

UKCPO



UK Coalition for People living with Obesity

National Meeting
March 2026

Contents

	Page
• Directors' Summary	3
• Jenny James – You don't need to exercise – any movement is great	4–5
• Zahir Toumi – Future of Obesity Treatment	6–7
• Yikta Graham – Weight Stigma	8–9
• Attendee Feedback	10–11
• Patient Stories	12–13
• Louisa Ells – Group Exercise	14
• Group Exercise – Policy	15
• Group Exercise – Research	16
• Group Exercise – Services	17
• Laurence Hall – Empowering Voices	18
• Evening Receptions	19
• Supporter Feedback	20

Director Update

Ken Clare - Executive Director



I have attended many national meetings for people with lived experience of obesity, organised by a range of groups over the years. These events always offer something meaningful and memorable. We chose to hold our meeting on the Saturday closest to World Obesity Day to recognise and align with this global moment.

This was our first event as UKCPO. A small but committed team of volunteers worked hard to bring it together. It was encouraging to see members, board members, and advisory board members working side by side throughout the day. We were also pleased to welcome colleagues from ICPO and the Obesity Institute at Leeds Beckett University, reflecting the value of partnership working.

While it can be difficult to measure the success of a day like this, the feedback we have received, both on the day and since, has been very positive. We are already looking ahead to building on this for our next event in 2027.

Andrew Healing - Director



Bringing so many people into one room, all with shared lived experience, was truly remarkable. The UKCPO National Meeting created a space where individuals felt able to speak openly, share their stories, and be heard without judgement. These conversations highlighted the importance of connection, understanding, and peer support.

Feedback from the day has been very positive. Many members shared that they left with new knowledge, greater confidence, and a sense of belonging. Just as importantly, new friendships were formed, strengthening the support network within our community.

The meeting showed the value of bringing people together in this way. It reinforced our commitment to creating safe, supportive spaces where lived experience is recognised and respected, and where people can learn from one another.

Member Stories

Throughout the session, member stories were shared through video, offering real insight into living with obesity.

These highlighted the daily challenges, stigma, and barriers individuals face. They helped ensure lived experience remained central to the discussion.



