What can we do to address the stigma surrounding mental health?

The importance of addressing stigma was well recognised whether it be in the workplace or through the language we use and the conversations that we have. Campaigns need to be coordinated, consistent and informed by service users. Suggestions, some with significant support, were made and these included:

In the workplace
- Employers need to know what action to take when aware that a colleague is not in a good place
- Involve experts by experience to support service development
- Leaders could set the template by openly sharing about their own mental health
- 50% of Mental Health crises are related to the workplace
- Some employers already have best practice; get them to share
- HR departments need to be more informed and supportive and encourage a culture that supports safe disclosure
- Physical health and mental health policies should have equal status in the workplace with programmes for self and other
- Policies for phased return to work, with support are essential
- Some policies contradict each other and those across Government should be consistent in supporting people/customers with mental health issues
- Ticking the box, but not walking the talk, is not helpful in organisations when seeking to support staff
- Waiting lists are a barrier; it can be a challenge getting support for staff during difficult times
- Updated training, such as Mental Health First Aid, that increase awareness and what to look out for, should be encouraged
- Some courses for understanding mental wellbeing issues are expensive
- Invest in peer support and buddy systems that build relationships on an individual level

Through campaigns
- Stigma still exists; campaigns and services need to be in place to address misunderstanding and general lack of awareness
- Look at campaigns that have been successful

- Self-stigma and not being able to break away from own diagnosis should be highlighted
- Should be part of PSHE in education with more open discussions encouraged with children
- Decider skills are now being taught in schools which is good

Through the language we use and the conversations we have
- Encourage openness with open and honest leaders normalising Mental Health
- Empathy needs to be sincere and genuine
- There needs to be a reframing of how we manage mental health crises or emergencies
- Individual protected first over the community when in crisis
- Silos need to be broken down to connect individuals with the right support

Any other thoughts
- It's OK to say "I'm feeling overwhelmed"
- What is the stigma?
- Are people ashamed about their own mental health?
- Are people ashamed of people with mental health issues?
- People can be uncomfortable when talking about mental health
- 30% of children self-harm. Surely a sign things are not well?
- Structuring services to support an unscheduled, unstructured event is difficult; more flexibility in the timing of GP consultation would help
- Dignify people exhibiting mental health distress; show kindness and empathy
- Where is the support, what are the post diagnosis pathways?