrediting psychiatric stigma. *American Psychologist.* 1999;54(9):765-776. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.54.9.765
4. McCulloch SP, Scrivano RM. Effectiveness of mental illness stigma-reduction interventions: A systematic meta-review of meta-analyses. *Clinical Psychology Review.* 2022;:102242.