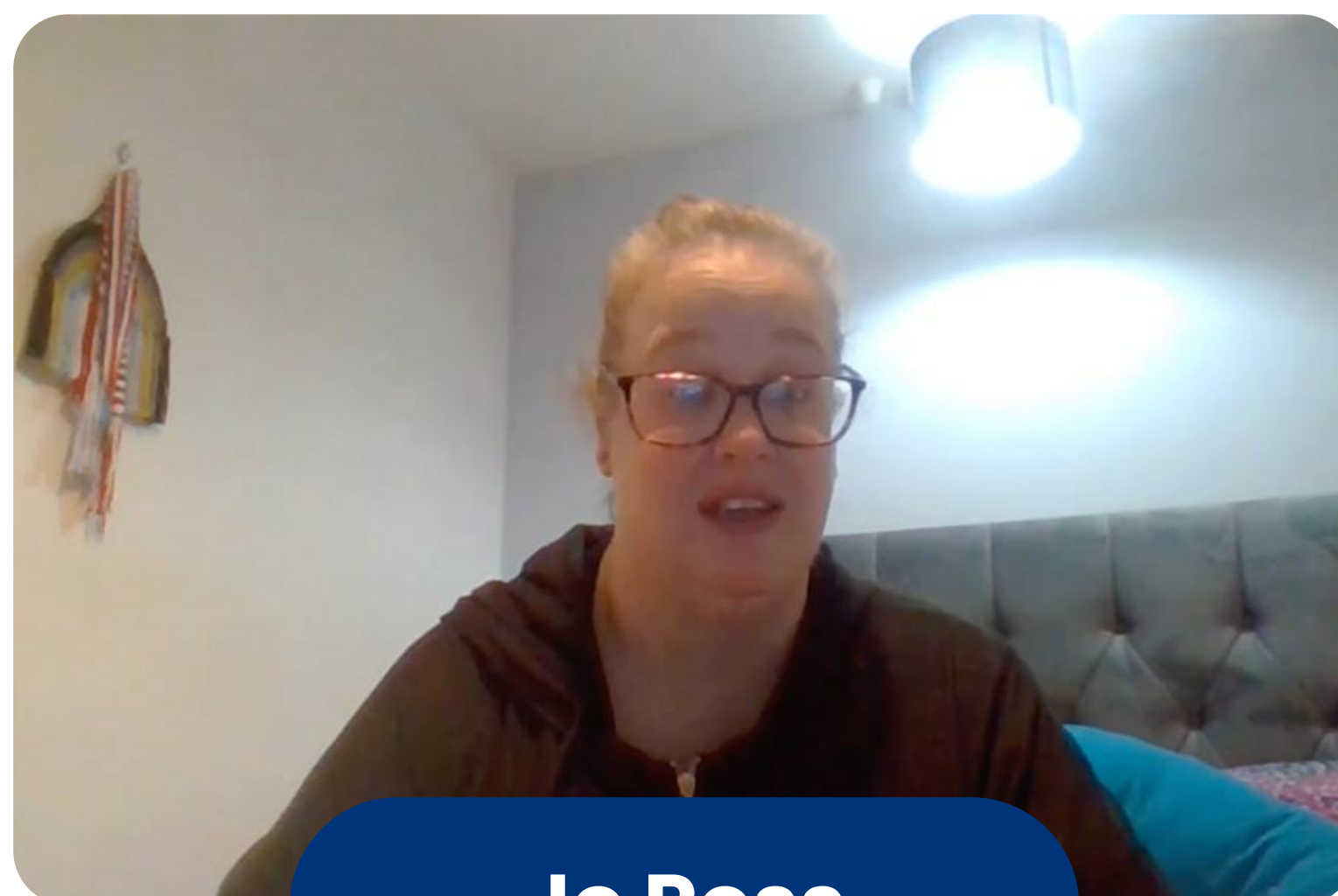
Kim Macken



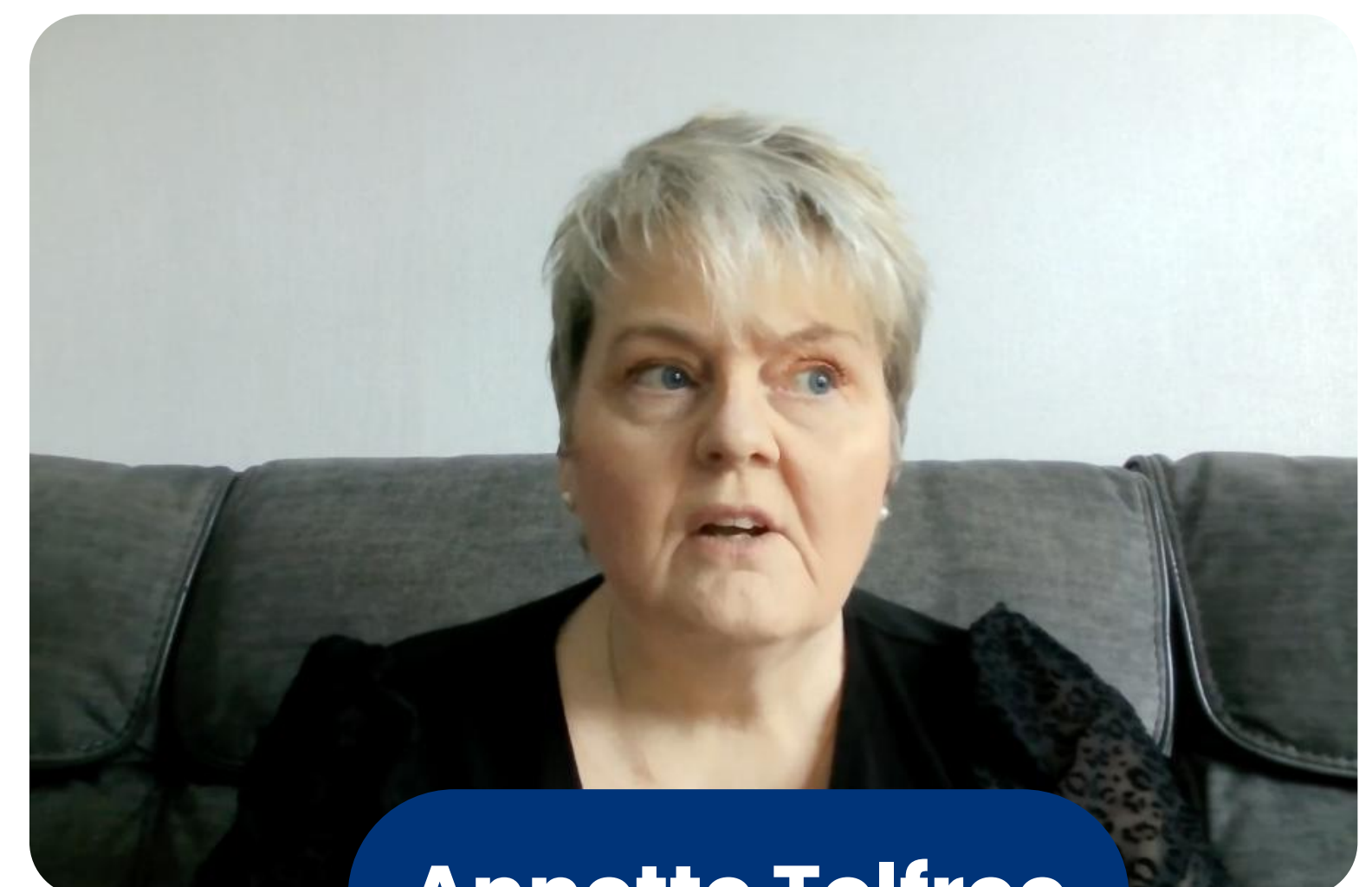
Kirsty Sugden



Phil Whamsley



Jo Ross



Annette Tolfree

Member Stories Watch Online

Kim Macken

<https://vimeo.com/1170359450?fl=tl&fe=ec>

Kirsty Sugden

<https://vimeo.com/1171956516/24b04e8185?fl=tl&fe=ec>

Phil Whamsley

<https://vimeo.com/1171957232/a082b14a4f?fl=tl&fe=ec>

Jo Ross

<https://vimeo.com/1171955837/d6b1945a7e?fl=tl&fe=ec>

Annette Tolfree

<https://vimeo.com/1171955122/df0a393661?fl=tl&fe=ec>

Jennifer James

The session led by Dr Jennifer James offered a practical and reassuring perspective on movement, wellbeing, and how we define progress when living with obesity. It focused on simple, realistic changes that can fit into everyday life, rather than setting high or rigid expectations.

Movement does not need to be structured exercise to be beneficial. Small actions, such as reducing time spent sitting or finding ways to be more active in daily routines, can make a real difference. This helps make movement feel more achievable and less overwhelming.

The session also encouraged people to think about what matters most to them. By focusing on “non-scale victories”, such as improvements in energy, comfort, or quality of life, it shifts the focus away from weight alone. As highlighted, the scales do not reflect body composition, personal goals, or overall wellbeing.



Avoiding “all or nothing” thinking. Life includes holidays, celebrations, and changes in routine, and these should be seen as part of normal life rather than setbacks.



Finally, the session emphasised the importance of not comparing yourself to others. Recognising that each person’s journey is different can help build a more positive and sustainable approach to health and wellbeing.

Zahir Toumi

The session led by Zahir Toumi offered a clear and practical way of understanding how obesity treatment is changing. Using the analogy of a home thermostat, he explained how the body works to maintain a set point, and why managing obesity is about long-term balance rather than short-term change.

Obesity care should be viewed as a system. Just as keeping a home at a stable temperature requires more than one control, effective treatment involves a combination of approaches working together. These may include surgery, medication, nutrition, physical activity, and psychological support. Each plays a role, and outcomes improve when they are well coordinated.

