

Lanarkshire Links

Summer Members Meeting Report

17th of June 2026

Alona Hotel



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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

Lanarkshire Links hosted its Summer Members Meeting on the 17th of June 2026, bringing together a vibrant community of people with lived experience, carers, staff, and partnership organisations. An incredible 103 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; **Amanda Minns**; Head of Evidence for NHS Lanarkshire, **Kenneth Muir MBE** and **Cara McGurn**; Morphfit Gentle Movement Project Ltd. **Hera Mohammad**; Stigma Free Lanarkshire, **Lorraine Swan**; Lanarkshire Links. We would also like to thank **Councillor Martin McCulloch** (Convenor of Adult Care & Social Work Committee) and **Councillor Allan Falconer** for joining the Lanarkshire Links Summer Members Meeting.

Following the meeting, 74 evaluation forms were completed and returned, providing a robust and representative voice from our community.

A central theme throughout the Summer meeting was the members' overwhelming appreciation of their voices being heard. This underscores the position of Lanarkshire Links not merely as an independent group, but as a vital partner and a direct conduit for the NHS and Health and Social Care Partnership to capture the authentic views of people who use mental health services and their carers. By creating a trusted space for these two crucial consultations, Lanarkshire Links bridges the gap between statutory services and the community. This ensures that invaluable lived experience directly informs, shapes, and improves local health and social care delivery, making it a truly 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



Lanarkshire Links
Service User and Carer
Involvement in Mental Health

SUMMER MEMBERS MEETING

Location: Alona Hotel, Strathclyde Country Park
Date: 17th of June 2026
Time: 10am registration – tea & coffee

Members register, network with stall holders and enjoy a morning tea or coffee

10.30am: Liz MacWhinney – Welcome and Domestic arrangements

10.35am: Amanda Minns – Head of Evidence; NHS Improving Patients Experience Consultation

11.00am: Kenneth Muir MBE – MorphFit Gentle Movement Project Ltd

11.30am: Comfort break

11.40am: Hera Mohammad – Stigma Free Lanarkshire Consultation

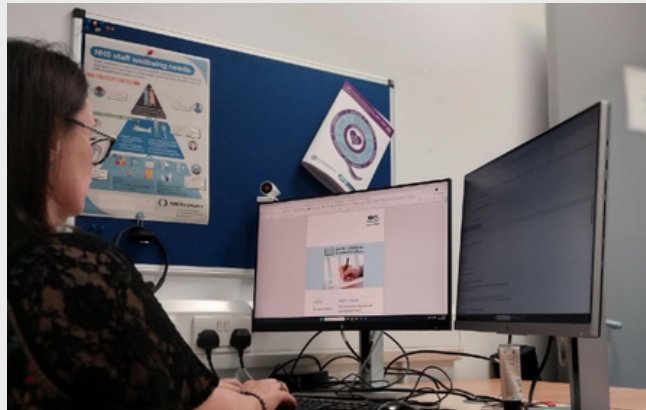
12.05pm: Lorraine Swan – Lanarkshire Links update and the new website launch

12.30pm: Lunch

PROGRAMME



Summary of Presentation: Amanda Minns, Head of Evidence NHS Lanarkshire.



Lanarkshire Links was pleased to welcome Amanda Minns, who delivered a brief presentation on the proposed changes to NHS patient appointment letters. Setting the context for the redesign, Amanda highlighted the importance of using plain English, noting that the typical reading age in Scotland is 9 to 11 years old. She explained that simplifying written communications makes them significantly more accessible for service users and staff who may have additional needs relating to the written word.

Amanda outlined the draft letter format and proposed design alterations, explaining that all feedback gathered from the session would be reported directly to the Corporate Management Team. She confirmed that a pilot of the redesigned letters would subsequently be sent to patients in the Wishaw locality, with the potential for common usage across NHS Lanarkshire should the pilot prove successful.

