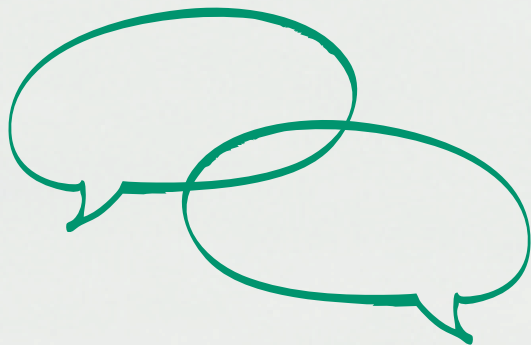




Ireland in Conversation

GREEN RIBBON CONVERSATION PACK 2026

Let's end mental health stigma

**Start one
conversation.
Change the story.**



Scan to visit the Green
Ribbon Campaign Hub



#GreenRibbonIRL
#IrelandInConversation

Welcome

Why Conversations Matter

Mental Health affects us all.

By talking openly and listening without judgement, we can break down stigma and create a more understanding Ireland.

Research shows that social contact and conversations are one of the most effective ways to reduce stigma and discrimination.

You don't need to be an expert.
You just need to care.



**Small conversations
can make a big difference.**

About the Green Ribbon Campaign



The Green Ribbon campaign is Shine's national campaign to challenge mental health stigma and promote open conversations.



Every September, thousands of people, organisations and communities across Ireland get involved.



Through events, talks, activities and partnerships, we encourage people to start conversations that matter.



Together, we are building a more inclusive Ireland where no one feels alone.

More than **500,000** Green Ribbons were distributed nationally in 2025.



What does “Ireland in Conversation” mean?

For almost two decades, the Green Ribbon Campaign has encouraged people across Ireland to stand against mental health stigma. Every Green Ribbon worn has represented solidarity, hope and a willingness to help create a society where mental health can be talked about openly.

In 2026, the campaign takes the next step.

Our new theme, **Ireland in Conversation**, recognises that while awareness is important, awareness alone does not reduce stigma. Change happens when people connect, listen to one another and feel safe to talk about their experiences.

Whether it's a conversation between colleagues over a cup of tea, friends catching up, students supporting one another, or neighbours checking in, every conversation helps to build understanding and reminds people that they are not alone.

The Green Ribbon is still our symbol but this year, we want it to become a conversation starter.



**Real change starts
with real conversations**



Conversations Change Attitudes

Research tells us that one of the most effective ways to reduce mental health stigma is through social contact – bringing people together to hear directly from those with lived experience of mental health difficulties.

The Lancet Commission on ending stigma and discrimination in mental health, 2022, reviewed hundreds of studies from around the world and concluded that meaningful interactions between people with and without lived experience are among the most powerful ways to challenge stereotypes, reduce prejudice and build understanding.

At Shine, this reflects the way we have always worked.

At Shine, lived experience is at the heart of our work. Through our **Ambassador Programme**, people with lived experience of mental health difficulties use their personal stories to challenge stigma, increase understanding and inspire hope. Our Ambassadors come from different backgrounds and have different experiences of mental health, demonstrating that there is no single experience of mental illness or recovery.

Shine Ambassadors receive training and ongoing support to help them share their experiences safely and effectively. They take part in talks, media interviews, campaigns, events and project work, using their own experiences to help others understand the realities of living with mental health difficulties and the impact that stigma can have.

This kind of lived experience engagement is particularly important to the Green Ribbon Campaign. Research shows that **social contact – opportunities to hear from, meet and engage with people who have lived experience of mental health difficulties – is one of the most effective ways of challenging stigma and changing attitudes**. Our Ambassador Programme helps us put this evidence into practice.

During the Green Ribbon Campaign, our Ambassadors speak in workplaces, colleges and communities and take part in festivals, public events, webinars and campaign activities across Ireland. By sharing their experiences openly and honestly, they can challenge misconceptions, encourage empathy and understanding, and show that recovery is possible. Their stories also remind us that conversations about mental health don't have to be perfect, sometimes simply creating the space to listen is where change begins.

