

Lanarkshire Links

AGM Members Meeting Report

9th of September 2026

Alona Hotel



**Lanarkshire
Links**

Service User and Carer
Involvement in Mental Health

Table of Contents

Background to Lanarkshire Links	03
Introduction	04
Agenda	04
Business of AGM - Alexander Sloane Accountants	05
South Lanarkshire's Community Planning Partnership	08
Lanarkshire Deaf Hub	10
Spotlight Shotts	13
Members experiences of NHS Health and Social Care	16
Executive Summary	17
Key Highlights	17



Lanarkshire Links is the commissioned engagement and participation organisation for mental health services across Lanarkshire. The key focus of the organisation is to encourage and support service users of mental health and social care services, their carers and families to be involved in and influence all aspects of the development and delivery of services relevant to them.

NHS Boards and Integration Joint Boards have a statutory duty to involve people in the planning and development of services, and in the decision-making process; the people who know best about what works are those people who use mental health services and those who care for them.

Changing the relationship between providers and users of services from one of consultation and participation to one of co-production should logically result in better services and improved delivery. What has been achieved so far is a firm foundation for change, calling for further major changes in culture. Increasing opportunities for mental health staff and services users and carers to work and train together would be essential to achieving this.

The underpinning vision of the organisation is:

'Our vision is to support, encourage and empower mental health service users and their carers to have their voice heard in the development and delivery of fit for purpose mental health and social care services throughout Lanarkshire'

Incorporating the opinions of mental health service users in the development of services is essential for creating more effective and responsive care systems. Service users are the ones directly affected by mental health services, and their lived experiences provide invaluable insights into what works and what doesn't. Their feedback can highlight gaps in care, areas of improvement, and potential barriers that may be overlooked by healthcare professionals.

Involving service users ensures that mental health services are not just clinically sound, but also person-centred, catering to the unique needs of individuals. By actively listening to their experiences, mental health services can adapt to the diverse and evolving needs of users, from improving accessibility to ensuring cultural sensitivity and addressing specific vulnerabilities.

Involving service users fosters empowerment and recovery. When individuals feel heard and valued, it strengthens their sense of autonomy and agency in their mental health journey. It also helps reduce stigma, as service users become more involved in the decision-making process, encouraging greater openness in discussing mental health issues.

Ultimately, integrating service user perspectives leads to a more compassionate, effective, and equitable mental health system that is truly responsive to the needs of those it aims to support.



Introduction

On the 9th of September 2026, Lanarkshire Links hosted its AGM Members Meeting, an event driven by the essential need to bring together people with lived experience to share their invaluable insights alongside a committed community of carers, staff, and partnership organisations. An incredible 130 people attended this event, demonstrating a deep and ongoing commitment to shaping the mental health and social care landscape across North and South Lanarkshire.

We would like to give special thanks to our presenters; **Allison Devine**; of Alexander Sloane Accountants, **Heather Robertson** and **Cheryl Burnett**; South Lanarkshire's Community Planning Partnership, **Cheryl Devlin** and **Nicola Boyle**; Lanarkshire Deaf Hub, **Mark Traynor**; alongside the members from Spotlight Shotts.

We deeply appreciate **Councillor Martin McCulloch** (Convenor of Adult Care & Social Work Committee) and **Councillor Allan Falconer** for their continued attendance, which bridges the gap between everyday lived experiences and influential decision making.

Following the meeting, 94 evaluation forms were completed and returned, providing a robust and representative voice from our community.

Our AGM highlighted just how deeply our members value having a platform where their voices are truly heard. This reinforces our true purpose: Lanarkshire Links is far more than a third sector charity, but we are the vital bridge connecting statutory services with the real experts. By harnessing the power and influence of mental health service users and their carers, we ensure their invaluable lived experience directly shapes, challenges, and improves local care, making our community an indispensable asset to our health partners.

This report provides an analysis of the feedback received, that explores members' perceptions of the guest speakers, the thematic discussions, and the overarching impact of Lanarkshire Links.