The session also highlighted the importance of a multidisciplinary approach. Different professionals support different parts of care, from dietitians and physiotherapists to psychologists and medical teams. This reflects the need to address both physical and mental aspects of health.





The body can respond to change by increasing hunger or reducing energy use. This helps explain why maintaining weight loss can be difficult and why ongoing support is important.

The session provided a simple and relatable way to understand the complexity of obesity treatment, while reinforcing the need for personalised, long-term care.



Yitka Graham

Professor Yitka Graham provided a clear overview of weight stigma and its impact on people living with obesity, explaining how it develops and affects many areas of life.

The evidence highlighted that stigma is common in healthcare, with many people feeling judged, unheard, or receiving lower quality care. This underlines the need for more respectful and supportive interactions within services.

Stigma follows a pattern. It often starts with stereotypes, develops into prejudice, and can lead to discrimination. This can result in real consequences such as reduced opportunities, negative experiences, and avoidance of healthcare. The session highlighted that stigma is not just about attitudes, but about actions that affect people directly.

The session also explored where stigma exists, including in education, employment, media, social settings, and healthcare. This demonstrated how widespread and embedded these issues are.



When people begin to believe negative messages about themselves, it can affect confidence, willingness to seek help, and engagement with care.

The session also addressed stigma linked to treatment options, including diet, physical activity, and surgery, and how this can influence decisions about seeking support.



Attendee Feedback

We asked attendees to share their feedback following the event, so we could understand what worked well and where we can improve. The responses were thoughtful, honest, and incredibly helpful.

Here are some of the key things people told us about their experience of the day...



“ Thank you for such a great day. The collaboration between us at ICPO and you is so important. We are looking forward to the future and working together with UKCPO.

Susie Birney (ICPO)



“ It has been an absolute pleasure getting to know you all. It has been such a lovely day and I cannot wait to see you all again next year!

Karen



“ Thank you for all you do, for your unwavering support, for your education and determination to make a change for all living with obesity. My family and I will be forever grateful.

Rebeka G

“ An amazing fun and laughter filled day with like minded people. Looking forward to this event growing even bigger!

Jo-Jo

“Thank you for all the years of support and advice.

Susan

“ An amazing day. Fantastic people and energy in the room.

Thank you everyone!

Toni



“ Really enjoyed the whole day. Already looking forward to 2027. The support I have received from UKCPO has been amazing and I couldn't have done it without you

Selina



“ Absolutely EXCELLENT event! Will be here next year for definite and will recommend to everyone that I think would benefit! Thank you!

Victoria P

“ What a fantastic conference. I have loved the day. See you next year!

Kris

“ So very grateful to UKCPO for their efforts and all the speakers. It has been a fantastic day!

Rowan

“ Thank you for all the years of support and advice.

Susan

“ Fantastic event, loved every minute and I am looking forward to coming again next year!

Thank you everyone!

