

STAMMIA ▶▶▶ FEST '26 CONFERENCE REPORT



STAMMIA



THANK YOU

We are hugely grateful for the financial support that made this conference possible, and especially to **Lara Cournoyer** for supporting the event for the third time.

We are also grateful for the legacies left by **Roy Tranckle** and **Owen Simons**, whose generosity helped support and enabled young people to attend this conference and take part in youth exchanges.

Thank you too to Iris Worldwide for their creative genius, JCDcaux UK for all their space, John Lennon & Thryve for sponsoring the Open Mic session.

And love also to EIS, Unison Forth Valley Health Branch ASLEF and the CWU.



A WEEKEND OF CONNECTION, PRIDE AND COMMUNITY

"I feel honestly so lucky that people put so much effort into the Stamma charity as the way Stammafest 26 has made me feel has changed my life."

STAMMAFest '26 brought just shy of 400 people who stammer, their families, allies, researchers and professionals together over four days in Northampton. And, not to bang our drum too much, but it was GREAT. Lovely to see so many members, brilliant to see so many First Timers and Lone Rangers. Great to see SO many parents and children. Feedback on the plenaries and workshops was lovely and STAMMAFest in the Wild West was a hoot.

"I made new friends in moments - everyone was so welcoming and supportive."

WELCOME RECEPTION

The conference opened on Thursday evening in the Leathersellers Hide, a beautiful fourth-floor space overlooking Northampton and the surrounding countryside. As the sun set on a slightly chilly evening, attendees gathered for canapés, drinks and conversation - reconnecting with old friends and meeting new ones.

Outgoing Vice Chair, Paul Fix, welcomed everyone and introduced our new President, Joanna Gaukroger. Joanna reminisced about her journey with STAMMA and why events such as STAMMAFest are so important.

Paul Roberts, Chair of STAMMAFest Organising Committee wrapped up with a warm welcome. The Committee had spent many long evenings agonising over details of this event - and hoped that all attendees feel welcome and free to talk how they wish over the coming days. And that this conference was as life-changing for them as it had been for him many moons ago.

Pictured, top to bottom: Paul Roberts, Chair of STAMMAFest Organising Committee, Joanna Gaukroger, STAMMA President, outgoing Vice Chair, Paul Fix.





PLENARY SPEAKERS





PLENARIES

"The Sunday plenary was amazing, an inspiring panel, great questions and moderation by Scroobius Pip, and so heartwarming to see people creating positive representations in the media and having good supportive experiences while doing so."

Friday began with a packed marquee for the opening plenary, **The Future of Stammering**. This featured a three-way discussion between Dr Clenton Farquharson, Jack Nicholas and Deputy CEO Kirsten Howells around approaches to therapy, the rise of Stammering Pride, and the challenges ahead - from NHS pressures to the impact of AI on communication. One attendee wrote "Such inspirational panellists - it really made me think about what 'building tomorrow' means." Another wrote "the interaction between Kirsten, Jack and Clenton was again inspiring."

Saturday's plenary, **AI: Friend or Foe**, tackled the opportunities and risks of emerging technologies. Speakers included Toju Duke (Founder of Diverse AI), Shaomei Wu (Founder of Alm Power.org), Vice Chair Paul Fix and STAMMA CEO Jane Powell. Attendees appreciated the honest discussion about bias, accessibility and the future of voice-activated systems. *"AI Friend or Foe. AI is great and can do amazing things but much work is still needed with regards to understanding speech impediments."*

Sunday's plenary, **Representation in the Media**, brought together Jessie (The Traitors), Nataliia (Great British Bake Off), Lewis (Call the Bailiffs) and choreographer Graeme Pickering - and was superbly hosted by Scroobius Pip. They spoke candidly about visibility, public perception and the power of seeing people who stammer on screen.



WORKSHOPS

Workshops, put on by the community, run through every STAMMAFest. Participants praised the depth, creativity and emotional resonance of the sessions. Here's what delegates said:

"The creative writing session... the depth of feeling impressed me."

"Luke Wyland's music session was very inspiring."

"It was beautiful meeting people sharing the same experiences as mine."

"I learned how critical self-worth is."

"Favorite? The self compassion workshop with Ben Farmer."

"I enjoyed the Public speaking. It was engaging and fun."

"I also really enjoyed Sam Simpson and Patrick Campbell's workshop."

"I am responsible for building my tomorrow' with Hanan Hurwitz. I thought this was the deepest, most profound and most useful workshop."

"Workshop with Kristel and other workshops mentioned that fear means face everything and rise and I'm using that everything."

"The self compassion and Avoidance workshop. Self compassion - and being more kind - and less critical of one's self was a real eye opener. Comparing Avoidance to a character -or finding out it's intention was something I had never really considered!"

"Improvisation. Good to be in the moment."





THE QUIZ

STAMMAFest is above all social. A time to meet and mix, share experiences, share food and enjoy being with one another. So, as is now tradition, Friday evening ended with 'The Quiz', magnificently compared by Paul Roberts, and put together by Paul, Dean Ridge and Jenny Packer. As ever, there was a fiendish plan to ensure no-one sat with who they knew! The room buzzed with laughter, rivalry and a little flavouring of chaos.