Agenda



PROGRAMME	 Lanarkshire Links Service User and Carer Involvement in Mental Health
	AGM MEMBERS MEETING
	Location: Alona Hotel, Strathclyde Country Park Date: 9 th of September 2026 Time: 10am registration - tea & coffee
	Members register, network with stall holders and enjoy a morning tea or coffee
	10.30am: Lorraine Swan - Welcome and Domestic arrangements
	10.35am: Allison Devine - Alexander Sloan Accountants providing Annual Report and Financial Statements • Approval of Annual Report & Financial Statements • Appointment of Alexander Sloan as Accountants 2026 - 2027 • Appointment of Stewart Gilmour & Co as Independent Examiners • Minutes of the previous AGM held on 10th September 2025 • Nominations to the Management Committee
	11.00am: South Lanarkshire's Community Planning Partnership
	11.30am: Comfort break
	11.40am: Cheryl Devlin - Lanarkshire Deaf Hub
	12.05pm: Spotlight Shotts - performance
	12.30pm: Lunch



Summary of Presentation: Allison Devine of Alexander Sloane Accountants and Lorraine Swan of Lanarkshire Links



Allison Devine of Alexander Sloan Accountants presented the financial statements from the Annual Report. She confirmed that Lanarkshire Links remains in a sound financial position, with healthy reserves in place to support future activities. Allison noted that the full financial statements will be a public record, and they get filed with both Companies House and with OSCR, who are the charity regulator in Scotland. The AGM considered the financial statements for Lanarkshire Links for the last financial year up until the 31st of March 2026.

For year ending 31st March 2026, Allison reported on the finance. The minimal deficit of just under £9,000 was offset from the charity reserve. The deficit is mainly due to the core funding that came in, which albeit very, very welcome, did not cover all of the costs that had to be met during the year; this is due to changes to changes to National Insurance which increased staff costs overall, as well as general inflationary increases.

Despite this Lanarkshire Links has a stable base for the organisation's future work. Members noted that the overall financial outlook for the organisation continues to be positive. It was noted that the Annual Report and Accounts have been prepared in line with OSCR requirements and provide assurance that the charity remains on a sound financial and governance footing.

Following on from Allison's presentation of the accounts the members approved the accounts which will be available on the Lanarkshire Links website.

Following the financial report, Lorraine Swan, Development Manager, proposed the reappointment of Alexander Sloan as the charity's accountants for the forthcoming year. This appointment was formally approved by the members. Following the approval Lorraine then proposed the reappointment of Stewart Gilmore & Co as Independent Examiners, which was likewise approved.



Presentations

Lorraine Swan presented the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting, held on 10th of September 2025, and they were approved by the members without amendment.

Finally, nominations for the Management Committee were received, and the existing committee members were reappointed with the approval of the membership.

The following office bearers were appointed: Cora Cowan to continue on as the Chair, John Pursley to be the Vice Chair, May Burns to continue as our Treasurer, and Donna McAllister as Secretary.

Nominations and seconders were received for the following trustees: Tommy Murphy, Carris Marshall, Helen Strachan, Leslie Tomney, Jacqui Fulton, Adi Kamalov, Elizabeth Bole, Ghena Saklouj, and Noureen Iqbal.

The board was duly elected for the upcoming financial year and the business element of the AGM was closed and the Trustees were thanked for their commitment and dedication to Lanarkshire Links.

A special mention was presented to the members regarding one of our own members Carol Wallace.

Carol was nominated and won the Community and Volunteer Provost Award, for her volunteering and fundraising that she has carried out for The Beatson.





Feedback

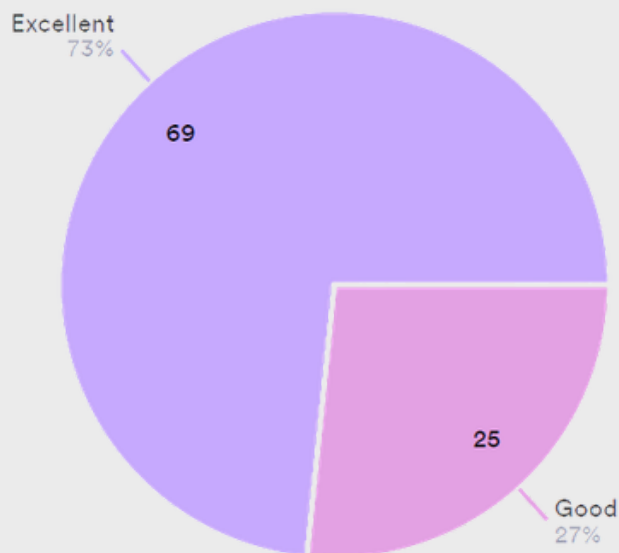
Feedback from Lanarkshire Links Members:

At the end of the morning, our members were asked

'Overall, how would you rate today's meeting?'