This commitment to lived experience extends across Shine's wider work, including our recovery services, advocacy and Voice Platform. We believe people with lived experience should not only be part of conversations about mental health, but should be heard, valued and meaningfully involved in shaping them.

The Green Ribbon Campaign is about much more than September. Through **Ireland in Conversation**, we want to encourage conversations and connections that continue throughout the year, helping to create an Ireland where people can speak about mental health without fear of stigma or judgement.

Ambassador Stories

The following stories come from Shine Ambassadors who have lived experience of mental health difficulties.

Every story is different, but they all have one thing in common: the power of conversation to challenge stigma, build understanding and remind us that no one has to face mental health difficulties alone.

Ambassador Stories

Brodie Thompson



Hey, I'm Brodie (she/her)!

I'm 36 years old and originally hail from the rural South Island of New Zealand, though Dublin has been my home since 2019. I've been an ambassador for Shine for a number of years now, and talking openly about mental health difficulties is invaluable to me. Not only has it enabled me to let go of shame, but it's been so important for me to be the voice I wish I'd heard when I was struggling.

It can be so daunting to know who to open up to, which is exactly why we need to normalise these conversations. When we're in a dark place, we can isolate ourselves and feel like a burden, but there is hope and there are people who will understand. You will get better, and you will recover, even when life currently feels unbearable.



Hear Brodie's Story

Scan the QR code to hear Brodie share her mental health journey and the conversations that supported her recovery.

Ambassador Stories

Ciarán O'Brien



Hi, I'm Ciarán,

There's two big reasons I'm working with Shine.

No.1 To reduce the untrue stigma that prevents people from reaching out and receiving the support that they need.

No. 2 to educate people that you can become seriously unwell with your mental health and still make a full recovery. That you can go and lead a purposeful, high quality, meaningful life.

Essentially revealing the positive truth about mental health.



Hear Ciarán's Story

Scan the QR code to hear Ciarán reflect on the importance of talking openly and the support of family.

Ambassador Stories

Sinéad Smyth



It is not always a big event that leads to mental health difficulties. Sometimes it's the gradual build-up of stressors and genetic susceptibility that brings you to a point where you simply can't cope anymore. That was me, and sitting on my bed for the first time as an inpatient in St. Patrick's University Hospital was soul-crushing. I thought my life was over. I felt so ashamed and useless that I didn't tell my own family that I was off work. I was afraid I would be seen differently or even mocked.

Art became a turning point in my recovery. It gave me a way to express what I couldn't put into words and helped me better understand my experiences. Today, I speak openly about my journey because I know how powerful honest conversations can be. By sharing my story, I hope to challenge stigma, encourage understanding and remind others that reaching out for support is a sign of strength.



Hear Sinéad's Story

Scan the QR code to hear Sinéad share her experience of OCD and why the language we use matters.

Ambassador Stories

Johnny Hunt



I'm Johnny Hunt,

A nurse, a dad and a veteran of 25 charity walks!

I'm here to help start the conversation around breaking the stigma around mental illness. I am proud of how I've gone through a long journey with my mental health and the stigma around it.

I'm a proud Shine Ambassador.

LET'S TALK, join the conversation today!



Hear Johnny's Story

Scan the QR code to hear Johnny talk about the power of community, connection and conversation.

Ambassador Stories

Steven O'Neill



Hey, I'm Steven

Mental health is something that's become really important to me because I've lived through my own struggles. For years, I kept a lot of it to myself because I thought I had to deal with it alone. Looking back, I realise that opening up wasn't a weakness – it was the start of things getting better.

That's why I'm proud to be a Shine Ambassador. I want to help break the stigma around mental health and show people that it's okay not to be okay. You don't have to have all the answers, and you don't have to wait until you're at breaking point to ask for help. Sometimes one honest conversation can make all the difference.



Hear Steven's Story

Scan the QR code to hear Steven discuss mental health in the workplace and how we can all help challenge stigma.

Conversation Starters

Every conversation starts somewhere

Talking about mental health doesn't have to be difficult or complicated. You don't need to have all the answers or know exactly what to say. Often, simply asking someone how they are and taking the time to listen can make a real difference.

