

People's **Stigma Free** Network: September 2025 Summary Report

Background

- **Network Launched January 2025**
 - **Quarterly meetings held in January, April and September this year**
 - **All community members who want to prevent & challenge mental health stigma are welcome.**
- The network provides a platform for open conversations, sharing best practices and invaluable insights, with a focus on successful initiatives within Lanarkshire's communities. Members can contribute ideas, inspire others, and drive further efforts to create safe spaces while tackling mental health stigma and discrimination.**

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

Phase 1 Completed

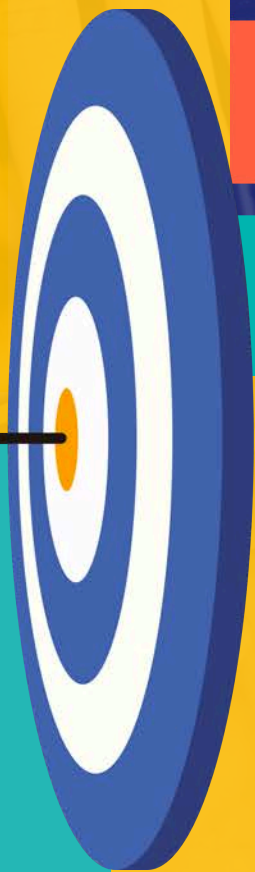
Pre-People's Stigma Free Network survey and focus groups held to explore the perspectives and needs that are essential for establishing a People's Stigma-Free Network.

Phase 2 Completed

Network event that anyone can attend held in January. 33 attendees identified individual action.

Phase 3 Completed

Evaluation of network members experience so far.



**Stigma Free
Lanarkshire**

September Network Meeting Overview

The September meeting continued the Network's mission to create spaces where lived experience, professional insight, and community action converge to challenge mental-health stigma across Lanarkshire.

AGENDA

- Welcome and Setting the Scene
- Recap Video – Updating existing members and orienting new members
- Lived Experience Speaker
- Keynote Speaker – How I Have Tackled Mental Health Stigma Through My Work
- Learning Zone – Interactive session exploring Institutional, Self, Associative, Societal, and Intersectional Stigma
- What Does “Stigma Free” Mean to You? – Group reflection activity
- Facilitated Discussion – Introduction to the My Action Plan booklet and roundtable discussion to identify individual actions
- Spotighting Your Organisation and Networking

Peoples Stigma Free Network

Join a movement for change where we share and learn from each other to end mental health stigma and discrimination in Lanarkshire

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

23rd September 2025 at 1.30 - 3.30pm
Dalziel Building,
7 Scott St, Motherwell,
ML1 1PN



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September Network Meeting Introduction

The session opened with the short introductory video *Bringing People Together*, which revisited the Network’s shared values of compassion, inclusion, and co-production while reflecting on PSFN’s journey since January 2025. Drawing on findings from the *Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study* (See Me Scotland & Mental Health Foundation, 2022) alongside feedback from PSFN members, the video reminded participants that while awareness has grown, stigma continues to affect lives and discourage help-seeking. It set a reflective tone for the session, underscoring that meaningful change begins through connection, understanding, and shared action.

Network Meeting Recap Video available, contact SFL team

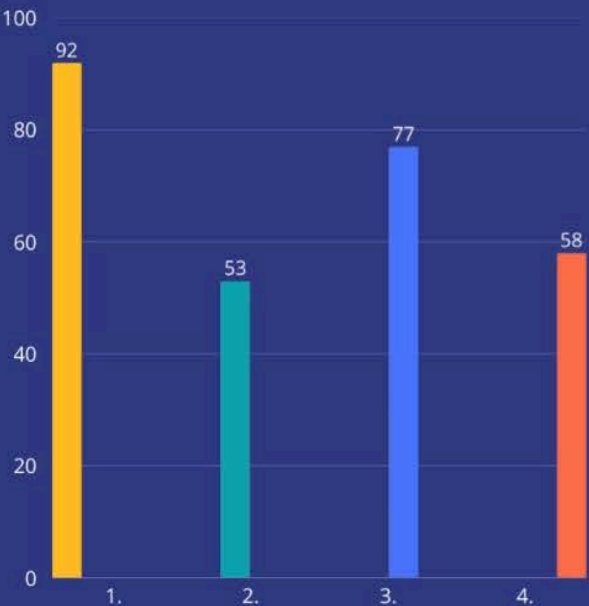
Peoples Stigma Free Network

Bringing people together to end mental health stigma and discrimination across Lanarkshire.