The quantitative data gained from this question determined that an outstanding 100% of the members found our AGM to be either excellent or good.

Considering that we received 94 evaluations returned, as a team we are overwhelmed by the support of our members as this indicates that our meeting has resonated with our members.



This outstanding feedback underscores that the topics that were presented, from challenging systemic barriers with Lanarkshire Deaf Hub to demanding public accountability through the Community Planning Partnership, all struck a chord with the realities our members face every day. It reflects an engaged membership who want to engage with our statutory partners and they clearly appreciate Lanarkshire Links acting as the conduit for this.

When our members were asked what worked well and what could have been improved, their responses provided a really important insight into the impact of our Members Meetings. The feedback highlighted our members appreciation for the welcoming, inclusive environment that allows them to connect, network at the information stalls, and form meaningful friendships. Many attendees praised our presenters. Members expressed gratitude for the provision of printed slides, which significantly aided their understanding of the meeting's content. The resilience and professionalism of the Lanarkshire Links team were also widely noted, particularly in their calm, competent handling of the unexpected fire alarm and technical microphone issues.

However, authentic engagement means listening just as closely to where we can improve to ensure every voice is accommodated. Members provided constructive feedback regarding the venue's accessibility, pointing out a lack of ramps at the fire exits. Catering shortfalls, such as running out of coffee early in the morning and the absence of decaf tea, were also highlighted. All of which we have acknowledged or taken on board, and will discuss with the Alona Hotel.



The comments we received from our members is what drives Lanarkshire Links to continuing empowering service users and carers, so in the words of our members:

- *'Always friendly welcoming, everyone feels valued. Staff always go the extra mile and always arrange relevant talks on services that we all use and need.'*
- *'Always an excellent friendly service good to see younger members involvement and all working together I think that there is always work to be done regarding stigma and we all need to be involved as a community to make a difference.'*
- *'Excellent! Overall the most beneficial attendance I have been too.'*



Summary of Presentation: Heather Robertson and Cheryl Burnett from South Lanarkshire's Community Planning Partnership



Lanarkshire Links were delighted to welcome Heather Robertson, Community Planning Partnership Officer at South Lanarkshire Council, and Cheryl Burnett, Volunteer Chair across the four localities in South Lanarkshire, who delivered a passionate and empowering presentation. Their session resonated deeply with the core ethos of Lanarkshire Links, which places authentic engagement and participation at the heart of local decision making.

Heather provided a clear overview of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP). The CPP is funded by key statutory partners, including the Council, NHS, and Health and Social Care Partnership. The CPP is a unique platform designed to take grassroots issues straight to the very top decision makers as Heather sits and reports each localities views directly to council leaders and the Chief Executive. Heather shared that the CPP cuts out the 'middleman' to advise on strategic priorities based on what the public actually needs.

Heather noted that the local CPP meetings provide a crucial, accessible space for community members, who may feel unheard in traditional meetings. This ensures that everyday inequalities experienced by localities such as, transport, local infrastructure, and mental health provision are placed firmly on the agenda. Ultimately, the CPP is about driving accountability; it takes community concerns directly to leadership to challenge services, encouraging them to take ownership of systemic gaps and reshape local policies so they genuinely work for the people living in South Lanarkshire.

Heather explained that as a direct response to those who attend the CPP meetings they have moved their locality meetings to an eight weekly cycle; as the community's across South Lanarkshire wanted faster responses, rather than waiting for the previous quarterly board cycles.

