

People's Stigma Free Network



Stigma Free
Lanarkshire

**SUMMARY
REPORT**

**SEPTEMBER
2026**



Table of Contents

01

Introduction

02

Session Overview

03

Guest Speaker

04

Interactive Learning

05

Networking

06

Quantitative Findings

07

Qualitative Insights & Themes

08

Areas for
Improvement &
Future Directions

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 previous PSFN sessions this summary report shares key learning from the September 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 third PSFN session of 2026 on 1st September, bringing together **22** members, including **10** 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 North Lanarkshire Carers Together

Members heard from North Lanarkshire Carers Together (NLCT), who shared reflections on the stigma carers can face and how this can affect their experiences of seeking and accessing support. This was followed by an interactive Q&A and discussion with attendees.

Interactive Pathway to a Stigma Free Lanarkshire

Members then took part in a facilitated group activity, reflecting on how stigma has shown up in their own experiences, how they responded and what they had learned. These reflections contributed to a shared 'Wall of Wisdom', capturing learning, advice and ideas to help inform the wider journey towards a Stigma Free Lanarkshire.

Guest Speaker:

North Lanarkshire Carers Together

The session opened with a talk from North Lanarkshire Carers Together (NLCT), a service created by carers to provide information, advice and support. Shazia, Equality Worker, explored how carers can experience overlapping forms of stigma that make it harder to recognise their role, seek help or feel understood by services.

Shazia described NLCT's approach: listen without assumptions, ask what matters to each person and work with others to challenge barriers. Their Carer Aware workshops help carers and professionals understand carers' rights and the impact caring can have on mental health, beginning with a simple question: "How are you?"

Karen's story, previously shared at PSFN, showed the value of bringing lived experience into this work. NLCT now use her story in training to help people reflect on stigma and how services can respond differently. Their wider partnership work has also helped inform NHS Lanarkshire's new Family and Carer Standards, showing how shared learning can influence practice beyond the network.





Interactive Learning

Members worked together to create a pathway towards a stigma-free Lanarkshire, drawing on their own experiences.

First, they identified where stigma appears in everyday life, including mental health, substance use, disability, caring responsibilities, workplaces and the language used in services. They then discussed how they had responded. Some described feeling afraid, embarrassed or unsure whether it was safe to challenge stigma; others found that asking questions, sharing experiences and seeking support helped open conversations.

These reflections became a shared Wall of Wisdom. Members highlighted the value of listening, challenging stigma respectfully, questioning assumptions, using inclusive language and acting with compassion.

The activity ended with a Mentimeter question about how PSFN could move forward. Collaboration emerged as a strong theme: members recognised that staying connected, sharing what they learn and acting together can help carry this work into their communities.

Wall of Wisdom

- * Have a conversation that involves Really Really listening!
- * Be confident to speak out against stigma & discrimination^①
- * Creating allies to address stigma collectively.
- * Raising awareness that some disabilities aren't always visible.
- * Stigma & discrimination sometimes comes from the places we least expect!

Challenging
language
- respectfully
- right place
- right time

stop +
reflect
on language

non-stigma
language
- positive
adaptions

kindness
+ compassion
empathy

① comes from practice

Wall of Wisdom

- Calling it out
- Educating people
- Lived experience/Social Stories
- Peer Support groups
- encourage attending stigma free events.
- Uncomfortable to call it out but feel better
- Educating yourself
- Working on our own unconscious bias
- Looking at the larger Picture Stigma
↑
break the cycle
- Changing Language



Don't give up

Being listened too helps

Having phrases to say in a situation
to diffuse/calm and show you
have shared a difference of opinion

What is one key message you think everyone should take away?

18 / 18

19

Language is crucial

It is important to listen without judgement.

Don't be afraid to educate people around you and encourage them to educate themselves/attend stigma free events!

Bw pro active on stigma

address stigma, create awareness and provide training for support

Reflecting on language, actions and recognising improving them in the future.

Don't stop sharing the message

Be more tolerant of others

Not making assumptions, working collaboratively is really important. The fact power of lived experience.

Every person is a unique individual with different needs and as a carer they are knowledgeable. The key message I would say is to listen. Actually listen to details.