Statistics

- **92%** of participants say that they have experienced stigma in relationships with family and friends in the last year.
- **53%** said they respected themselves less because they will not recover or get better.
- **77%** said they had been treated unfairly at work.
- Of those who had faced stigma in mental healthcare services, **58%** had avoided calling an ambulance or attending A&E in relation for emergency mental healthcare.



The Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study - See Me

Session Highlights: Opening Reflections

Following the introductory video, facilitators invited members to reflect on the language and emotions associated with mental health stigma through a short group exercise. People with lived experience, staff from H&SC, Third Sector and Local Authorities came together to prevent and challenge stigma. When we asked them what being stigma free means to them, they said:



A word cloud of responses to the question 'what being stigma free means to them'. The words are arranged in a circular pattern around a central point. The most prominent words are 'understanding', 'valued', 'included', and 'supported'. Other words include 'free from judgement', 'able to communicate', 'informed', 'not judged', 'accepted', 'safety', 'equality', 'no shame', 'human rights', 'positive', 'being who you are', 'encouraged', 'understood', 'sharing lived experience', 'without judgement', 'compassion', 'inclusive', 'able to contribute', 'caring about others', 'open minded', 'open conversations', 'worthy', 'liberating', 'feeling appreciated', 'opportunities', and 'everyone counts'.

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Network's My Action Plan Booklet

A booklet was created to support members in reflecting, identifying, planning, and reviewing action.

Why I care?

💬 What makes this important to me?

💡 What do I want to see change in my community?

1



My Starting Point

Before I begin, I want to check in with myself. These questions help me notice how I feel about taking action right now. I can come back later and see if anything's changed.

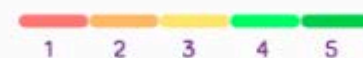
Please circle how much you agree with the following:

1 = Strongly Disagree 5 = Strongly Agree

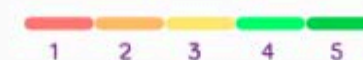
• I feel confident talking about mental health with others.



• I believe I can help reduce stigma.



• I know where to find support or resources.



1

My First Action

🎯 I want to...

📅 When might I do this?

1

My First Action

📍 Where will I do this (e.g., workplace, community, home)?

👤 Who might I involve or ask for support?

🚨 Need help?

(Scan the QR code to explore examples from others in the network)



1

Spotlight Speakers

Two speakers were invited to share their experiences to bring the anti-stigma approach to life and remind us why it's so vital.

CHAMPION SPOTLIGHT – MARC HOWARD, HEALTH IMPROVEMENT SENIOR (NHS LANARKSHIRE)

Marc Howard, a Stigma Free Lanarkshire Champion and longstanding PSFN member, delivered an inspiring presentation highlighting the practical actions he has taken to challenge stigma and promote stigma-free practice.

His presentation demonstrated how connections first made within the Network can translate into real-world impact—from embedding intersectional perspectives in training to strengthening collaboration across local services. Together, these developments reflect the PSFN's growing influence as a catalyst for culture change across Lanarkshire.



LIVED EXPERIENCE SPOTLIGHT – THOMAS MCCALLUM

Thomas McCallum, a Stigma Free Lanarkshire volunteer, singer songwriter, and mental-health advocate, shared a deeply moving account of his personal journey with stigma and self-acceptance. Diagnosed in 2017 with young-onset Parkinson's disease, Thomas spoke candidly about the emotional impact of stigma, describing how internalised shame can transform into purpose when people find understanding, connection, and support. His story illustrated the human side of stigma, reminding participants that visibility and openness can inspire others to seek help and realise they are not alone.

Members described Thomas's talk as "moving" and "inspiring", noting how his openness and authenticity created a space for empathy and reflection.



Understanding Stigma Q&A

Using interactive Mentimeter polls, members explored five forms of stigma—public, self, associative, structural, and intersectional—through short real-life scenarios. Each example prompted discussion on how stigma is experienced and sustained across families, workplaces, services, and communities. These scenarios were thought-provoking, and the discussions that followed facilitated reflection, sparking thoughts of action.

Figure 3. Participant responses to Scenario 1: Identifying Self-Stigma.