Amanda presented to Lanarkshire Links members two letter formats, the appointment letter that is currently used by NHS Lanarkshire and a redesigned version that takes into account accessibility of the letters, where a consultation was then carried out through a structured questionnaire which was followed by tabletop discussions.

For full feedback and analysis of the members views during the consultation a detailed report has been written and is available by contacting admin@lanarkshirelinks.org.uk. However for the purpose of the Members Meeting Report a summary has been provided.

Members were asked to consider the readability, language clarity, and the approachability of the tone of the new appointment letters. Engagement was exceptionally high, with all 103 attendees participating in facilitated tabletop discussions and 34 individuals completing a structured questionnaire provided by NHS Lanarkshire.

Members shared an overwhelming support for the new letter's direction, particularly its use of plain English, its simplified structure, and polite tone. Members welcomed these changes as a step towards reducing the anxieties that are often associated with hospital communications. However, the table discussions highlighted concerns regarding directions, with members noting that substituting traditional directions with digital tools such as QR codes, may be inadvertently deepen the inequalities faced by those living with digital exclusion or digital poverty.



Presentations

The consultation highlights the importance of keeping lived experience at the centre of communication design. Our members requested that NHS Lanarkshire take a balanced approach to modernisation; one that embraces cleaner, friendlier features while protecting accessibility through traditional, physical alternatives like printed maps to ensure no patient is left behind.

There was an overwhelming sense of support for the new letter's direction. Members praised the shift towards plain English and the removal of complex jargon, alongside a polite, friendlier tone that helps reduce the anxieties often associated with hospital communications. The structural design, including an increased font size and a spaced-out layout, was highly commended for allowing appointment details to clearly 'jump out' to the reader.

- **Digital Exclusion Concerns:** A concern raised during the tabletop discussions was the substitution of traditional directions with digital tools, such as QR codes. Members noted that an over-reliance on digital navigation could inadvertently deepen inequalities for older adults, those without smartphones, or individuals experiencing digital poverty.
- **Neurodivergent and Sensory Needs:** While the new layout was broadly popular, one member with dyslexia noted the spaced-out structure felt too 'bitty' and difficult to visually track, highlighting the need for information blocks to remain visually cohesive. Furthermore, members strongly advocated for alternative communication formats, such as BSL interpreter details on telephone lines and automated voice reminders for those with sensory impairments, low literacy, or severe mental illness who cannot easily engage with physical mail.

Key Recommendations: the membership requested a balanced approach to modernisation that embraces digital features whilst firmly protecting accessibility. The core recommendations put forward were:

Retain Physical Maps: Printed maps and step-by-step written directions must be provided alongside any digital solutions to ensure no patient is left behind.

Provide Alternative Contact Methods: Ensure the letters provide access to human assistance, such as a call-back number or receptionist availability.

Maintain the Simplified Structure: Continue utilising the spaced layout, bullet points, and bold text that members identified as highly effective.



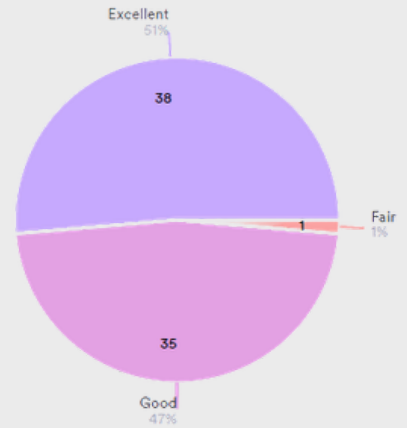


Feedback

Feedback from Lanarkshire Links Members:

At the end of the morning, our members were asked **'How informative did you find the speaker Amanda Minns?'**

A total of 74 evaluation forms were completed following the Summers Members Meeting, with all members responding to this question. The quantitative data determined that 98% of the members found her talk to be excellent or good. These findings indicate that our members found this presentation and activity to be enjoyable and worthwhile.