Whether you're in the workplace, at college, in your local community or chatting with family and friends, small conversations can help reduce stigma, build understanding and remind people that they are not alone.

Remember, the aim isn't to solve someone's problems – it's to create a space where they feel heard, supported and understood.

Conversation Starters

Sometimes the hardest part is knowing how to begin. Here are a few simple ways to open the conversation:

- "How have you really been lately?"
- "You don't seem yourself recently. How are things?"
- "I've been thinking about you. How are you doing?"
- "Is everything okay? I'm here if you'd like to talk."
- "How have things been for you recently?"
- "What's been on your mind lately?"
- "How are you looking after yourself at the moment?"

Remember that if someone doesn't want to talk straight away, that's okay too. Simply letting them know you're there for them can be just as important.

Conversation Prompts

These prompts can be used to encourage discussion in workplaces, colleges, community groups or with family and friends.

In the Workplace

Creating a workplace where people feel comfortable talking about mental health starts with everyday conversations.

Consider asking:

- What helps you manage stress at work?
- What does a supportive workplace look like to you?
- How can colleagues help create a culture where people feel comfortable asking for help?
- What small changes could make work feel more supportive?



In Colleges and Education

Starting conversations early helps reduce stigma and encourages students to seek support when they need it.

Try discussing:

- What helps you maintain your wellbeing during busy periods?
- How can students support one another?
- What makes it easier to ask for help?
- What advice would you give someone struggling in silence?



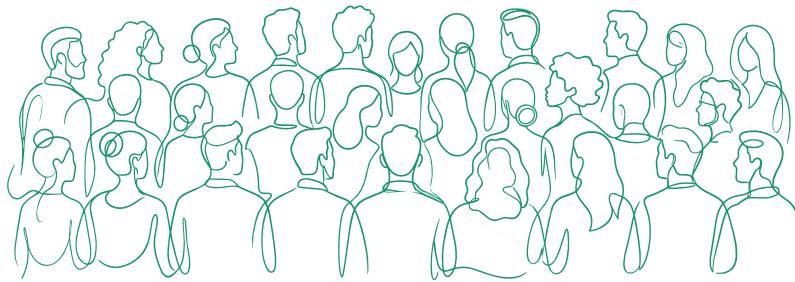
Conversation Prompts

In Community Groups

Communities become stronger when people feel connected and supported.

Conversation ideas:

- What does community mean to you?
- How can we make everyone feel welcome and included?
- What local supports make the biggest difference?
- How can simple acts of kindness help someone's mental wellbeing?



Among Friends and Family

The people closest to us are often the first to notice when something isn't quite right.



Questions to ask:

- How have you really been lately?
- What's been helping you recently?
- Is there anything you'd like to talk about?
- What kind of support is most helpful when you're having a difficult time?
- How can I best support you?

Listening Matters Too

A meaningful conversation isn't just about talking, it's also about listening.

When someone shares how they're feeling:

- Give them your full attention.
- Listen without interrupting.
- Avoid judgement or assumptions.
- Let them share at their own pace.
- Thank them for trusting you.
- Don't feel you need to have all the answers.
- Encourage them to seek additional support if they need it.

Sometimes listening is one of the most supportive things you can do.

Every Conversation Makes a Difference

Not every conversation will be easy, and not every conversation needs to be long.

By creating spaces where people feel safe to talk, we can all help challenge stigma and build a more compassionate Ireland.

One conversation won't change everything but it could change something for someone.

That's where change begins.

Language Matters

The power of words

The language we use when talking about mental health has the power to shape attitudes, influence understanding and either challenge or reinforce stigma.

Using respectful, person-centred language helps create environments where people feel safe, valued and understood. It reminds us that a person is never defined by their mental health.

Nobody gets it right all the time, and that's okay. This isn't about policing language, it's about choosing words that encourage empathy, reduce judgement and support more open conversations.

Person-First Language

Mental health is only one part of someone's life. Wherever possible, put the person before the condition.

Instead of...

-  "A schizophrenic"
-  "A person living with schizophrenia"

-  "The mentally ill"
-  "People living with mental health difficulties"

-  "She's bipolar."
-  "She is living with bipolar disorder."