Sara

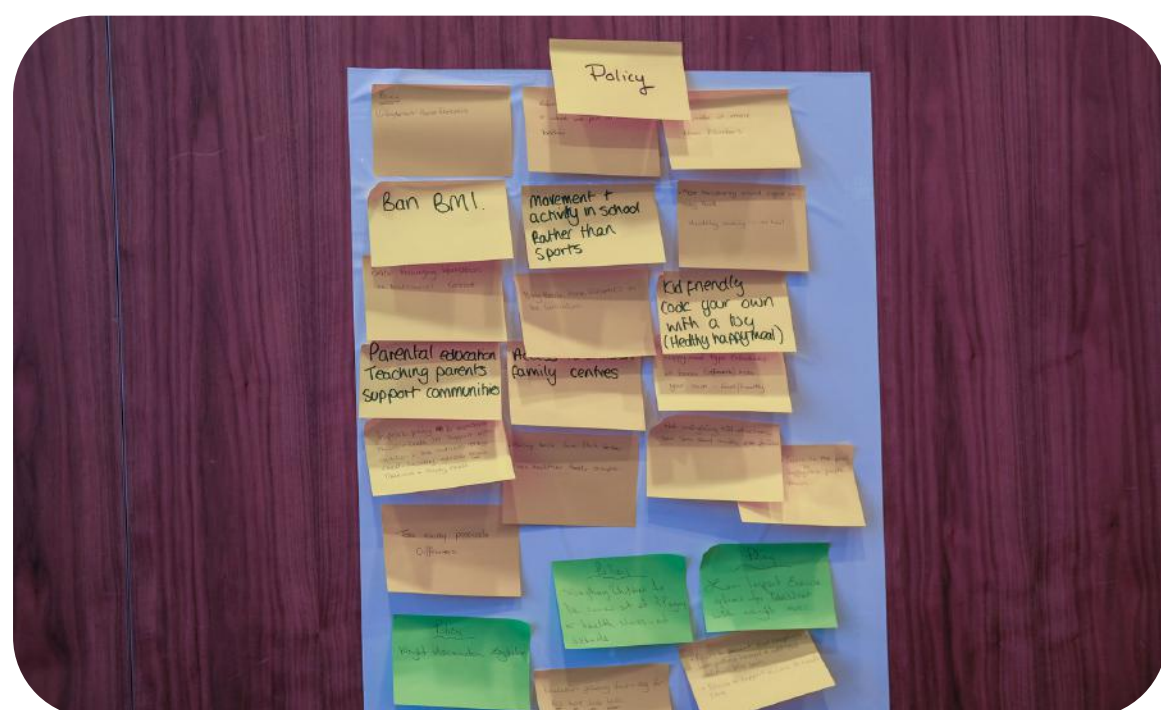
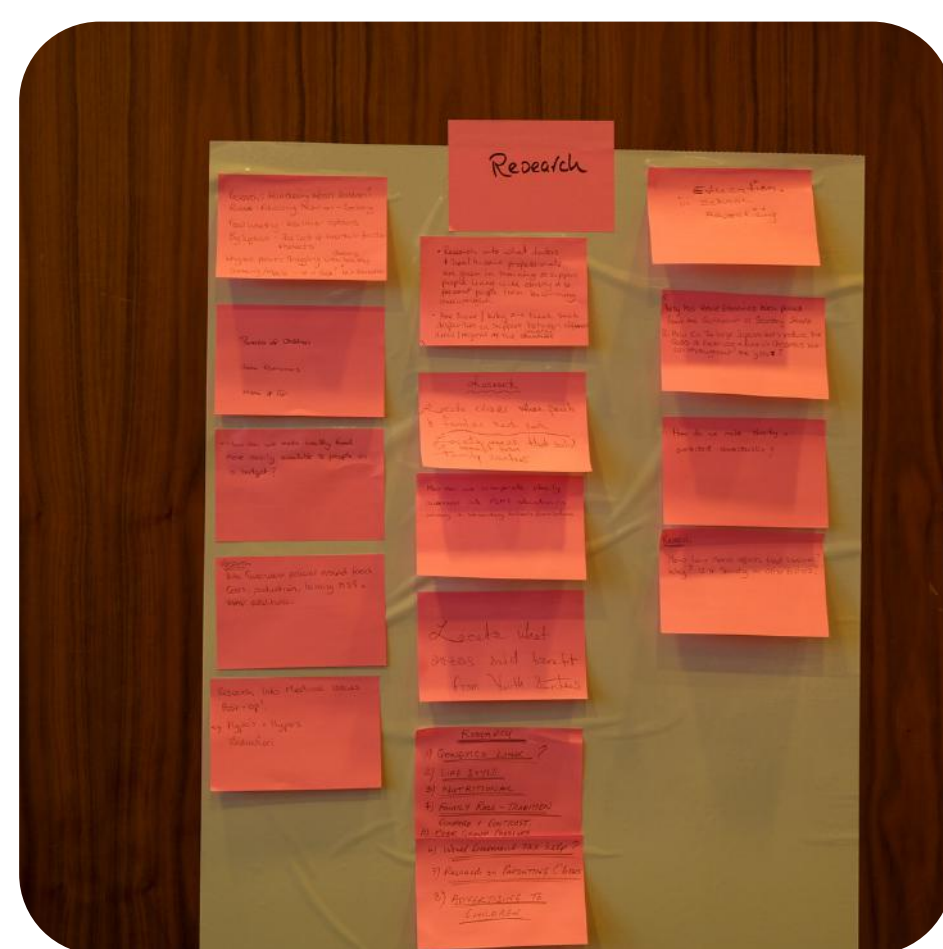
