

People's Stigma Free Network



Stigma Free
Lanarkshire

**SUMMARY
REPORT**

**APRIL
2026**



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Introduction

The People's Stigma Free Network (PSFN) brings together people with lived experience, professionals, and community members to explore mental health stigma and support more compassionate, inclusive responses across Lanarkshire.

PSFN connects members through shared learning, reflection, and action, creating opportunities to talk openly about stigma, understand its impact and translate learning into practical change.

Building on learning from PSFN sessions this summary report shares key learning from the April 2026 session, including member feedback, confidence changes, and priorities for future PSFN activity.

Our Aims:

Together we will...

Create a safe and inclusive space where individuals from all walks of life can share their experiences

Foster open conversations and share all learning, specifically good practice, and what is working in the communities of Lanarkshire

Provide a platform for the voices of network members to offer ideas and inspiration

Encourage further action to create safe places while challenging mental health stigma and discrimination

Identify ways in which we can support members to achieve their own goals in creating stigma free environments



Session Overview

Stigma Free Lanarkshire hosted the second PSFN session of 2026 on 21st April, bringing together **13** members, including **8** returning members, suggesting continued engagement with the network.

Members brought lived experience perspectives alongside representation from NHS Health Improvement, third sector organisations, Stigma Free Lanarkshire volunteers, and Lanarkshire Links members. This diverse mix of lived and professional experience supported shared learning across community, health, and voluntary sector contexts.

What happened on the day:

Spotlight on Sakoon Mind

Members heard from Sakoon Mind, who shared reflections on challenging mental health stigma within communities, followed by an interactive Q&A discussion with attendees.

Interactive Action Planning – Ripple Effect Activity

Members then took part in a facilitated group activity exploring practical actions that can help create more stigma-free communities across everyday conversations, workplaces, services, and community spaces.

Spotlight: Sakoon Mind

The session opened with a spotlight on Sakoon Mind, a charity working to improve mental wellbeing within South Asian communities. Founders Taj and Sandi shared insights into their work and personal experiences of challenging mental health stigma within their community.

Members heard how Sakoon Mind began through informal “coffee therapy” meetups, creating space for open conversations about mental health within their South Asian community, where these discussions can often feel taboo. After sharing these sessions online, they gained traction and highlighted a wider need for safe, judgement-free spaces, leading to the creation of Sakoon Mind.

Throughout the discussion, Taj and Sandi highlighted the importance of normalising conversations around mental health and how one person speaking openly can encourage others to seek support.

Members were highly engaged throughout the discussion and anonymous Q&A feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with members reflecting on learning valuable approaches to self-care and relating the discussion to their own experiences. A number of members described the talk as emotional and inspiring.