When considering the qualitative data gained by asking the follow-up question on Amanda's presentation/consultation: **'What are your thoughts on the information Amanda shared?'** we found that a significant number of members opted to provide written comments.

The written comments indicated and mirrored the high level of engagement during the meeting as well as a deep appreciation for the opportunity to actively participate in shaping NHS communications. Members praised Amanda's presentation style, the interactive group discussions, and the tangible improvements seen in the new letter format.

Key themes from the evaluation forms included:

Members felt validated by the NHS actively seeking their input before finalising changes.

One member noted:

'Informative and patient inclusive prior to making a change.'

While another said:

'It is also good that NHS are looking at a better format of letters and doing a consultation about it with the public.'

A further member expressed

'Knowing our voices will be heard.'

Other comments shared by our members were:

'I think the group discussions were really useful.' *'Fantastic brilliant session.'*





Summary of Presentation: Kenneth Muir MBE from MorphFit Gentle Movement Project



Lanarkshire Links were delighted to welcome Kenneth Muir MBE, Director of the MorphFit Gentle Movement Project. Kenneth outlined the origins of the project, explaining that it was launched in 2020 during the pandemic to support vulnerable groups. The project has been accessed over 50,000 times to date.

MorphFit's primary goal is to help elderly and vulnerable groups throughout Lanarkshire and beyond to receive specific exercise programmes that will improve their quality of life. A core objective of the organisation is to provide this high-quality service at absolutely no cost to the service user.

Kenneth shared that MorphFit has the capacity to accommodate 480 service users per week across 34 community projects throughout central Scotland. He explained that the organisation reinvests its profits back into the Lanarkshire community, which means they are able to fund eight additional classes per week, creating an extra 120 spaces for their sessions. The organisation works in close partnership with local authorities, as well as private and third-sector organisations.

Kenneth provided an overview of the diverse classes delivered by MorphFit, which include:

- **Mind and Body Connection:** Sessions that run on Mondays and Tuesdays incorporate chair yoga, mixed chair-based exercises, and support from healthcare professionals.
- **Specialised Health Classes:** High demand sessions specifically tailored for individuals with Parkinson's, as well as dedicated cardiac classes.
- **Partnership Programmes:** Collaborative work alongside Macmillan for cancer pre-habilitation and rehabilitation.

The presentation also highlighted the extensive recognition MorphFit and its team have received, including winning the Lanarkshire Business Excellence Award for Community Impact in 2023.

Following Kenneth's presentation, MorphFit Instructor Cara McGurn led the room in a practical demonstration of their chair exercises. The activity was a brilliant success, and the members were completely engaged throughout. To ensure the session was enjoyable and tailored to the audience, all movements were choreographed to a carefully selected music playlist, featuring a Scottish folk song, a classic Beatles track, and an upbeat rock and roll song.

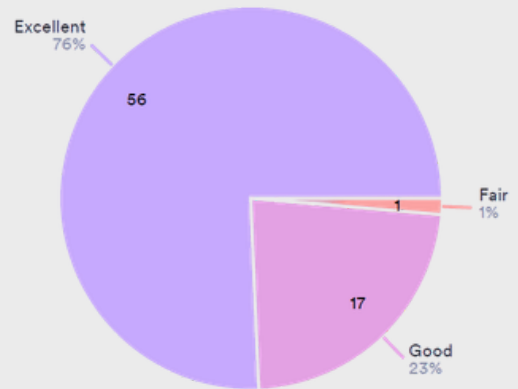


Feedback

Feedback from Lanarkshire Links Members:

At the end of the morning, our members were asked **'How informative did you find the speaker Kenneth Muir?'**

The quantitative data gained from this question determined that an impressive 99% of the members found Kenneth's presentation on MorphFit Gentle Movement Project to be either excellent or good. Indicating that it was extremely well received by our members.



When considering the qualitative data, we could see how much members valued both the informative nature of the presentation and the energetic, practical demonstration that took place afterwards.