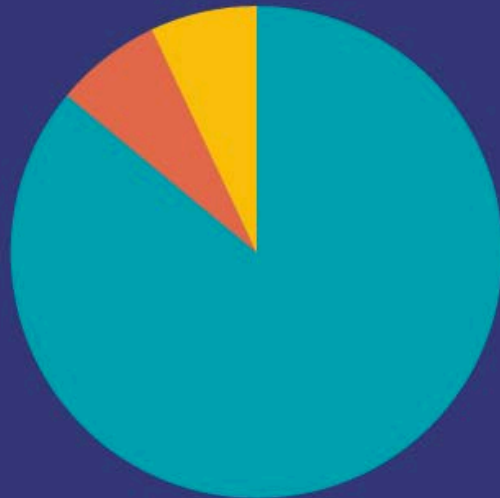
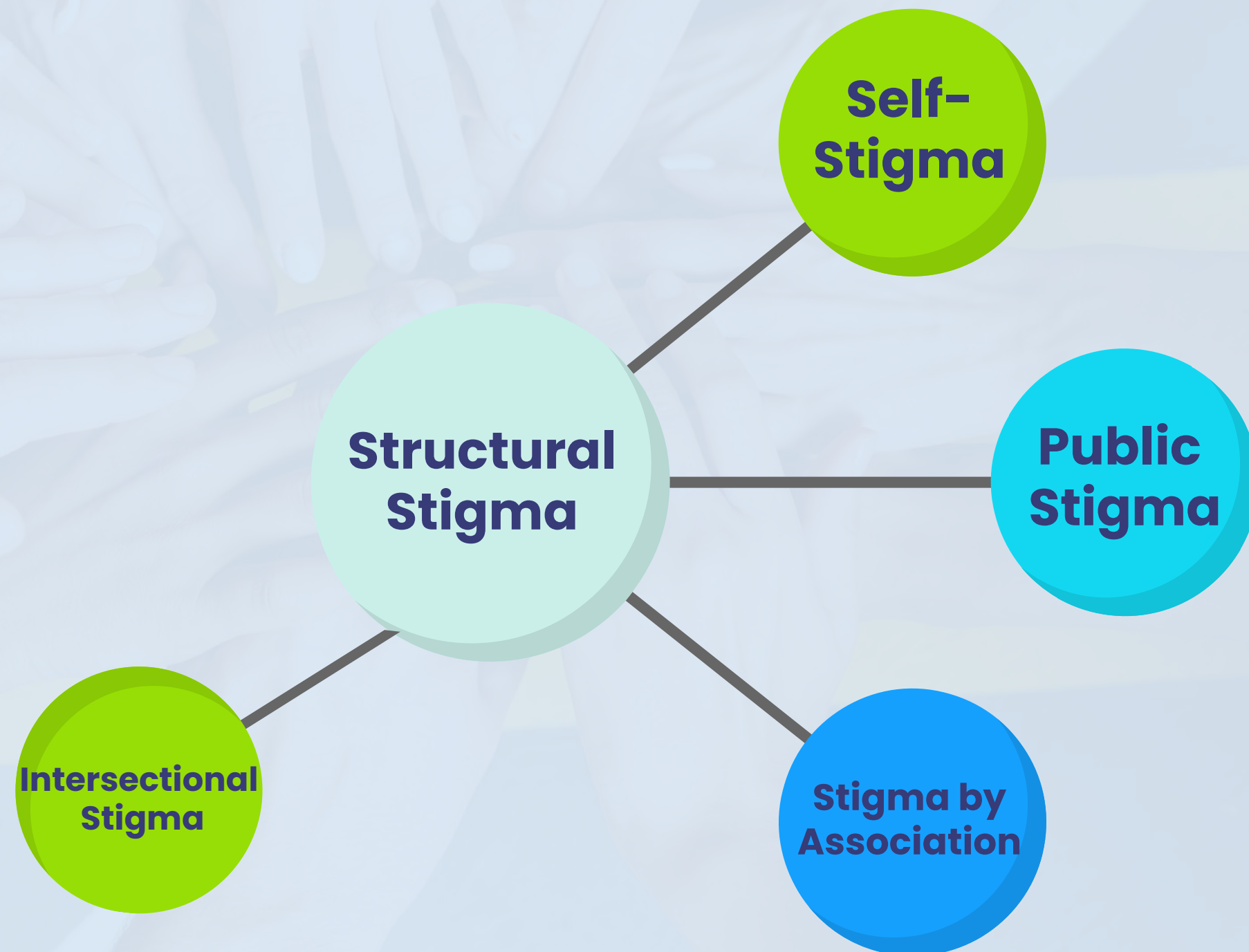
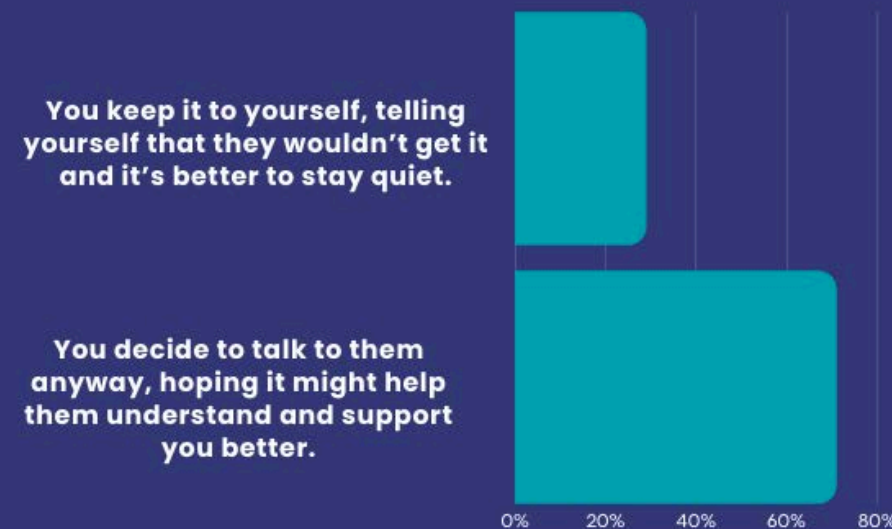