Cheryl's contribution powerfully highlighted the power of lived experience. Speaking with remarkable passion, she shared the realities of navigating neighbourhood planning across areas facing extreme inequalities. Cheryl shared her hard-won battle to elevate the community's voice from a mere 'tick box' exercise, previously hidden on page 292 of board papers, to securing the first twenty minutes of every board meeting. The CPP does not provide the Board with 'corporate reports' but hands unedited minutes directly to the Chief Executive, Cheryl shared that she ensures that the raw, lived experience of the community gets complete accountability and swift action from our statutory partners.

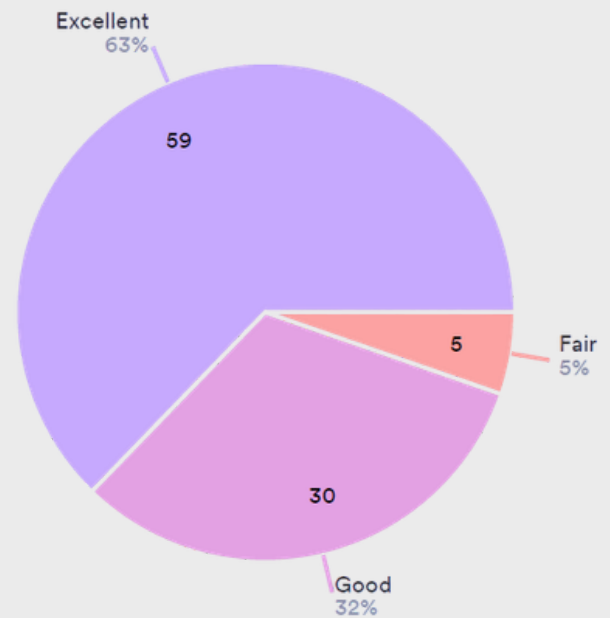


Feedback

Feedback from Lanarkshire Links Members:

At the end of the morning, our members were asked **'How informative did you find the speakers from South Lanarkshire's Community Planning Partnership?'**

The quantitative data gained from this question determined that an impressive 95% of the members found Heather and Cheryl's presentation on South Lanarkshire's Community Planning Partnership to be either excellent or good. Indicating that it was extremely well received by our members.



When members were asked what worked well and what could have been improved regarding the guest speakers, their qualitative feedback provided a brilliant reflection of how valuable the Community Planning Partnership session was for them especially those South Lanarkshire residents.

The feedback highlighted that our members were incredibly engaged by the authentic and passionate delivery of both speakers. Many attendees noted that they had been completely unaware of this level of support or these neighbourhood structures beforehand, showing that the session actively broadened their understanding of the resources available to them. The presentation's impact also reached the local stakeholders in the room, with one SLC Councillor noting that the session successfully made them more aware of the service.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, our members also provided helpful and constructive feedback so we can ensure future sessions are as accessible as possible. Because the speakers specifically represented South Lanarkshire, a recurring piece of feedback was the clear desire to hear from their North Lanarkshire counterparts, or to at least have equivalent information for the North provided. Finally, some attendees felt that more detailed information on the slides would have helped them to fully digest the broad range of topics covered, and the microphone issues were flagged as a frustrating barrier to hearing the session.

The impact of the speakers on our members is best summarised in their own words:

- *'A lot of information encouraging success of community groups. Good quality speakers. Very confident. Gave a lot. Hope for change'*
- *'Loved the 'no filter' lady. She seemed to be head strong and looking for accountability'*
- *'Great to hear from someone who speaks from the heart I thoroughly enjoyed it'*





Summary of Presentation: Cheryl Devlin and Nicola Boyle from Lanarkshire Deaf Hub



Lanarkshire Links was delighted to welcome Nicola Boyle, Project Officer and Team Leader, alongside Cheryl Devlin, Project Worker, from the Lanarkshire Deaf Hub. They provided our members with an extremely powerful and passionate presentation detailing the work their organisation carries out. Operating since 2003, Lanarkshire Deaf Hub is the first and only deaf-led deaf charity supporting individuals with hearing loss and deafness across Lanarkshire.

Nicola and Cheryl shared that their core strengths are built on four pillars: Connect, Communicate, Collaborate, and Care. The primary aim of the Deaf Hub is to break down the barriers that deaf people face in their daily lives; in education, employment, healthcare, and especially in mental health. They highlighted that these barriers often come from language and communication gaps, systemic exclusion, limited awareness, and widespread accessibility issues.