Avoid Labels and Assumptions

Everyone's experience is different. Avoid making assumptions about someone's abilities, behaviour or recovery based on a diagnosis.

Instead of...

-  "They're unstable."
-  "They seem to be having a difficult time."

-  "He's attention-seeking."
-  "He may be looking for support."

-  "She's just being dramatic."
-  "She's sharing how she's feeling."

Speak About Mental Health Respectfully

Words can either encourage understanding or reinforce stereotypes.

Instead of...

-  "Suffers from depression."
-  "Lives with depression."

-  "Committed suicide."
-  "Died by suicide."

-  "Crazy"
-  "Psycho"
-  "Lunatic"
-  Use respectful, person-centred language instead.

Avoid Sensationalising Mental Health

Not every mental health conversation needs dramatic language. Avoid using mental health conditions as everyday expressions.

Instead of...

-  "I need things a certain way, I'm so OCD."
-  "I need things a certain way, I'm so specific."

-  "The weather is bipolar."
-  "The weather is unpredictable."

-  "What's happening right now is so crazy."
-  "What's happening right now is so bizarre."

Listen Without Judgement

Supportive conversations aren't only about the words we use—they're also about how we listen.

When someone opens up:

-  Listen without interrupting.
-  Avoid making assumptions.
-  Don't minimise their experience.
-  Resist the urge to immediately offer solutions.
-  Thank them for trusting you.
-  Let them know they don't have to face things alone.

Sometimes the most supportive response is simply:

"Thank you for telling me."

Ways to Take Part in Green Ribbon 2026

Every conversation starts with someone

There are lots of ways to support the Green Ribbon Campaign, whether you're an individual, workplace, school, college, community group or organisation. Every action – big or small – helps to challenge stigma, encourage conversation and create a more compassionate Ireland.

Choose the activities that work best for you and help get *Ireland in Conversation* this September.

Wear a Green Ribbon

Wearing a Green Ribbon is a simple but powerful way to show your support and let others know you're open to conversations about mental health.

[Order your free Green Ribbons here](#)



Book an Ambassador Talk

Our Shine Ambassadors share their lived experience of mental health to challenge stigma, inspire hope and encourage open conversations. Ambassador Talks are available for workplaces, colleges, schools and community organisations throughout the campaign.

Email ambassadorprogramme@shine.ie



Download the Supporters Pack

Our Supporters Pack contains everything you need to get involved, including posters, social media graphics, email signatures, Zoom & Teams backgrounds and campaign resources.

[Scan the QR code here](#)

Ways to Take Part in Green Ribbon 2026

Take Part in Our Webinar Series

Join our free September webinar series exploring mental health across different sectors and communities, featuring expert speakers and lived experience voices.

[View the programme here](#)



Host a Green Ribbon Event

Bring people together by organising an event in your workplace, school, college or community. It doesn't need to be complicated, sometimes the simplest gatherings create the most meaningful conversations.

Ideas include:

- Coffee mornings
- Lunch and learn sessions
- Community walks

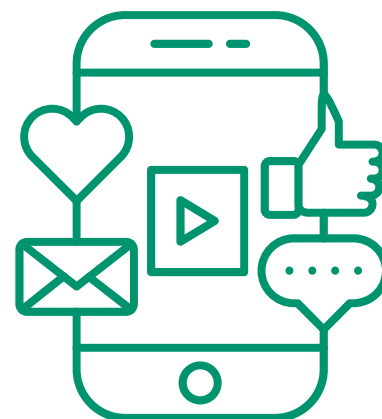
Share Your Support

Help spread the message by sharing your Green Ribbon activities on social media. Whether you're wearing your ribbon, hosting an event or simply starting a conversation, we'd love to see how you're taking part.

Use:

- **#GreenRibbonIRL**
- **#IrelandInConversation**
- **#EndTheStigma**

Don't forget to tag **@ShineOnlineIE** on all platforms



Light Up Green

Help shine a light on mental health by taking part in Light Up Green. Each year, buildings and landmarks across Ireland turn green in support of the campaign, helping to raise awareness and encourage conversations in communities nationwide.