Figure 4. Participant responses to Scenario 1: Likelihood of speaking to family despite fear of judgement.



Networking

NETWORKING

The session concluded with informal networking following the group action-planning activity, giving members space to share updates on their own anti-stigma initiatives and explore opportunities for collaboration. Survey feedback showed that this was one of the most valued parts of the session. All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had made a useful new connection

Open-text responses highlighted plans to collaborate across local mental-health and carers' organisations, co-deliver stigma-awareness training, and support peers to take on facilitation roles. Others spoke about building relationships with lived experience members and Health Improvement teams, demonstrating how PSFN continues to spark practical, cross-sector collaboration.

This networking space reinforced the Network's identity as a living, evolving community of practice where shared learning and relationships translate into action across Lanarkshire



Evaluation

Evaluation Framework

01 Awareness

02 Confidence

03 Inclusion

04 Motivation to Act

05 Empowerment

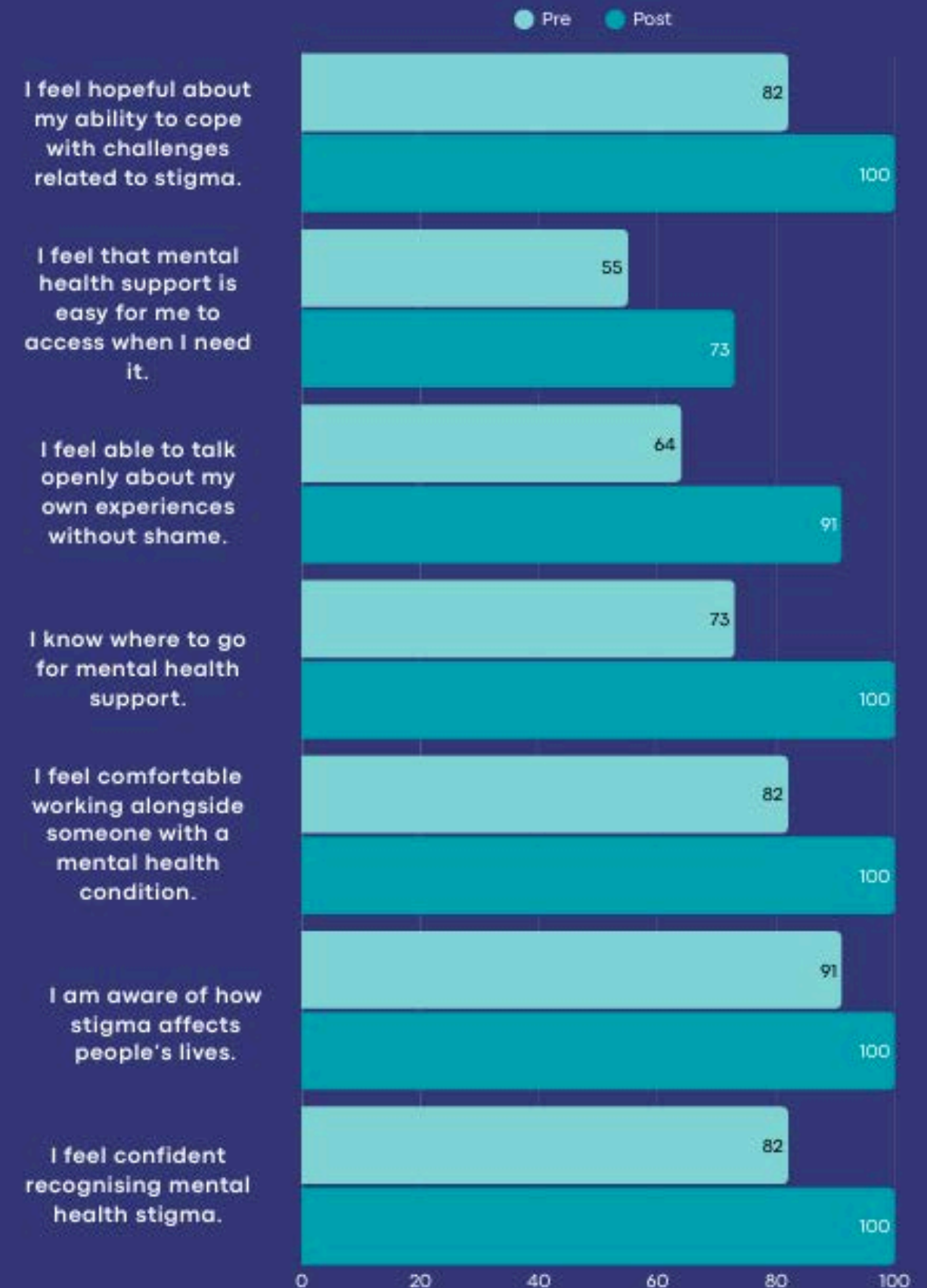
The PSFN evaluation framework is closely aligned with Stigma Free Lanarkshire's campaign aims and national mental-health strategies, including [Good Mental Health for All](#) and the [Lanarkshire Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#). Each emphasises prevention, inclusion, equity, and community empowerment to take collective action against stigma.

Pre- and post-event surveys measured participants' awareness, confidence, motivation to act, and sense of inclusion within the Network. These domains reflect national and local strategic priorities (see [Table 1](#)).