A central and key focus of their presentation was the intersection of deafness and mental health. They shared a stark reality with our members that deaf people are up to four times as likely to experience mental health challenges. This risk is driven by factors such as loneliness, social isolation, and ongoing communication barriers. However, importantly Nicola and Cheryl emphasised a message of hope, that with the right accessible supports in place, these challenges can be reduced and prevented.

To contextualise the scale of the need, the presentation featured powerful statistics regarding the local community. Our members were informed that Lanarkshire is home to the third-largest deaf and British Sign Language (BSL) communities in Scotland. Across North and South Lanarkshire, there are 13,061 people who use BSL, and over 42,000 deaf individuals living within the region.



Presentations

To support this significant population, Lanarkshire Deaf Hub provide independent advocacy and as they are entirely independent, they are uniquely positioned to challenge statutory decisions on behalf of the people they support. Their advocacy involves empowering individuals to explore their options, attending appointments and meetings to ensure the right questions are asked, and guiding people through complex paperwork to maximise their income.

A deeply impactful element of their presentation was Cheryl and Nicola sharing their own personal journeys of navigating the system as deaf individuals. From their early educational experiences through to employment and the everyday realities of parenting, their stories resonated deeply with the room. The feedback from our members powerfully highlighted the sheer impact of sharing our lived experience. It is precisely this kind of authentic storytelling that breaks down barriers, challenges systemic assumptions, and directly leads to tangible changes in practice. Lanarkshire Links acknowledge that when individuals are empowered to voice their lived realities, they become the catalyst for shaping and improving the health and social care landscape.

Concluding their presentation, the Deaf Hub team outlined how they can collaborate with and support other services. As the only deaf charity in the region supporting individuals of all ages, they offer accessibility and inclusion training, information, advice, and guidance consultancy, all aimed at improving deaf people's health and wellbeing across the board.

Reflecting on the Lanarkshire Deaf Hub's presentation, it is clear how important the peer-led, third-sector support is. By fostering connection, facilitating independent advocacy, and addressing systemic exclusion head on, organisations like the Deaf Hub provide the preventative care that keeps people well. Their work illustrates the need for bespoke, lived-experience led services in alleviating the mounting pressures on our statutory health and social care systems.



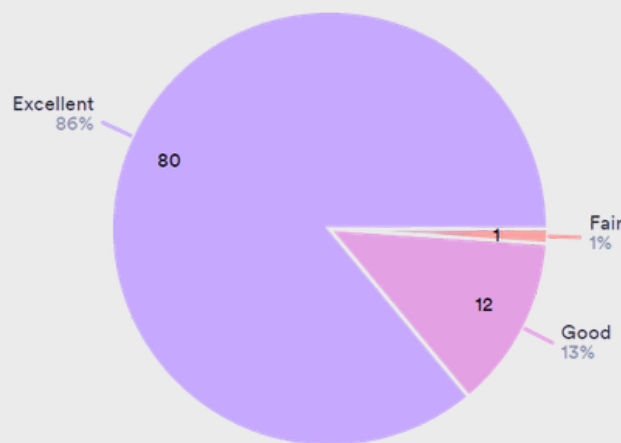


Feedback

Feedback from Lanarkshire Links Members:

At the end of the morning, our members were asked **'How informative did you find the speakers from Lanarkshire Deaf Hub?'**

The quantitative data gained from this question determined that an impressive 99% of the members found the presentation from Lanarkshire Deaf Hub to be excellent or good.



When our members were asked to reflect on the presentation delivered by the Lanarkshire Deaf Hub, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive and moving. Members highlighted just how eye opening it was to hear Cheryl and Nicola share their authentic, live experiences of navigating a hearing world. The session highlighted the reality of systemic barriers, stigma, and the profound isolation faced by the deaf community to the forefront of our minds. Members noted that hearing these personal life stories and case studies not only raised their awareness of the unique, everyday challenges, especially the severe intersection with mental health, but also demonstrated the incredible impact of Lanarkshire Deaf Hub's dedicated advocacy services.

