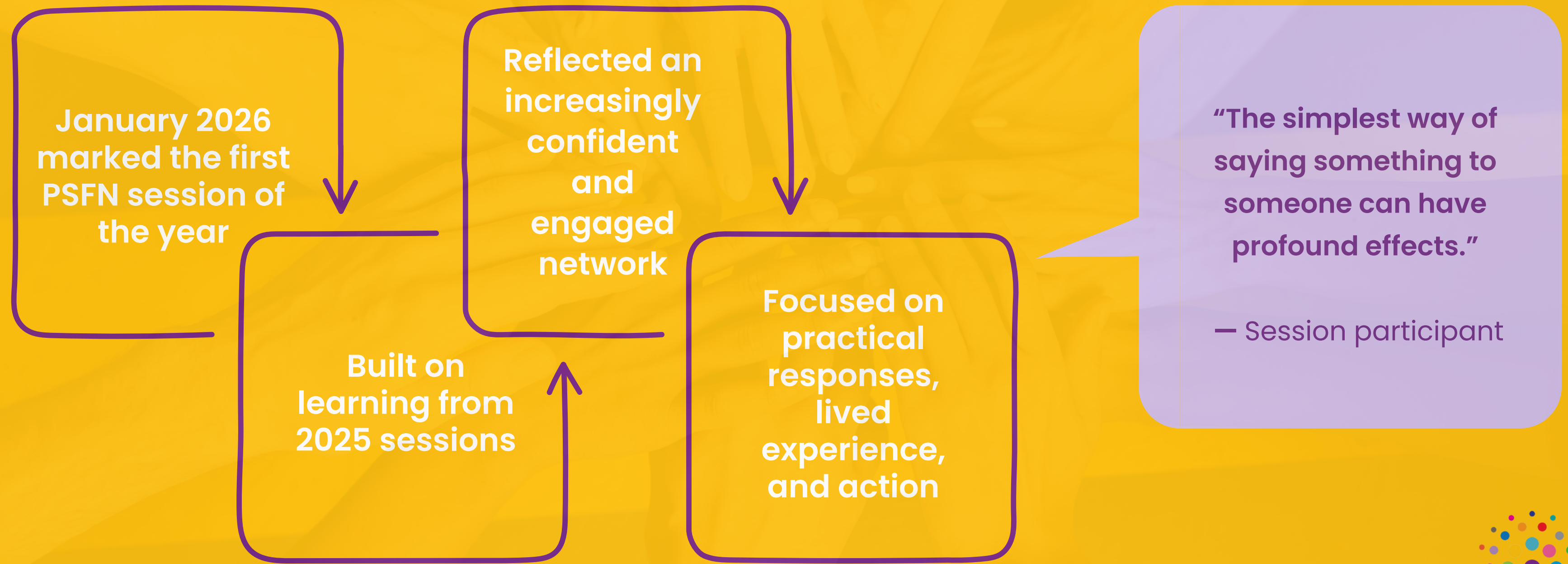


# People's **Stigma Free** Network: January 2026 Flash Report

## 21st January 2026 Session Highlights:



# January Network: Session Snapshot



**21 attendees**

**5 returning**

**Profile:** lived experience & professionals (3<sup>rd</sup> sector mental health and family support, peer support, education, policing)

## Core Activities

- **Stigma-free practice in action**
  - Lanarkshire Links and Police Scotland shared real examples of stigma-free work in practice.
- **Lived experience voices**
  - Personal stories highlighted the real-life impact of stigma.
- **Scenario-based learning**
  - Interactive activities explored supportive responses to mental-health disclosure.
- **Action planning**
  - Members identified practical steps to challenge stigma in workplaces and communities.

# Spotlight Speakers

## Lanarkshire Links & lived experience

The session opened with a spotlight on Lanarkshire Links, highlighting the role of community-led groups in creating welcoming, stigma-free spaces across Lanarkshire. Members with lived experience shared personal reflections on how stigma has affected their everyday lives, and how being listened to, understood, and supported through creative and community connections has played a meaningful role in their wellbeing. These contributions grounded the session in real experience, reinforcing that stigma is shaped through everyday interactions.