Key messages that could be taken from the evaluation forms included:

Praise for the presentation as members noted;

'Kenneth Muir was excellent at explaining the project and the activity was excellent.'

'He explained everything in a nice manner and I could hear him clearly.'

'Brilliant idea and it showed both Kenny and Cara's enthusiasm on their subject. I will definitely be joining.'

Members felt that the practical portion of the session was a standout success. They thoroughly enjoyed moving to music and appreciated that the routine was accessible enough to replicate at home. The written feedback from members said:

'Exercises were so much fun and Cara made it engaging.'

'Excellent group and in particular it is free. Enjoyed taking part - fantastic idea for people with a disability.'

The fact that MorphFit offers a high quality programming completely free of charge resonated with our members, who highlighted its incredible benefit to the community.

'Very good to know about the organisation and fulfilling a need in the area.' "Well informed to pass this onto us free of cost'

While South Lanarkshire residents celebrated the availability of the project in their area, the session sparked a strong demand for MorphFit to expand its footprint to North Lanarkshire.





Summary of Presentation: Engagement and Participation Partnership



Our very own Hera Mohammad, Development Officer for Stigma Free Lanarkshire (SFL) delivered a presentation and consultation that outlined SFL's vision to build a culture of understanding, respect, and support, ultimately aiming for a Lanarkshire that is completely free from mental health stigma and discrimination. She explained that the programme focusses its efforts across four key areas: communities, workplaces, NHS health and social care, and education and young people.

Before delving into the consultation phase of her presentation, Hera deconstructed Stigma by providing an overview of what stigma is, highlighting the key message that it is not always visible or obvious. She walked members through five distinct types of stigma:

- **Public Stigma:** An example of which could be when the media portrays people with mental illness as dangerous or unpredictable.
- **Self-Stigma:** Such as when we feel like we should cope alone rather than ask for help because we worry that people will judge us.
- **Structural Stigma:** For example when recruitment processes disadvantage those with mental health conditions.
- **Associative Stigma:** The judgement, blame, and isolation faced by family members, carers, and supporters, such as a parent feeling judged because their child is experiencing a mental health condition.
- **Intersectional Stigma:** This recognises that mental health stigma does not always occur on its own; it can overlap with other forms of discrimination, such as poverty, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, or substance use; which can make the impact far deeper and more complex.





Presentations

Hera shared with our members why tackling these issues is so important, as they create significant barriers across many areas of a person's life, such as;

- preventing them from speaking openly
- seeking help
- accessing education, employment
- relationships
- community participation

When individuals feel unable to ask for support or simply feel understood, their struggles become hidden, and vital support is delayed. Over time, this leads to isolation, reduced wellbeing, and in some cases, individuals reaching a crisis point long after they should have received help.

Hera explained that to combat this, SFL strive to create change by encouraging those all important open conversations, deepening people's understanding through education, exemplifying lived experience, and inspiring action in others. SFL deliver this practically through workshops, campaigns, community engagement, local partnerships, and the People's Stigma Free Network.

Hera transitioned the session into the consultation. She stressed that the unique perspectives of the members meeting as it spanned individuals, communities, services, and organisations; all of which are crucial to understand exactly how stigma is showing up across Lanarkshire today, who is most affected by these barriers, and what actions would help create meaningful change.

A summary of the findings noted that seventy-three participants shared their views through a survey and facilitated table discussions, identifying stigma as a continuing barrier to openness, help-seeking and social connection. Participants highlighted communities, workplaces and social media as key settings where stigma is experienced, while education, open conversations, community connection and inclusive approaches emerged as priorities for future stigma reduction work. Further detail on the consultation findings will be available in a detailed report produced by Stigma Free Lanarkshire.