In terms of constructive feedback and actionable next steps, our members were motivated to learn how to be better supporters of the deaf community. Several members said that they would love to have information on where hearing people can learn British Sign Language (BSL), and suggested that teaching a few basic signs during the presentation would have been a fantastic addition.

Our members with their own hearing impairments bravely pointed out that many community meetings are still not entirely user friendly, reminding us all that there is always more work to be done regarding inclusive event planning and acoustic considerations.

The power of sharing lived experience and breaking down these societal barriers was perfectly highlighted in the words of our members:

- *'Discussing back stories and stigma faced was eye opening and informative'*
- *'Made me think of the isolation that the deaf community face and how we can be more inclusive of the deaf community'*
- *'A great service, good to know that we can reach out to them as before the speakers completed their talk I wouldn't have known where to go'*
- *'It is disappointing that the support for deaf people has not improved. Also that there is a shortage of translators. It was good to hear their different stories. Their advocacy services is having a good impact'*
- *'As hearing impaired (hearing aids) the amount of meetings I go to which are not user friendly'*
- *'It was good to learn about this group especially as someone with a hearing impairment. I will be looking to find out more about the support I could receive'*



Summary of Presentation: Lanarkshire Links Update



To close our annual AGM we had a performance delivered by members of a local organisation called Spotlight Shotts, who delivered a powerful project for its members which was funded by the Growth Pot fund, which is distributed in partnership with Lanarkshire Links, North Lanarkshire Disability Forum and Voice of Experience Forum. The aim of Spotlight Shotts project is to utilise the creative arts to promote good mental health for all. Through a series of spoken word performances and poetry, each individual demonstrated how storytelling can promote connection, challenge stigma, and offer a platform for lived experience.

The performance featured five deeply personal and impactful journeys that guided the audience through a variety of mental health journeys:

- The event opened with a powerful and moving reflection on selective mutism delivered by one of our own members Antje, exploring the profound sense of invisibility it creates and the isolation of feeling unseen, despite significant life achievements.
- The second speaker articulated the suffocating reality of living with mental ill health, using the metaphor of navigating a 'darkened room' with the walls closing in, yet demonstrating immense resilience in surviving everyday life.
- With our third speaker the tone then shifted to explore the intersection of grief and humour, with the speaker sharing a lighthearted, spiritual anecdote about her late mother, revealing how humour and levity can act as coping mechanisms for some.
- Margaret delivered her account of childhood bereavement, recalling the moment of her young brother passing and the lasting emotional weight of hearing her father cry for the first time.
- The performance concluded on an uplifting note, featuring a speaker who shared his journey through alcoholism and addiction. By focusing on his recovery, his published book, and finding the 'light at the end of the tunnel,' he provided a strong message of hope to close the event.

Organisations like Spotlight Shotts highlight the irreplaceable impact of third sector organisations within the wider health and social care landscape. By providing accessible, place based spaces for people to process trauma, build resilience, and find peer support, grassroots organisations are so important as early interventions. This proactive, human centred approach offers wellbeing spaces and social inclusion long before individuals reach a point of crisis, and plays a critical role in keeping people out of our overstretched statutory services and clinical pathways.

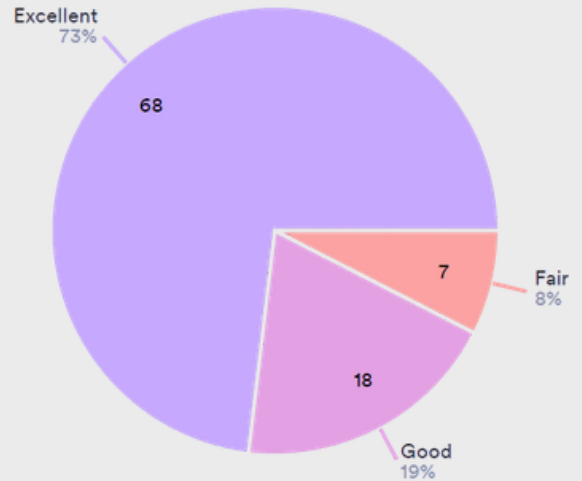


Feedback

Feedback from Lanarkshire Links Members:

At the end of the morning, our members were asked **'How informative did you find the performance from Spotlight Shotts?'**

The quantitative data gained from this question determined that a staggering 92% of the members found the presentation on the Lanarkshire Links to be excellent or good. This overwhelming approval demonstrates that our members deeply value creative, alternative methods of exploring mental health and lived experience.



