



Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway Mental Health Forum

The inaugural Mental Health Forum took place at [St George's Church Hall](#) on 27 May 2025.

Members from over 25 organisations were welcomed to the event and were advised that the Mental Health Forum will be a cross sectoral forum to support shared contribution, shared knowledge and learning, a safe space for networking and relationship building and joined up approaches to mental health contribution and support in the community. Presentations from the event can be found [here](#).



Representatives from across a wide range of organisations attended the event including:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better Lives Partnership• Carers Centre for Dumfries and Galloway• Change Mental Health• Creation Mill CIC• DG Advocacy• Dumfries and Galloway Mental Health Association• Dumfries and Galloway Recovery Together• Dumfries and Galloway Heard of Hearing• Dumfries and Galloway Outdoor and Woodland Learning Group• Dumfries Baptist Church• ELVES CIC• KPT Development Trust | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Let's Get Sporty (CIC)• Local Initiatives in New Galloway (LING)• NHS Dumfries and Galloway• OutPost Arts• Paragon Ensemble Ltd• Scottish Forestry• The Greystone Rovers Foundation• The Riverside Centre• Think Differently• Upper Nithsdale Arts and Crafts Community Initiative Limited• Vajrasattva Kadampa Meditation Centre• Volunteering Matters |
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Speakers at the event were:

- ❖ Niomi Hamilton, Lead for Community Health and Wellbeing, [Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway](#) (TSDG)
- ❖ Jim Hume, Chair, [National Rural Mental Health Forum](#) /Chair of [the ALLIANCE](#) (Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland)
- ❖ Justin Murray, General Manager for Mental Health, [NHS Dumfries and Galloway](#)
- ❖ Lynsay Laird, Mental Health Development Worker, [Borders Care Voice](#)

Presentations

Opening Comments

Niomi Hamilton, Lead for Community Health and Wellbeing, [TSDG](#)

Niomi welcomed everyone to the inaugural meeting of the Mental Health Forum and explained the journey to establishing the forum. Niomi also highlighted the significant contribution and impact that third sector organisations have on mental health services across our communities.

Niomi advised that the forum provided a dedicate space for mental health and was about bringing together the third sector, statutory partners, and lived experience voices - not just to talk, but to collaborate, challenge, and change. The aim of the forum is to create a space to share openly and safely; build relationships; empower those with lived experience; and strengthen our collective voice. And ultimately, to make mental health support better together.

National Rural Mental Health Forum

Jim Hume, Chair, [National Rural Mental Health Forum](#), and Chair of [the ALLIANCE](#)

Jim explained the work of the [National Rural Mental Health Forum](#) which is a dedicated network of over 260 organisations from third, private and public sectors, with an outreach to over 500,000 people in rural Scotland.

Jim talked about the role of communities in supporting mental health in rural areas and highlighted some of the barriers, strengths and future developments of the National Rural Mental Health forum.

Jim also provided an update on some of the services delivered by [Change Mental Health](#).

Table Talks

Attendees gathered in groups to discuss the following - “How do we make better connections?” Attendees were asked to consider:

- Barriers like transport, stigma, digital inclusion
- Creative solutions
- What’s missing between third and statutory services?

Groups fed back on this with some key points noted further on in this Event Note.



Getting to Know You

Justin Murray, General Manager, Mental Health, [NHS Dumfries and Galloway](#)

Niomi explained that the Getting to Know You part of the forum provided an opportunity to get to know the human being behind the position they hold. Niomi presented Justin with a series of questions and provided the audience with a real insight into Justin’s background, career journey and influences over the years.

Making Engagement Meaningful

Lynsay Laird, Mental Health Development Worker, [Borders Care Voice](#)

Lynsay explained the process that Borders Care Voice went through to improve the [Mental Health and Wellbeing Forum](#) in the Scottish Borders.

Lynsay talked about a number of key areas including: the planning process; co-production; key themes identified (promotion, format and feedback); and next steps.

Lynsay concluded by advising that, following the development work that has taken place, the Borders Care Voice Mental Health and Wellbeing Forum will now be known as “Flourish – Mental Health Matters for Everyone”.

Table Talks

Attendees gathered in groups to discuss the following – “*What does success look like for us?*” Attendees were asked to consider:

- Defining purpose, tone, frequency and outcomes that would feel worthwhile
- How we ensure lived experience shapes this forum
- Who’s missing from the room – and how do we bring them in?

Groups feedback on this with some key points noted later on in this Event Note.

Strategic Updates

Due to time restraints, this section was not discussed, however, further detail can be found in the presentation [here](#). This includes information about: Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2026; Lived Experience Voice and Co-production; the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund; Think Carer – Carer Awareness; and Scottish Government Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy Leadership Board.

Key Takeaway Messages and Emerging Themes

- There is huge range of third sector organisations offering a diverse range of services to support mental health across the region. Knowledge sharing, mapping and effective engagement is required to build up a clear picture of what is available across Dumfries and Galloway.
- Cross sector partnerships, a collective voice and shared learning is key to building trust and ensuring the Mental Health Forum is fully supported and effective going forward. There is a need for consistency and commitment from partners across all sectors in the region to make effective connections and support meaningful change. This includes third sector organisations, NHS, local authority, South of Scotland Enterprise, economic development, funders, and employers.
- Potential barriers to seeking mental health support were highlighted, with particular emphasis on the impact of rurality eg. geography, transport (public, private and community), stigma/pride, close knit communities/lack of anonymity, digital barriers, loneliness/social isolation, resources (time and money), infrastructure, aging population, employment, funding/investment challenges.

- How do we demonstrate the impact and cross benefits of third sector organisation services on mental health in the region? What services are interconnected? How do we communicate this both internally and externally?
- There was recognition that many individuals are reaching out for mental health support from within their communities in the first instance rather than seeking help from statutory partners eg. GP, NHS, local authorities.
- Engaging with people and groups supporting lived experience is crucial to supporting mental health going forward. What lived experience groups are there in Dumfries and Galloway and how do we reach these individuals?
- The mental health landscape, services offered, criteria and key personnel are continually changing/evolving. How do we communicate these changes better to ensure the right people have the right information at the right time?
- There was comment that a tiered level of mental health support may be required to support specific needs. How do we identify and communicate this to ensure person centre tailored support for individual need is provided?
- There is a need to share best practice, ideas, resources and challenges with other collective advocacy groups whilst ensuring we are not 'reinventing the wheel'. Open and honest conversations are required to support innovation, connections and breaking down barriers. Goals and solutions need to be created – not just conversations.





Event Feedback

“[enjoyed] the opportunity to interact and especially talk to peers”

“light-hearted and engaging”

“a great start to this network/forum”

“good topics and really good information”

“[enjoyed] authenticity of speakers. Inspiring and exactly what is needed”

“[enjoyed] meeting people that are like minded”

“thank you for bringing everyone together”

“interesting to hear different opinions”

“a very informative day and it was good to see and meet different organisations coming together”

“a meeting of minds”

Other useful links

- [Video - What is Co-Production?](#)
- [Video - What is a Recovery Conversation Cafe?](#)
- [Borders Care Voice - Co-production Charter](#)
- [Vox Scotland - Scotland's national voice on mental health](#)
- [Authentic Voice – Embedding lived experience in Scotland](#)
- [Recovery Conversation Café - Scottish Recovery Network | Toolkit](#)
- [Scottish Co-production Network](#)
- [Mental Health Foundation - Open FAQs](#)

Contact

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See link here for [TSDG Events](#)

Third Sector, Dumfries and Galloway is the operating name of Dumfries and Galloway Third Sector Interface, a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC043832