The framework also draws on insights from the [Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study](#) (See Me Scotland & Mental Health Foundation, 2022) and the [Self-Stigma of Mental Illness Scale – Short Form](#) (Corrigan et al., 2012). Items such as *"I feel able to talk openly about my own experiences without shame"* and *"I feel confident to challenge stigma when I see it"* capture constructs of self-stigma, disclosure, and empowerment (Corrigan & Rao, 2012).

By integrating strategic goals with validated stigma-reduction models, the PSFN evaluation framework ensures both local relevance and theoretical rigour, strengthening its contribution to Scotland's wider evidence base on awareness, empowerment, and inclusion.

Figure 16. Percentage of participants reporting positive attitudes before and after the session.



Conclusion & Next Steps

The September 2025 PSFN meeting marked another strong step in building a compassionate, inclusive, and action-focused network across Lanarkshire. Members moved beyond awareness into tangible practice—planning stigma-free initiatives in their workplaces, communities, and local services. Feedback evaluation showed clear growth in confidence, motivation, and openness to talk about mental health, alongside a deepened sense of belonging within the Network.

Participants described feeling heard, valued, and inspired to collaborate, reinforcing PSFN's evolution into a sustainable community of practice where learning translates into real-world change.



Looking ahead, future sessions will:

- Refine activities by clarifying key concepts such as the different forms of stigma;
- Broaden inclusivity by incorporating more diverse cultural and lived-experience perspectives;
- Strengthen follow-up through the My Action Plan booklet and opportunities for peer reflection between meetings; and
- Continue using pre/post-event evaluation to track progress and adapt to member feedback.

Through these next steps, PSFN will continue to grow as a shared movement, connecting people, stories, and actions that challenge stigma and create lasting impact across Lanarkshire.



**Stigma Free
Lanarkshire**