When our members were asked to reflect on the performance by Spotlight Shotts, the qualitative feedback painted a picture of an incredibly moving, thought-provoking, and deeply human experience. The responses overwhelmingly highlighted the sheer bravery and honesty of the performers who took to the stage to share their personal journeys. Members noted that hearing these raw accounts, which touched on themes of addiction, bereavement, grief, and the realities of daily life with a disability, was both emotional and empowering. The performance served as a vital reminder of the diversity of mental health challenges and provided a strong sense of solidarity, reassuring many in the room that they are not alone. Members also shared their appreciation for the careful and trauma-informed handling of the session, specifically noting that the warnings provided prior to sensitive topics, alongside the availability of support staff, were excellent and necessary touches.

As an organisation committed to authentic engagement, we also listen closely to the constructive feedback. Because of the unfiltered nature of the storytelling, a few members found the content too sad or upsetting. From a practical standpoint, members suggested that a little more stage management would have been beneficial. Several members noted that while they loved the poetry and were inspired to share the group's details, they would have appreciated a clearer explanation of exactly what Spotlight Shotts does as an organisation and how people can join their services.

Ultimately, this session proved that creative expression is an innovative tool for recovery. The impact of giving lived experience a creative platform, is better captured in the direct words of our members:

'Blew me away everything just so resonates to me'

'Powerful - reminded of humanity of people. Loved the different types of people'

'Really hits home how debilitating mental health can be'

'It was an honour to listen to individuals stories. Thanks for sharing'

'We went on a journey with each and every one of the poets, very emotional, very powerful. Great talent'

'The stories had a real profound effect on me'





Members experiences of NHS Health & Social Care

As a core element of Lanarkshire Links' function is the engagement and participation of mental health service users and their carers with our statutory partners, our post meeting evaluations routinely invite members to share their recent experiences with NHS Lanarkshire and the Health and Social Care Partnerships. This is vital for us in identifying emerging themes, trends, and systemic gaps directly from the community so that we can either report on them or share them at the platforms that we sit on. While the number of responses we get to this question can vary, our recent AGM received 14 detailed responses regarding their recent service contact. This provides an authentic real life snapshot of current experiences and service delivery, offering senior leaders and stakeholders critical insights that can offer our statutory partners an indispensable tool to inform, shape, and enhance future service delivery.

To ensure that the voices of our Lanarkshire Links community inform practice, we asked our members: ***'Since our last Members Meeting, have you had any contact with Lanarkshire NHS Health and Social Care? If so, we'd love to hear about your experience, whether good or not so good, so we can share it with the right people.'***

The qualitative feedback gathered provides a vital, unfiltered snapshot of what is currently working effectively on the ground, alongside areas where vital improvements are needed to ensure consistent, seamless support for our service users and carers. As part of the Engagement and Participation Strategy, Lanarkshire Links relies upon these lived experiences to champion examples of good practice and constructively challenge our statutory partners to address these systemic gaps.

Highlighting Good Practice: The Impact of Person-Centred Care

At Lanarkshire Links we know that when services operate effectively and compassionately, the positive impact on a person's recovery and daily life is profound. Several members reported highly positive experiences characterised by prompt action and supportive staff. Key highlights include:

- **Exceptional Individual Care:** The transformative power of dedicated, frontline staff was perfectly illustrated by a member who commended Lynsey, a Mental Health Nurse at a Health Centre in East Kilbride. The member noted she was *'fantastic, knows her stuff, is easy to talk to, and very patient.'*
- **Effective Third-Sector & Statutory Partnerships:** Members highlighted the crucial role of integrated, multi-agency support. Distress Brief Interventions (DBI) were commended for being *'great again,'* whilst another member praised the dual support of statutory homecare alongside Penumbra, noting that this holistic combination directly empowers them to *'go out and pursue my interests.'*
- **Timely Access and Professionalism:** Several members reported prompt and efficient assistance, with one securing a same-day GP appointment, while others highlighted excellent experiences with Occupational Therapy services and previous, helpful NHS contacts.