Interactive Learning

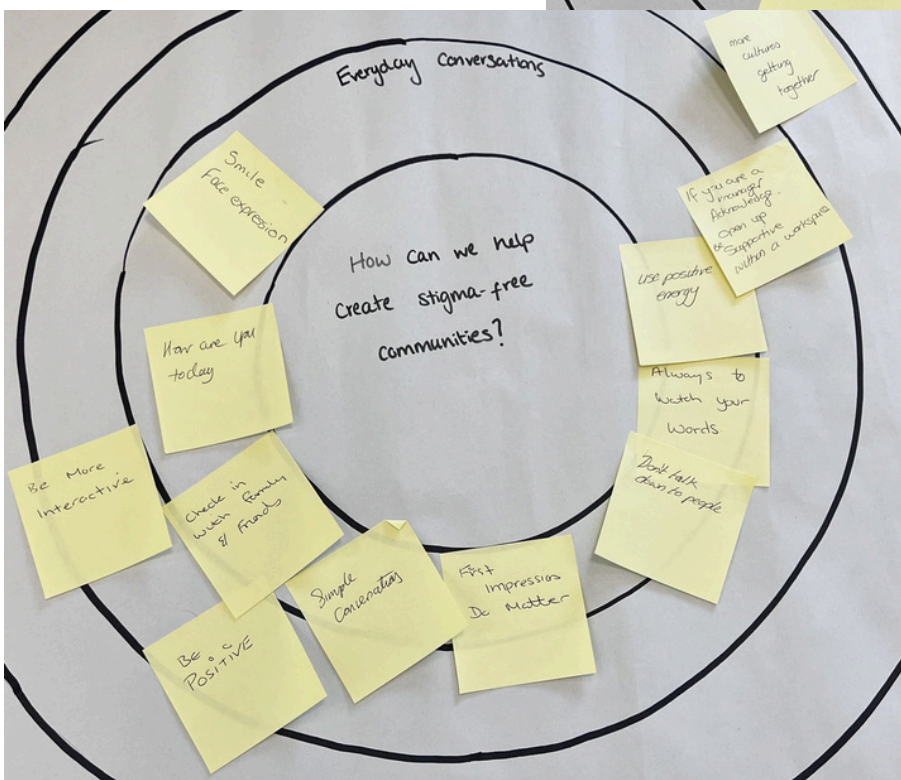
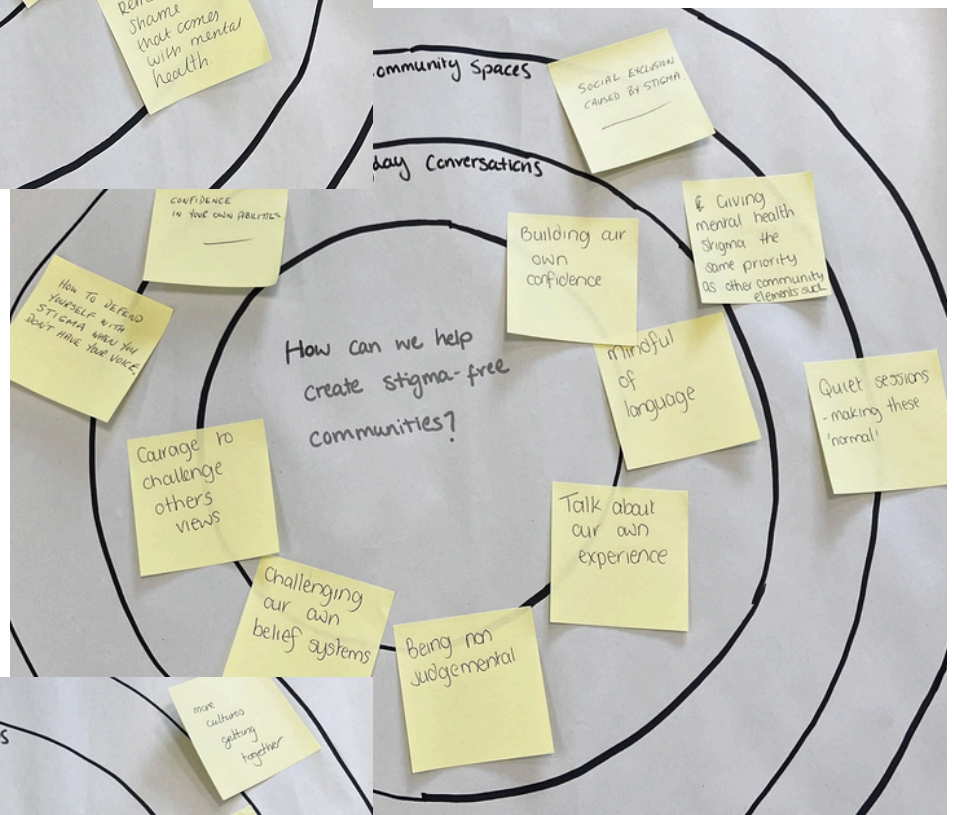
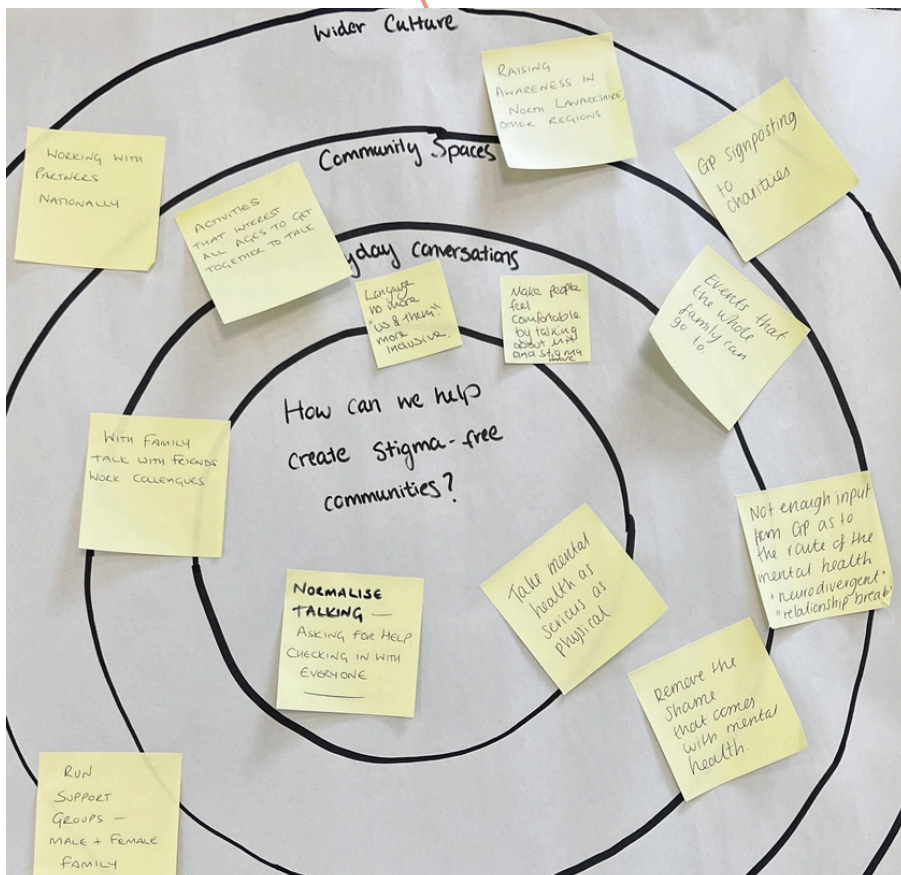
Members then took part in the Ripple Effect activity, where groups explored how small actions and conversations can help create more stigma-free communities across everyday conversations, community spaces, and wider culture. Using a ripple diagram, members reflected on how stigma can be challenged across different areas of community life and how small actions can contribute to wider cultural change around mental health.

