

## HOW CAN WE USE SOCIAL CONTACT INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS?

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**Introduction:** Social contact is one of the most effective strategies for improving inter-group relations and is supported by decades of positive evidence. Several studies specifically support social contact interventions as a way of reducing stigma against people with mental health problems. Despite the effectiveness of this approach, some social groups have few opportunities for social contact in the real world.

**Objectives:** Using the England Time to Change anti-stigma campaign as an example, we investigate the feasibility and effectiveness of delivering social contact interventions at the mass population level to reduce stigma and discrimination against people with mental health problems.

**Aims:** To investigate: (i) the feasibility of scaling up social contact interventions to reduce stigma and discrimination against people with mental health problems and (ii) the effectiveness of mass population social contact interventions to: improve intended stigmatising behaviour, increase willingness to disclose mental health problems and to promote engagement in anti-stigma activities.

**Methods:** Two types of mass participation social contact programmes within England's Time to Change campaign were evaluated via self-report questionnaire. Participants at social contact events were asked about the occurrence and quality of contact, attitudes, readiness to discuss mental health, and intended behaviour towards people with mental health problems.

**Results:** Findings on feasibility and effectiveness of social contact programmes will be presented.

**Conclusion:** This study suggests that social contact interventions can be used by anti-stigma campaigns to reduce stigma and discrimination against people with mental health problems. Further investigation is needed regarding the maintenance of these changes