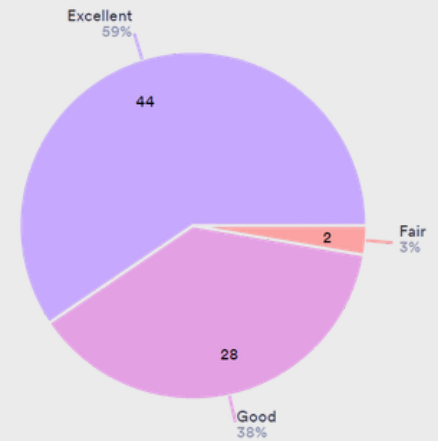


Feedback

Feedback from Lanarkshire Links Members:

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

The quantitative data gained from this question determined that an impressive 98% of the members found the presentation on Stigma to be excellent or good.



Beyond the statistics, the written feedback captured a sense of appreciation from our members. It was clear that they did not just feel like a passive audience; they felt genuinely empowered and valued by being actively consulted on such an important topic. The responses reflect both an emotional engagement alongside a real desire to dismantle these barriers in our communities.

From the evaluation forms, many of the members found this session to be genuinely eye opening. Members were moved by the breakdown of what stigma actually looks like in practice, shifting their understanding of an issue they thought they already knew.

'Was great I learned stuff I never knew before.'

'I learned new things today and I wish I learned more about stigma in mental health.'

Our members really valued having their voices heard and the opportunity of being given a platform to share their thoughts. They recognised the necessity of bringing these conversations out into the open to drive genuine change.

'I really enjoyed participating in the stigma free consultation.'

'It is what is needed somewhere to get information to go forward.'

Hera's presentation style was consistently described as 'thought provoking' and accessible, allowing members to comfortably engage with complex and emotional information.

'Hera was brilliant in her presentation and the information was really interesting.'

'Always excellent from Stigma Free Lanarkshire.'

'Hera was good sharing her information on mental health... Helpful to hear this information.'

Perhaps the most powerful takeaway was the enthusiasm and momentum the session ignited. The presentation sparked a strong reaction that members were left wanting more more time to discuss, more time to learn, and more opportunities to step up and help.

'It would have been better to have had more time to debate.'

'Very interesting if I had more time I would volunteer for this project.'



Summary of Presentation: Lanarkshire Links Update



The final presentation of the session was delivered by Lorraine Swan providing a 3 monthly update on the activities from Lanarkshire Links, starting with the Lanarkshire Links Wellbeing Groups. Lorraine shared that our wellbeing groups continue to be a cornerstone of our community support, offering safe spaces to unwind, connect, and share experiences to help highlight barriers and improve local services. Lorraine noted the new 'Space To Talk' sessions were available to members where peer support is delivered through friendly and non-judgemental drop-in sessions.

- Newmains (NCT Centre): Every other Friday, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm.
- Coatbridge (Riverbank Hub): Every other Tuesday, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm.
- Bellshill (Orbiston Hub): Every other Wednesday, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm.

It was celebrated that our regular Mental Health & Wellbeing Groups continue to grow across Lanarkshire offering informal peer support, self-care, holistic support, and a chance to relax. These groups take place in Motherwell, Hamilton, Larkhall, and Cardowan including a Men's only group.

Our Wellbeing Creative groups provide a space where art-focussed sessions are provided to support mental wellbeing and they take place in:

- Motherwell (The GLO Centre): Last Monday of the month, 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm.
- East Kilbride (Kilbryde Hospice): First Monday of the month, 12:30 pm – 2:30 pm.

Lorraine shared that Lanarkshire Links are actively seeking new Trustees to join our Board to help guide our strategic direction. Interested parties were encouraged to get in touch or visit our office at the Dalziel Business Centre in Motherwell.

Lorraine shared information on a research project that Lanarkshire Links are engaged with called The CARE-PAC Project which is dedicated to supporting better end-of-life care for dementia patients in Lanarkshire. Lorraine encouraged members to volunteer and noted that this would be a 2 year project where members and their carers could co-design an online interface that would ensure a simple, person-focussed communication as well as real-time advice.