The activity was centred around the idea that change spreads outward through communities, much like ripples in water. Rather than focusing on one large intervention, the discussion encouraged members to think about the cumulative impact of small everyday actions, conversations, and responses. Members explored how the ways people speak about mental health, respond to disclosure, and support others within workplaces, services, families, and communities can collectively shape wider attitudes and experiences of stigma.

Across the discussions, members highlighted the importance of normalising conversations around mental health, using non-judgemental and inclusive language, checking in with others, and creating safe spaces where people feel able to open up. There was also strong reflection on the responsibility of organisations, workplaces, healthcare services, and community groups to create environments where people feel supported rather than judged.

A strong theme throughout the activity was the importance of compassion, connection, and cultural understanding. Many members reflected on how small everyday interactions can help build trust, reduce isolation, and contribute towards creating a more stigma-free Lanarkshire.

Member Responses from the Ripple Activity



Action Planning

Following the Ripple Effect activity, members were invited to share via Mentimeter: "What is one action you could take (or are already taking) to create stigma-free communities?"

Responses highlighted the importance of challenging stigmatising language, encouraging open conversations, and creating supportive environments where people feel safe to seek help and share their experiences.

Many responses focused on how small everyday actions and interactions can collectively contribute to creating more stigma-free communities.

What is one action you could take (or are already taking) to create stigma-free communities?

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Challenge stigmatising language

Encouraging open conversations about mental health

Be mindful of negative language and its connotations when talking about mental health in general conversation.

Lots of conversations that enables individual to open up and feel safe to talk

Being mindful of language I use. Eg. "that's crazy", "that was mental". Trying to be aware and use alternative expressions

Be open-minded and accept people as they are

Normalising mental health Take mental health as serious as physical. Try to understand the route and cause of the mental health.