THE PARTY

STAMMAFest in the Wild West

Saturday night transformed the marquee into a cowboy-themed party, complete with live band, dancing and hay bales. The band put their heart into the music and people happily joined in with the line dancing. It was a joyful, relaxed celebration of community. The Organising Committee were blown away by just *how much* thought people had given to the evening - it was a sea of cowboy hats and boots, waistcoats and fringes. With the odd tutu thrown in.





FAMILY DAY

Running alongside STAMMAFest, Family Day is a dedicated programme for children, teens and parents. This year was our busiest ever, with nearly 100 attendees.

While the younger children took part in circus skills, free-flow sports and games, older children first had a session with actor and podcaster Scroobius Pip. Here they prepared to interview a celebrity - setting up all aspects of the prep. And in the next session Jessie from The Traitors duly arrived and was interviewed. Pip is currently preparing the interview for public broadcast.

Parents attended a panel of adults who stammer including David Skaith, the Mayor of York and North Yorkshire, who shared their experiences and what they wish they had known as a child. Then they had time to share with other families.

Following lunch, there were family-friendly workshops, where parents and children could take part in sessions with adults who stammer. Meeting adults who stammer with successful lives and careers can be hugely reassuring and a revelation for children.

There was a Junior Open Mic, where parents and delegates whooped and cheered as children and teenagers stepped forward and took the mic. Note for the next Open Mic, "Find someone with a heart of stone, so they can hold it together".

Even after just a few weeks since Family Day, parents reported increased confidence, acceptance and connection with the stammering community. They reported on the impact Family Day has had on their children, with children feeling proud, supported and part of something bigger. Every respondent rated the day 4 or 5 stars.











FEEDBACK

Overall attendee feedback across both events was overwhelmingly positive, demonstrating strong community connection, empowerment, and value: 95% of respondents stated they would attend STAMMAFest again, 90% found it to be value for money, and felt the event met their needs.

- **Personal Impact:** 87% of stammering attendees reported coming away feeling more positive about their stammering.
- **Family Day Success:** 100% of responding parents reported feeling more confident advocating for their child in school or social settings after attending.

What Worked Well

- **Networking & First-Timers Integration:** 77% rated the "Lone Rangers & First Timers" session and quiz night teamings as "Very much so" effective in helping them meet new people. Attendees praised the welcoming atmosphere created by staff and volunteers.
- **Workshop Engagement:** 60% found the workshops and plenaries "Extremely" engaging and thought-provoking. Open-mic sessions, research panels, and lived-experience talks were highlighted as standouts.
- **Family Day Impact:** The Junior Open Mic and Parent Roundtables received exceptional praise for providing children with a non-judgemental platform to express themselves and giving parents a supportive space to connect.
- **Venue & Quiet Spaces:** Overall venue amenities (66% Excellent) and quiet spaces (87% Excellent/Good) provided suitable environments for reflection and rest during the festival.





"This was my first time at STAMMAfest. I was overwhelmed by the friendliness and positivity of the experience.

The talks and workshops were so interesting, inspiring and thought-provoking. The event was also superbly organised and very enjoyable to attend.

I made new friends in moments and everyone was so welcoming and supportive. It felt it was an incredibly safe space.

I wish such an experience had been available 50 years ago when I was a young person who struggled so much with my stammer!

Finally, I was struck by the need for us, the stammering community, to continue to raise awareness of stammering and of our needs as people who stammer.

A huge thank you to all the organisers, presenters and participants. It was a great experience."

*"Came away speaking to lots of people/Creating lasting friendships/
Increased confidence/Opportunities/More knowledge around stammers./
Honestly it meant everything/ Feel like I've uncovered a new part of me/Felt
so supported/Less alone."*



THANK YOU



Planning for STAMMAFest starts shortly after conference closes. It is a community venture.

Speakers

We'd like to thank the speakers who gave their time: Jack Nicholas, Dr Clenton Farquharson, Toju Duke, Shaomei Wu, Paul Fix, Graeme Pickering, Nataliia Richardson, Lewis Tombs. A particular thanks to Scroobius Pip and Jessie Roux for going the extra mile and throwing themselves into Family Day.

Workshop Leaders

At the heart of STAMMAFest are our workshop leaders, who submit proposals months in advance and wait to hear if theirs are selected, then turn up on the day and deliver a wonderful kaleidoscope of events.

Organising Committee

Chair: Paul Roberts. Kirsten Howells, Dean Ridge, Jenny Packer, Jane Powell, Rory Sheridan. Marylyn Molisso led our volunteers. Bob Adams and Hilary Liddle did a fantastic job looking after the First Timers & Lone Rangers. Catherine Woolley led on Family Day.

Our Staff Jacqueline Fitzsimmons and Vidya Bijarnia spent WEEKS sorting out ticketing, they then stepped up to look after the Registration desk and were joined by Steven Halliday, Clara Burn and Manisha Vora. Throughout the conference, photos were taken by Adam Shaw - pictured on the right.

Our volunteers did another outstanding job. Nothing was too much trouble. Thank you to:

Anne Marie Withers
Gillian Rudd
Jack Nicholas
Kate Richardson
Leah Lynn
Louise Stringer
Lynda Buck

Michelle Paradies
Pearl Young
Rob Pinn
Ruth Cross
Susanne Platt
Trish Chilton
Wajid Hussain.





STAMMA

© STAMMA

stamma.org

Registered charity nos 1089967/SC038866