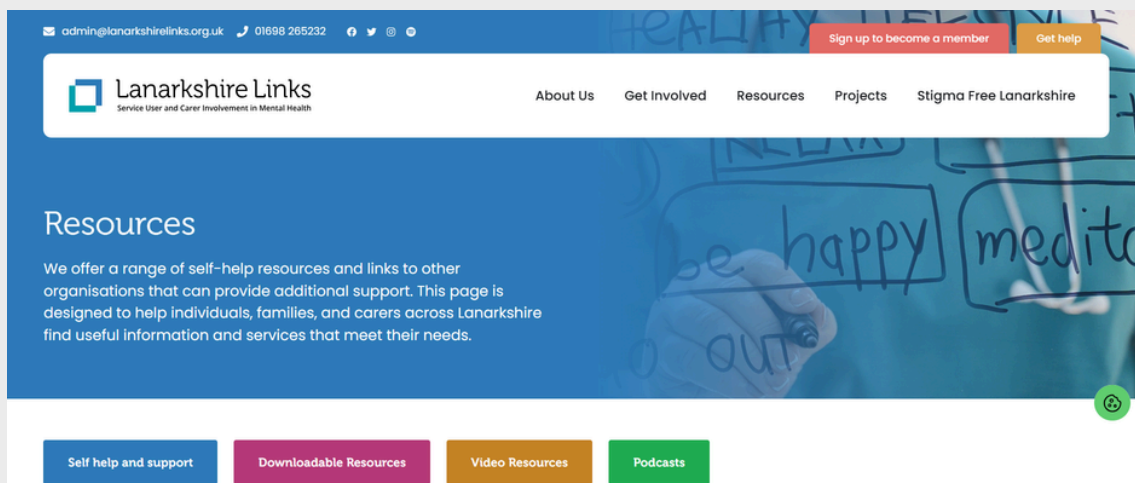
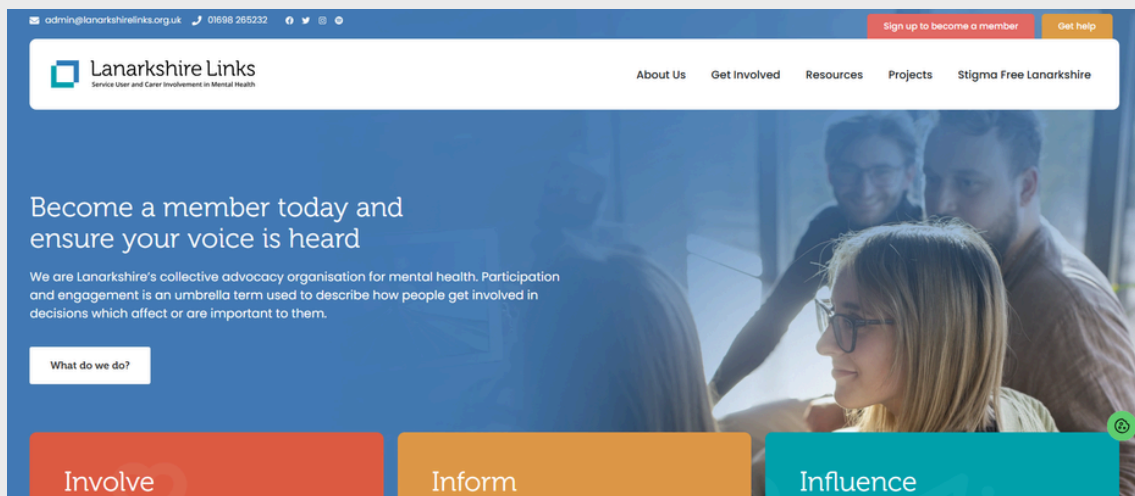


Presentations

Lorraine shared with the Lanarkshire Links members that the charity was actively supporting and working towards ensuring that there is an adult acute mental health ward in the New Monklands hospital while it is currently in its design stage. A focal point of the discussion was the absolute necessity of including an acute mental health ward within the new hospital's design. The members were highly vocal and fully supportive of Lanarkshire Links' firm stance that this dedicated ward is a critical requirement for local care.