Decrease the myths and stereotypes that creates stigmas

Work more on resources, materials so information is there and our door is open

Actively promoting SFL workshops and social media presence as well as other organisations

Mental health is first priority, daily check ins with family friends, workplaces.

Give support to those around the person struggling with mental health. It will be having an effect on them also

Quantitative Findings

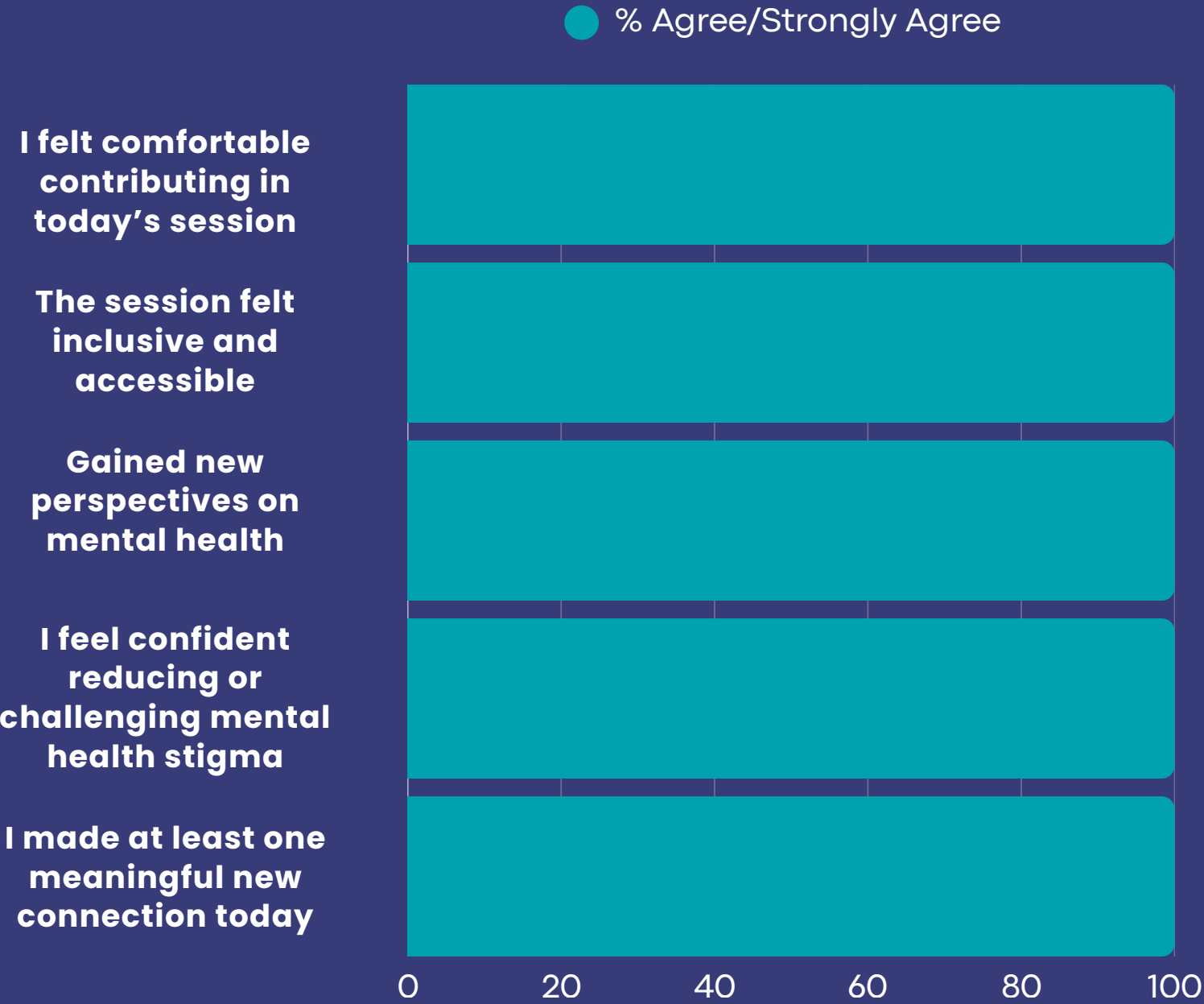
Based on pre- and post-session responses from 10 members:

- Members who strongly agreed they felt comfortable contributing during the session increased from 50% pre-session to **80%** post-session
- Members who strongly agreed they felt confident reducing or challenging mental health stigma in their community increased from 60% pre-session to **70%** post-session
- **80%** strongly agreed the session felt culturally inclusive and accessible
- **80%** strongly agreed the session gave them new perspectives on mental health
- **60%** strongly agreed they made at least one meaningful connection during the session

Overall, all members either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident reducing or challenging mental health stigma following the session.



Figure 1. *Post-session experience ratings*





KEY LEARNING

Quantitative findings from the April PSFN session suggest that members experienced the network as a psychologically safe, inclusive, and supportive space for discussion. Responses indicated strong levels of engagement across all measures, with members reporting increased comfort contributing during the session and increased confidence in reducing or challenging mental health stigma within their communities.

The findings suggest the session environment and opportunities for shared discussion helped members feel able to participate openly and engage with sensitive conversations around stigma and mental health. This is particularly important within peer and community-based spaces, where psychological safety and openness can support deeper reflection, connection, and learning.

Responses also highlighted strong perceptions of cultural inclusivity, accessibility, and shared learning throughout the session. Members reported gaining new perspectives on mental health and making meaningful connections with others working to reduce stigma. Together, this suggests PSFN is continuing to function not only as an awareness-raising space, but also as a community-building environment that supports dialogue, relationship-building, and collective learning across different lived and professional experiences.

Compared to the January 2026 session, findings from April suggest continued development of PSFN as a space for open discussion, shared learning, and connection. While January findings highlighted the value of creating psychologically safe spaces for discussion, April findings suggest members are continuing to engage openly with one another, reflect collectively on stigma within different community contexts, and build meaningful connections through shared learning and open conversation.



Qualitative Insights & Themes

Several consistent themes emerged from member reflections.

Open Conversation & Emotional Impact

Many members reflected positively on the open and honest nature of the discussions. Several described the session as emotional, inspiring, and hopeful, while others valued being able to openly share experiences and ask questions in a supportive environment.

Learning from Lived Experience

Hearing lived experience was repeatedly highlighted as impactful and grounding. Members reflected on the importance of hearing real stories and perspectives, particularly around stigma within different communities and cultural contexts.

Cultural Understanding & Community Perspectives

Members valued the discussion around stigma within South Asian communities and reflected on the importance of culturally relevant conversations around mental health. Several responses highlighted the need for more safe spaces where people can speak openly without fear of judgement.

Connection & Shared Understanding

Many reflections highlighted the value of bringing people together to learn from one another. Members described appreciating different perspectives, networking opportunities, and conversations that increased understanding of how stigma affects people across communities.

Action & Ongoing Learning

Several members reflected on wanting to continue conversations around stigma within their own communities, workplaces, and networks. Others expressed interest in future PSFN sessions, more group discussions, and continuing to learn from shared experiences and good practice.



Areas for Improvement & Future Directions

Member reflections highlighted a strong interest in continuing opportunities for open discussion, shared learning, and community connection through PSFN.

Suggestions for future sessions included:

- More lived experience speakers and community stories
- Continued discussions around stigma within different cultural and community contexts
- More opportunities for group discussion and interactive activities
- Exploring practical ways to challenge stigma within workplaces and communities
- Greater awareness-raising within community spaces and services

Several members also reflected on the importance of taking conversations beyond PSFN sessions and into everyday interactions, workplaces, and wider community settings.

PSFN will continue to build on this learning by:

- Creating safe and inclusive spaces for discussion
- Continuing to centre lived experience and community voices
- Supporting practical, community-led conversations around stigma
- Encouraging connection, shared learning, and collaboration across the network
- Responding to emerging themes and member feedback in future session planning

Questions? Contact us.

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