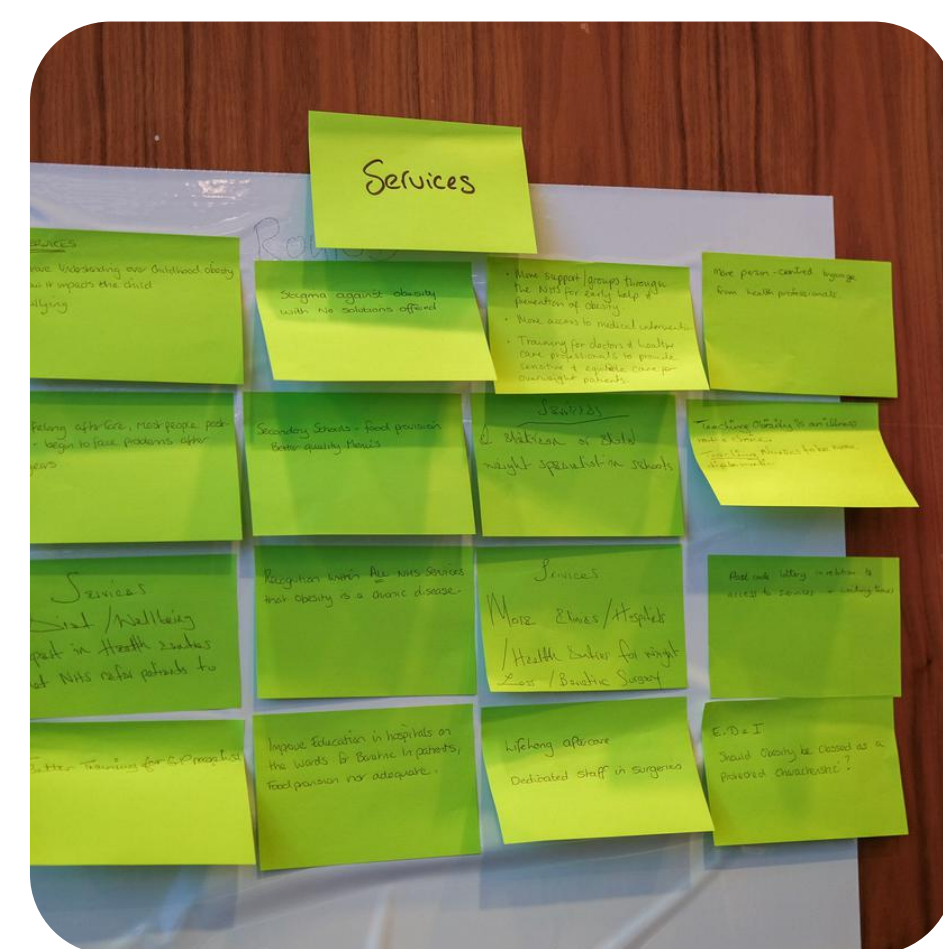
Louisa Ells