Lorraine also took the opportunity to guide members through the newly launched Lanarkshire Links website, providing a walkthrough of its fresh look and highlighting specific, key pages designed to improve user accessibility.

The Lanarkshire Links website is a one stop shop where you can get all the key information from Lanarkshire Links which is designed to 'Involve, Inform and Influence' our members. The website highlights how we ensure service users and carers have a genuine seat at the table to shape health and social care partnerships. Lorraine explained that on the site, you can catch up on our latest reports, find details on our informal wellbeing groups and resources that are designed to keep us well. The new website is the perfect go-to space for anyone looking to connect, stay well and share their voice.



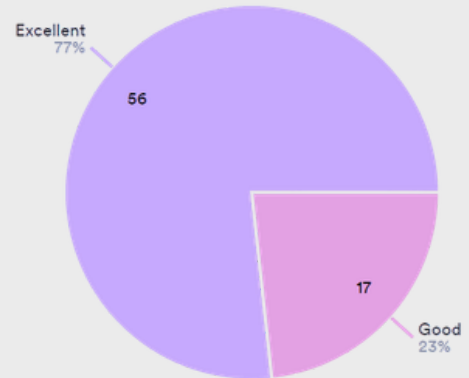


Feedback

Feedback from Lanarkshire Links Members:

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

The quantitative data gained from this question determined that a staggering 100% of the members found the presentation on the Lanarkshire Links to be excellent or good.



The written comments on the feedback forms reflect a highly engaged audience that appreciated the clarity of the updates and felt motivated by Lanarkshire Links' efforts. Key themes extracted from the evaluation forms include:

The website walkthrough was very well received, with many looking forward to using it as a primary resource. Members shared;

'Great new website. Look forward to using it'

'Being informed about the new website this will be very helpful and informative'

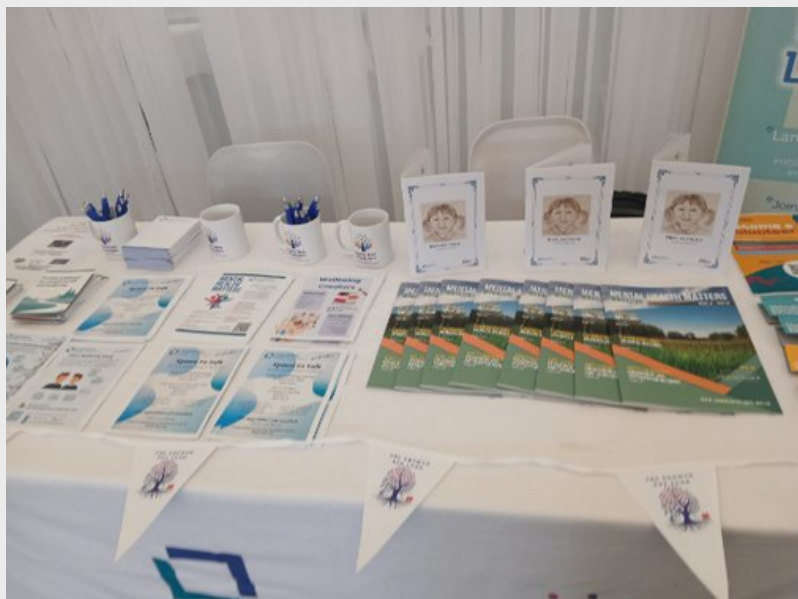
Some members did express that they are choosing to not be online.

Lorraine's update on the new Monklands Hospital struck a chord. Members are not only supportive of the need for an acute mental health ward but are also eager to add their voices to the campaign.