Click the link to find out how to get involved on page 4 of our [Green Ribbon Supporters Guide](#).



About Shine

For over 45 years, Shine has been supporting people affected by mental health difficulties and challenging the stigma that too often surrounds mental illness. We believe recovery is possible and that everyone deserves to feel heard, understood and included. We are proud to have been the first national mental health organisation specifically founded to provide support for family members and supporters as well as the individual with lived experience of mental illness.

Through our services, education programmes, advocacy and lived experience leadership, we work towards creating a more compassionate Ireland where mental health can be talked about openly and without judgement.

Recovery Support Services

Our Recovery Support Services provide one-to-one and group support for people living with mental health difficulties. Working alongside individuals on their recovery journey, we focus on hope, empowerment and helping people achieve the goals that matter most to them.

Relatives & Supporters Groups

Mental health affects families and friends too. Shine provides dedicated information, education and support for family members and supporters, helping them better understand mental health while looking after their own wellbeing.

Workplace Programme

Our HSE-funded Workplace Programme supports organisations to create psychologically safe workplaces where conversations about mental health are encouraged and stigma is challenged. Through workshops, practical resources and guidance, we help organisations build more open and supportive workplace cultures.

About Shine

Shine Media Programme

Our Media Programme works with journalists, editors, broadcasters and communications professionals to promote responsible reporting on mental health and suicide. Through training, resources and partnerships, we support accurate, respectful and stigma-free coverage in Irish media.

Advocacy

We work to influence policy, improve services and ensure the voices of people with lived experience are heard at every level of decision-making. Through advocacy and our Voice Platform, we champion recovery-oriented, rights-based mental health services across Ireland.

Ambassador Programme

Our Ambassadors use their lived experience of mental health difficulties to challenge stigma through public speaking, media engagement, campaigns and education. By sharing their stories, they help build understanding, inspire hope and encourage more open conversations about mental health.

Find out more

Discover our services, resources and ways to get involved by visiting:

www.shine.ie



Keeping Conversations Safe and Supportive

Starting a conversation about mental health can make a real difference. You don't need to be an expert or have all the answers – listening with empathy and knowing when to encourage additional support is enough.

When having a conversation

- Don't pressure anyone to share. Let people decide what they feel comfortable talking about.
- Listen without judgement. Give the person time and ask what support would be helpful.
- Respect their privacy, but don't promise absolute confidentiality if you are concerned about their safety or someone else's.
- Know your role. You don't need to diagnose, counsel or solve someone's difficulties.
- Encourage professional support when needed, such as their GP, out-of-hours GP or existing mental health team.

If someone needs urgent help

If someone is at immediate risk of harming themselves or another person, call 112 or 999 or go to the nearest Emergency Department.

Samaritans: 116 123 on Freephone for 24-hour non-judgemental support

Text About It: Free-text HELLO to 50808, available 24/7

Shine Support

Shine provides information and support for people living with mental health difficulties and their families and supporters.

Call our Shine support line (Mon–Fri, 9–5): 01 860 1610 / 086 040 7701

Email Shine: support@shine.ie

Remember: The Conversation Pack is designed to help start conversations and challenge stigma. It is not a substitute for professional mental health support.

Help Get Ireland in Conversation

Challenge yourself to complete as many as you can this September.



Wear your Green Ribbon and tell someone what it represents.



Ask someone how they're really doing.



Make time for a conversation over a cup of tea or coffee.



Reach out to someone you haven't spoken to in a while.



Listen without judgement when someone shares how they're feeling.



Thank someone who has supported you.



Share a Green Ribbon post to help spread the message.



Encourage your workplace, club or community group to get involved.



Watch a Shine Ambassador story.



Attend a Green Ribbon webinar or event.



Book or attend a Shine Ambassador Talk.



Download and use wallpapers, backgrounds, and frames from the Supporters Pack.



Thank You

Every Green Ribbon worn.

Every conversation started.

Every story shared.

Every act of kindness.

Together, we're helping to create a more compassionate Ireland where everyone feels safe to talk about mental health.

Thank you for helping get **Ireland in Conversation.**

#GreenRibbonIRL
#IrelandInConversation

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