Have a conversation and talk to one another and communicate in order to stop assumptions and stop judging

If you feel something is wrong, don't brush past it call it out

Be confident to call someone out (although i recognisr that can be challenging),thats where raising awareness and training is so important

Informing and educating yourself in order to be able to feel confident calling in out when it arises in the community

Carers - experience multiple areas of stigma and discrimination in their lives and we all have a duty to ensure that this is called out and that carers are supported and listened to.

Not making assumptions, collaborative working is so important. The power of lived experience.

Understand the cycle of stigma from the past, how it affected many, what were the costs for those that suffered from the stigma and the fight to break the wheel and what can be done differently

ignorance can mask fear and we can open conversations up to effectively challenge stigma.

Getting message about what we can do to change things by understand how they feel

Networking

There was a strong sense of connection throughout the session, with plenty of conversation as members mingled, shared experiences and explored opportunities to work together.

This was reflected strongly in the evaluation. Of the **20** members who responded to the statement “I made at least one meaningful new connection today”, the average rating was 4.75 out of 5, with **95%** agreeing or strongly agreeing and **80%** selecting strongly agree. Several attendees also expressed an interest in staying involved, continuing to attend, sharing opportunities and developing further links and collaborations.

Together, this suggests the PSFN is fulfilling an important part of its purpose: creating a space where people working across different sectors and communities can connect, build relationships and identify opportunities to collaborate on reducing mental health stigma.