During the afternoon session, Louisa Ells led a group exercise where attendees came together to explore three key areas: Policy, Research, and Services. Participants were invited to share their thoughts, experiences, and priorities within these themes.



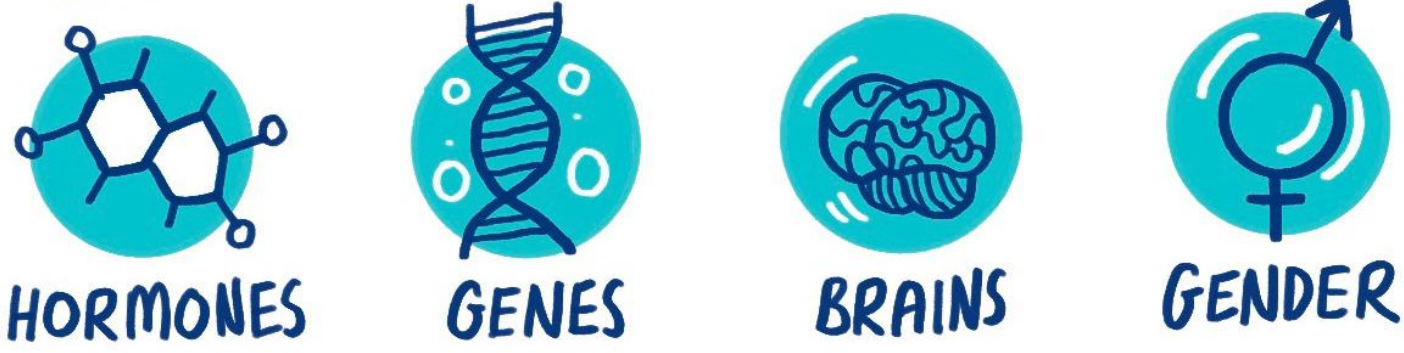
This was to better understand what matters most to our members and to ensure that their voices help shape future work. The discussions were open and insightful, highlighting both the challenges people face and the changes they would like to see. These contributions will play an important role in guiding our next steps and strengthening our approach across all three areas.



This visual captures key policy priorities identified by our members. It calls for recognition of obesity as a disease, reduced reliance on BMI, improved access to healthy food, and fairer systems. It highlights the need to reduce stigma, include lived experience in decisions, and ensure equitable access to care and support.



TELL US MORE ABOUT WHAT **CAUSES** OBESITY:



This visual highlights research priorities identified by our members. It calls for greater understanding of the causes of obesity, improved education, and addressing gaps in healthcare knowledge. It emphasises the need for consistent support across regions, culturally appropriate care, and meaningful involvement of our members in research and decision-making.

This visual highlights service priorities identified by our members. It calls for stigma-free, person-first care, recognition of obesity as a disease, and reduced reliance on BMI. It emphasises better access to long-term, joined-up care, improved psychological support, and stronger pre- and post-treatment services that reflect the complexity of obesity.



Laurence Hall - Empowering Voices

As part of the National Meeting, members were given the opportunity to view a film by PhD student Laurence Hall, titled Empowering Voices. The film highlighted the importance of lived experience and the value of ensuring that people are meaningfully involved in shaping research.

Several of our members were directly involved in the co-production of the film, sharing their perspectives and helping to guide its development. Their contributions ensured that the content reflects real experiences in an honest and respectful way.

The insights gathered through this work will support Laurence's ongoing studies, helping to strengthen understanding and ensure that future research is better informed by the voices of those it aims to represent.



Evening Reception

As part of the event, attendees had the option to join an evening reception, supported through ticket sales.

The reception provided an informal space to continue conversations, reflect on the day, and connect with others who share similar lived experience. It supported peer connection and helped strengthen relationships beyond the formal sessions.



Thank You

We would like to thank our supporters for their support as far as possible. This has helped bring people together and ensure that lived experience research is a priority.

While their support is greatly appreciated, we have had no influence over the content or delivery of the research. The research has been developed independently of the community.

ECPO 

**Boston
SCIENCE**

Advancing science

for their contribution in making this event
together, support meaningful discussion, and
remains at the centre of our work.

, it is important to note that they have had
of this event. All sessions and materials
to reflect the needs and voices of our
community.



Sanacare
Medisch Adviesbureau

ton
ntific

ience for life™

UKCPO receives funding from a variety of sources to support the work that we do. While we are grateful for this support, our supporters have no influence over our activities, priorities, or communications. We remain fully independent in all aspects of our work. We are proud to be an organisation led by, and dedicated to supporting, people living with obesity.