

# What is Stigma?



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**Stigma is when someone is viewed negatively because of a certain characteristic or trait that they have.**



**Stigma may be experienced because of a number of characteristics, traits or experiences. For example, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, mental health or physical health conditions.**

**Discrimination is when someone is treated unfairly because they hold a particular characteristic. For example not being offered a job because of your ethnicity or a physical disability.**

**People who have been diagnosed with a mental health condition commonly report experiences of stigma and people with a diagnosis of psychosis are one of the most stigmatized**

**Research has found that stigma can be divided into two broad categories: public and internalised stigma.**



## **PUBLIC STIGMA**

**Negative attitudes, beliefs and behaviour directed towards the person by society.**



## **INTERNAL STIGMA**

**When a person starts to believe the negative views that society holds about them**

# Psychosis and Stigma

**People who have been diagnosed with psychosis frequently report experiencing stigma and discrimination.**

**Research has found that the stigma people experience can be more damaging than the original difficulties themselves.**



**A report conducted in 2012 found that 87% people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia had experienced stigma and discrimination.**

**Below are some of the things people have said about their experiences of stigma:**

**'I felt bad about having to take medication and having an illness and being diagnosed with schizophrenia'**

**'My brothers and sisters do not stay in touch. They do not write... they do not call.... They do not visit'**

**"I used to be ashamed, I used to sit up all night crying'**

**'The first doctor who saw my son was really judgemental... she went as far as to say that my son's illness was my fault''**



# Developments

**The importance of tackling stigma around mental health is now starting to be more widely recognised:**

**A priority set out by the World Health Organisation in 2013 was the reduction in stigma associated with psychosis.**

**In March 2015, NHS England launched a five-year strategy to improve mental health outcomes for people of all ages. One of their key themes was tackling stigma.**

## Stigma Resistance in Psychosis

**There are a large number of people who do not report negative experiences of stigma and who do not have internalised stigma. This is known as 'stigma resistance.'**

**Research has found that a number of factors make it less likely that stigma will be internalised:**

**Having a good social network of friends**

**Disagreeing with the stereotypes/ not believing the myths about mental health problems**

**Feeling empowered to make choices and decisions about life, health and mental health.**

**It is thought that holding stigma resistance beliefs may help individuals to lead a more fulfilling life and peers who have similar experiences may be able to support others to develop stigma resistance.**