Members praised Lorraine's delivery and the breadth of the information shared, particularly regarding available support structures available through the groups.

'Lorraine was excellent at explaining things at Lanarkshire Links'

'Great information all round. Good to know about the new website and crisis support to prevent illness.'



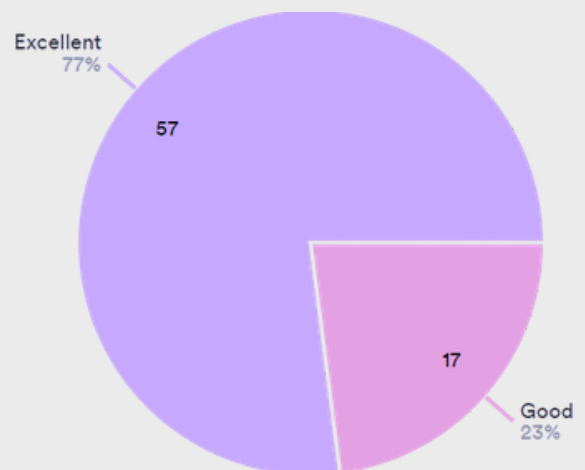


Overall Feedback

Feedback from Lanarkshire Links Members:

At the end of the morning, our members were asked **'Overall, how would you rate today's meeting?'**

An incredible 100% of those who completed the evaluation form rated the Summer meeting as either excellent or good. This is truly outstanding feedback and serves as a strong vote of confidence from our community. It indicates that the members' meetings are successfully fulfilling their core mission of engaging people who use services through informing, involving, and influencing, whilst fostering a strong sense of connection.



When asked to expand on this further in written comments, members valued the structure of the day, the relevance of the topics, and the opportunity to reconnect with peers. One member perfectly captured the sentiment of the day, writing: *'A really well-organised and informative day with great speakers.'* Another added, *'Excellent meeting, very relevant topics and good to catch up with people.'*

The concluding comments underscored the value of bringing the community together, whilst also offering constructive, practical suggestions to help us improve future events.

Key themes extracted from the final feedback include:

Our members highly valued the opportunity to share perspectives, meet individuals with shared lived experiences, as well as interact with service providers.

'I got to meet really interesting people similar to me and to meet people that had views I hadn't thought of'

'There were really good speakers and a great opportunity to interact with other providers'

Members provided helpful feedback to make future meetings more inclusive and comfortable, touching on digital access, and the room environment.

'It was all very informative however I would like to suggest that the information of the meeting at the Alona could be recorded or accessible if you are not able to attend'

'Could have been warned about the exercise. It was a bit hot and could have had the fans on.'

The activities incorporated into the day were a highlight for many attendees as well as the welcoming atmosphere that left newcomers eager to return and continue engaging with the organisation.



Executive Summary

Overview:

The Lanarkshire Links Summer Members Meeting (17th of June 2026) brought together 103 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 74 evaluations was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the event as informative. Crucially, the presentations and feedback underscored the indispensable role of the third sector in fostering community resilience, providing preventative support, and ultimately reducing the reliance on statutory NHS services.

Key Highlights:

Topic	Summary
Exploring Patient Experiences Amanda Minns	Provided the opportunity for Lanarkshire Links members to be involved in a consultation exploring NHS appointment letters.
MorphFit Gentle Movement Project Kenneth Muir MBE	Provided a comprehensive briefing on the MorphFit gentle movement project which was followed by an interactive demonstration of activities.
Stigma Free Lanarkshire Consultation Hera Mohammad	Provided the opportunity for Lanarkshire Links members to be involved in a consultation exploring the impact and prevalence of Mental Health Stigma in Lanarkshire.
Lanarkshire Links update and new website launch Lorraine Swan	Provided a comprehensive update on the work of Lanarkshire Links over the past 3 months including the launch of new groups. The new website for Lanarkshire Links was officially launched.