### What members reflected on:

- The impact of hearing directly from lived experience
- How small acts of inclusion can support belonging and recovery
- Increased mindfulness in language, assumptions, and everyday responses

## Police Scotland

Police Scotland shared insights from frontline practice, reflecting on the significant role policing plays in responding to mental-health crisis while recognising the limits of the policing role. The discussion highlighted the challenge of balancing public safety responsibilities with compassion, dignity, and care for individuals in distress. Members valued the openness of the conversation, particularly reflections on mental-health culture within policing and the importance of peer support.

### What members reflected on:

- Greater understanding of the realities and constraints of policing
- The importance of compassion within high-pressure roles
- Growing awareness of stigma within workplace cultures



# What Members Took Away from the Session

## ✓ **Greater awareness of everyday language**

Members reflected on how stigma can show up in small, often unintentional ways — through tone, assumptions, and everyday phrases. Many described leaving with increased mindfulness about how their language and responses can either reinforce stigma or help create safer, more inclusive conversations.

## ✓ **The power of lived experience**

Hearing directly from people with lived experience was repeatedly described as grounding and impactful. Members reflected on how personal stories deepened understanding, challenged assumptions, and reminded them that stigma affects people differently depending on context, identity, and support.

## ✓ **Confidence in sensitive conversations**

The scenario-based activities helped members feel more confident responding to mental-health disclosure across different settings. Rather than “having the right answer”, members valued learning how to listen without judgement, acknowledge emotion, and avoid rushing to fix or minimise someone’s experience.

## ✓ **Small actions that make a difference**

Members emphasised the importance of taking realistic, achievable steps rather than trying to “solve” stigma all at once. Many left with clear ideas for small changes they could make — in conversations, workplaces, or communities — reinforcing that change often begins with everyday actions.

# Session Outcomes

Overall, members reported strong and stable outcomes across confidence, awareness, and experience of the session.

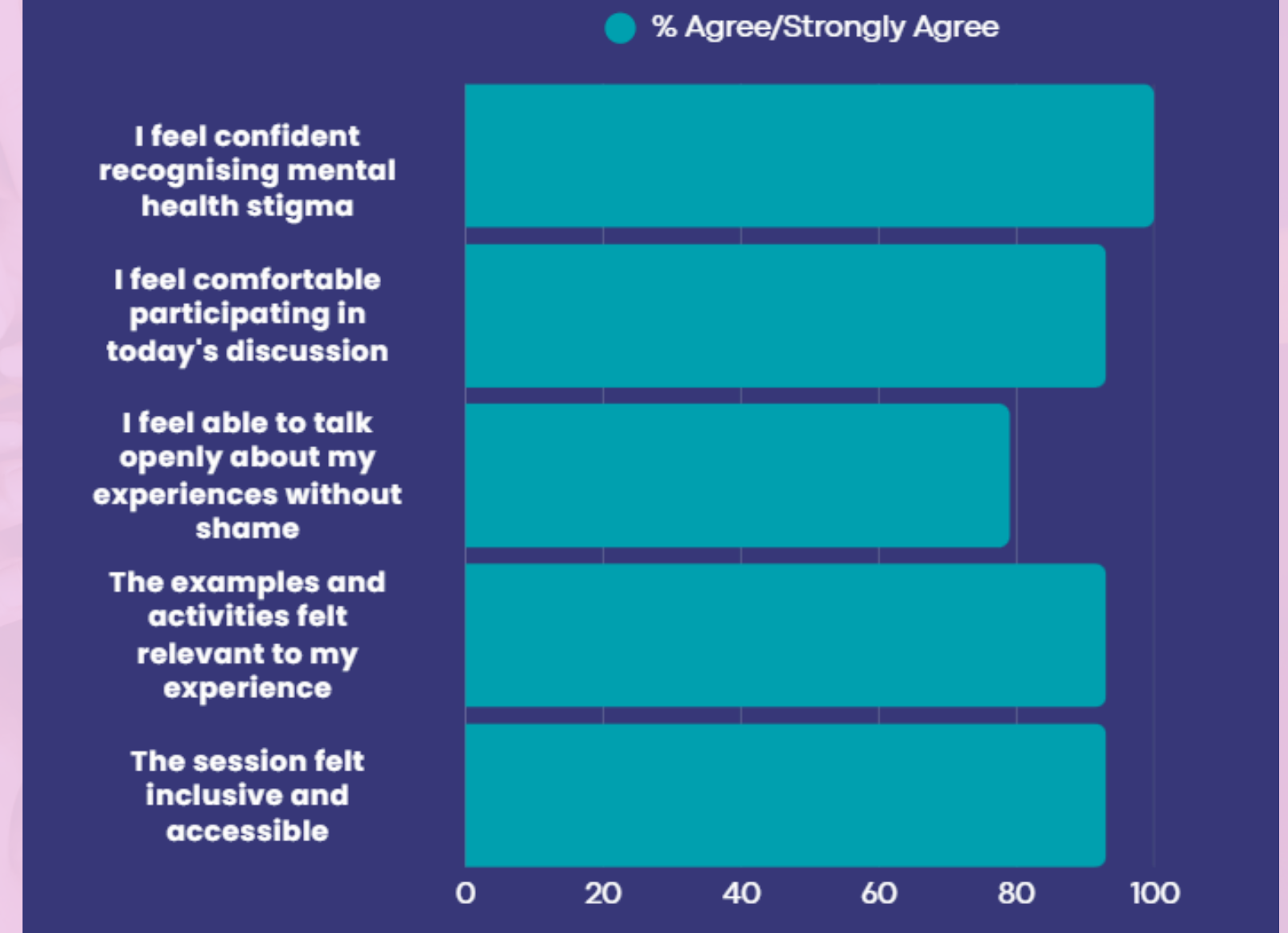
## At a glance:

- **90%+** of members reported stable or improved confidence following the session
- **100%** reported feeling confident recognising mental-health stigma both before and after the session
- **90%+** reported a positive experience of the session, including feeling included, comfortable participating, and finding the content relevant

## What this tells us:

These findings suggest that members are increasingly arriving with high baseline awareness of stigma, with PSFN providing space to deepen understanding, build practical confidence, and support ongoing stigma-free action.

Figure 2. Post-session experience ratings



# Member Reflections

Members reflected positively on how the session was experienced, describing it as open, respectful, and relevant to real-life situations.

## **Feedback highlighted:**

- The value of hearing lived experience in a supportive setting
- The usefulness of interactive discussion and shared reflection
- Feeling able to contribute in ways that felt comfortable
- Opportunities to connect with others across lived experience and professional roles

## **Why this matters:**

These reflections suggest that PSFN continues to offer a space where people feel able to engage honestly, learn from one another, and take part at their own pace.



# Turning Learning into Action

Throughout the session, members reflected on how learning could be translated into everyday practice. Discussion focused less on large-scale change and more on small, achievable actions that could support stigma-free responses in daily interactions, workplaces, and services.

## **Examples of practical actions members identified included:**

- Being more mindful of language, tone, and assumptions in everyday conversations
- Creating space for open and supportive discussion about mental health
- Sharing learning with colleagues, peers, and teams
- Responding with compassion and curiosity rather than judgement

These reflections reinforce a shared understanding that stigma is often challenged through consistent, everyday behaviours rather than one-off interventions.

Building on feedback from the January session, PSFN will continue to shape future sessions around member priorities by:

- Centring lived experience
- Strengthening facilitation of sensitive discussion
- Expanding practical workplace-focused content
- Maintaining accessible formats (e.g. Mentimeter)
- Supporting members to take learning beyond sessions and into communities
- Continuing conversations beyond sessions through follow-up reflections and light-touch check-ins, supporting members to notice and apply stigma-free learning over time

Future sessions will continue to respond directly to member priorities, supporting reflection, connection, and practical stigma-free action over time.