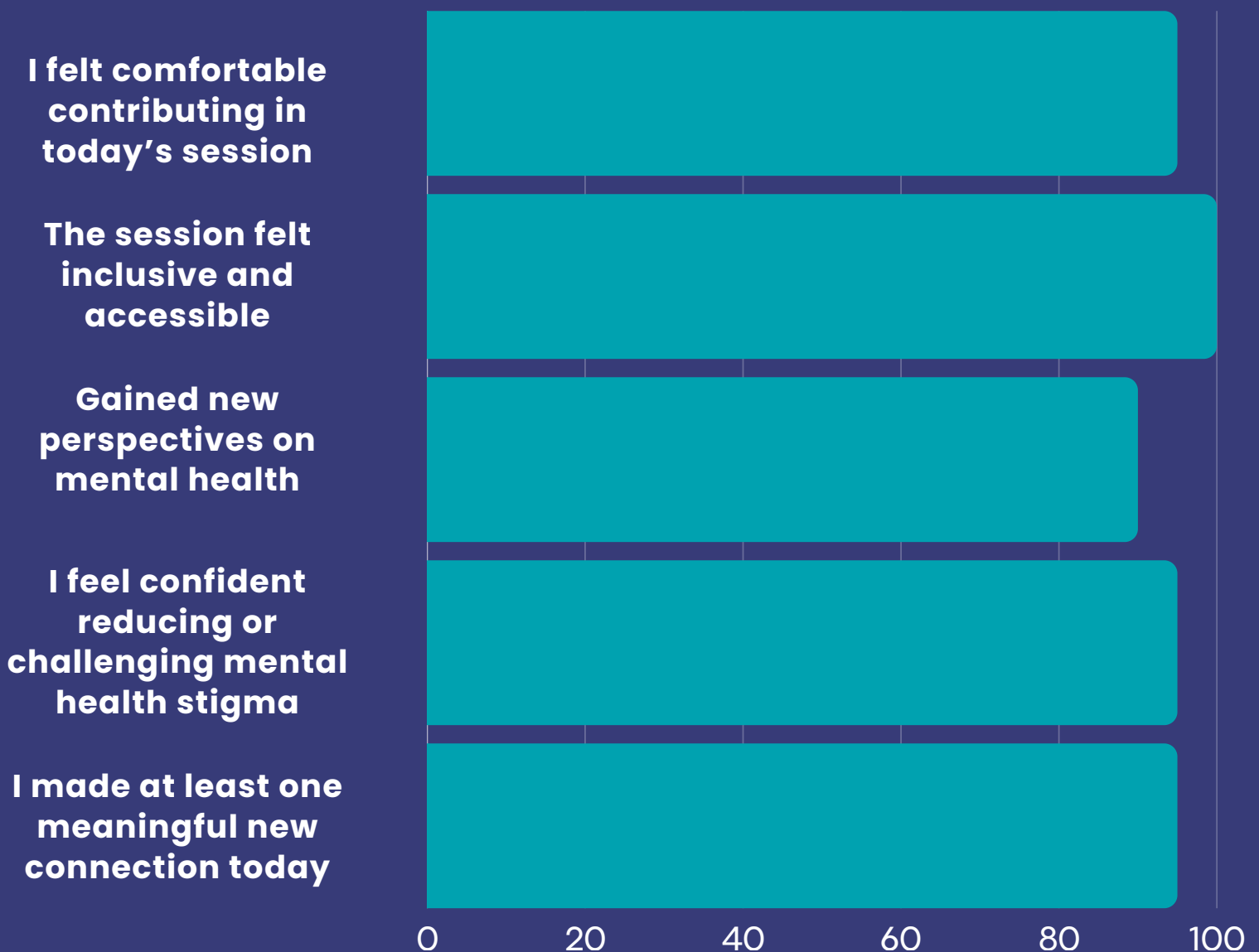


Quantitative Findings

Based on 20 post-session responses, ratings were high across all five indicators, with at least **90%** of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with each statement. Four indicators scored **95%** or above, including a **100%** rating for the session feeling culturally inclusive and accessible. These results suggest that members had a positive experience of the September PSFN session

Figure 1. Post-session experience ratings

● % Agree/Strongly Agree





KEY LEARNING

The September session built on April's strong findings while placing greater emphasis on connection and collaboration. The North Lanarkshire Carers Together spotlight set this tone, and time was built into the session for members to talk, share experience and explore opportunities to work together. This was reflected in the evaluation: **80%** strongly agreed they had made a meaningful new connection, compared with **60%** in April.

Strong agreement that the session gave members new perspectives on mental health was lower than in April (**65%** compared with **80%**), although **90%** of September respondents agreed or strongly agreed. September's interactive activity included learning about stigma, but drew primarily on members' own experiences rather than a structured knowledge-building focus. This difference in session content may help explain the ratings, but the evaluations cannot confirm a cause.

A useful next step is to retain the time for networking while developing a clearer learning element, particularly to help new members build their understanding of mental health stigma.

***Note:**

The comparison should be read in light of the different response numbers: 10 in April and 20 in September.



Qualitative Insights & Themes

Several consistent themes emerged from member reflections.

Connection and collaboration

Members highlighted the value of meeting people from other organisations and finding opportunities to work together. One response described cross-organisation connections as important for spreading the message and developing joint work.

Learning about carers' experiences

The spotlight on unpaid carers stood out in written feedback. Members mentioned learning how carers can face stigma and wanted to carry that understanding into their own work.

Shared experience and knowledge

Responses valued hearing different viewpoints, recognising experiences shared by others, and seeing the range of knowledge and community work represented in the room.

Practical conversations about stigma

Members pointed to the importance of everyday conversations and opportunities to share experiences. Suggestions included more activities, guest organisations and training information that members could take back to their networks.



Areas for Improvement & Future Directions

Member feedback offered several possible topics for future sessions, including cultural, disability and substance use stigma, and the history of stigma and discrimination. Members also suggested hearing from more organisations, sharing training opportunities and continuing group activities. One respondent asked for information on alternative therapies for unpaid carers. These were individual suggestions, so further discussion with members could help identify which topics to prioritise.

The September activity produced a Wall of Wisdom shaped by members' experiences. A next step would be to share its messages across the network and invite members to reflect on how they have used them in conversations, services or community work. This would help carry the learning beyond the session and bring practical examples back to PSFN.

Future planning can also build on the interest members expressed in contributing. This includes following up offers to volunteer, become an SFL Champion or give a spotlight, and creating space for organisations to share their work and training. Alongside these contributions, sessions could include focused learning on recognising and challenging stigma, with opportunities for newer members to take part.

Questions? Contact us.

lanarkshirelinks.org.uk/stigma-free-lanarkshire
sfl@lanarkshirelinks.org.uk



**Stigma Free
Lanarkshire**