Members experiences of NHS Health & Social Care

From the perspective of Lanarkshire Links, these positive accounts are highly encouraging. They factually demonstrate the immense value of dedicated frontline professionals and prove that when statutory and third-sector services collaborate effectively, the resulting person-centred care is genuinely transformative for our members.

Areas for Improvement: Systemic Gaps and Communication Breakdowns

However, achieving equitable care across the region requires us to address the current inconsistencies in service delivery. While the positive feedback demonstrates what is possible, our members' also highlighted critical gaps in communication, contingency planning, and initial access which has left vulnerable individuals and their carers feeling unsupported. It is our duty to use our platform to elevate these issues constructively, working alongside our statutory partners to review these systemic challenges and ensure that lived experience continues to drive necessary improvements:

- **Dangerous Breakdowns in Carer Communication:** A members' personal account highlighted a failing in communication between community, acute services and a carer of a person who uses mental health services. They shared that a Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) from the Older Adult Mental Health Team (OAMHT) failed to inform them that their severely mentally ill father had been sectioned. As result of this, the member did not know his whereabouts for two days, causing them to feel immense panic and fear for his life. In addition to this, ward 3 and the CPN reportedly blamed one another for this lack of communication. As part of the triangle of care, our carers must be consistently included as equal partners in care and never left in the dark during a crisis.
- **Contingency Planning and Continuity of Care:** Another member shared an experience regarding an occupational therapy outdoor group that had a number of cancellations and a several week pause as a result of weather and low numbers. Unfortunately, no interim support was offered during this period. This withdrawal of routine and plans caused a decline in the member's mental health, leading to a loss of self-care and hygiene. Even after expressing that they were struggling and merely '*masking in public*', describing themselves as being '*like a swan paddling frantically under the surface*,' they were signposted elsewhere and left to cope while waiting weeks for a psychologist. Services must recognise that pausing a group or intervention without adequate alternatives may ultimately trigger a crisis.
- **Primary Care and Social Work Access Barriers:** Whilst not solely related to Mental Health Services our members continue to face frustrating, systemic barriers at the very first point of contact. Feedback highlighted unacceptable waiting times for GP appointments, alongside '*very bad*' experiences with receptionists. Furthermore, a first time attendee noted how difficult it currently is to navigate and access initial support from South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership (SLHSCP) social work services.

These accounts demonstrate exactly why Lanarkshire Links exists. By taking lived experience directly to health and social care leaders, we ensure our members' voices drive accountability and meaningful service improvements across Lanarkshire.



Executive Summary

Overview:

The Lanarkshire Links AGM Members Meeting (9th of September 2026) brought together 130 attendees, including service users, carers, staff, NLC Senior Leaders, local Councillors and partner organisations. The meeting successfully reaffirmed Lanarkshire Links' commitment to empowering people with lived experience. Feedback from the evaluations noted a flawless 100% positive rating, reflecting an incredibly empowering AGM. If previous meetings highlighted community resilience, today powerfully underscored the necessity of requiring accountability. From challenging systemic exclusion to taking grassroots voices directly to top decision makers, the event proved that our members are not just passive recipients of care; they are an essential, driving force for change across Lanarkshire's health and social care landscape.

Key Highlights:

Topic	Summary
Alexander Sloan Accountants Allison Devine & Lanarkshire Links Lorraine Swan	Carried out the formal business of the AGM, sharing Lanarkshire Links financial stability is strong and elected the Trustees for 2026-2027
South Lanarkshire's Community Planning Partnership Heather Robertson and Cheryl Burnett	Provided a comprehensive briefing on South Lanarkshire's Community Planning Partnership.
Lanarkshire Deaf Hub Cheryl Devlin and Nicola Boyle	Provided a comprehensive briefing on the Lanarkshire Deaf Hub including their advocacy work and lived experience.
Spotlight Shotts Mark Traynor	Delivered a performance that has been developed using funding from the North Lanarkshire's Engagement and Participation's Growth Pot Fund