

# All Wales People First

## Talk Back

The National Voice of People with

Learning Disabilities in Wales

### Spring 2023



**mirror**  
ideas rights reflection  
members organisation review

**AWARDS  
DINNER &  
DISCO** JUNE 19TH  
6.30PM-11PM

**CARDIFF MARRIOTT**



Cost included for residential guests  
Additional places £35

To book, email  
Admin@allwalespeople1st.co.uk  
Closing date for bookings 26th May

#LDADFEST2023

## #LDAdFest2023 and #LDMIRROR Awards 19 - 20 June 2023

Bookings close 26th May Page 2

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## Editorial

Welcome to the Spring 2023 edition of Talk Back.

AdFest 2023 is getting close and we can't wait to see you all. The guest speakers and stalls are booked. We're ready to hear what you've got to say in the Round Robin conversations, to share information in workshops, and to dance the night away at Gerraint's nightclub!

Gig Buddies are also doing an AdFest night out on 19th June, for members who are interested in seeing a bit of what Cardiff has to offer at night.

Bookings for AdFest 2023 are still open, but not for long. You'll need to be quick to book a last minute place.

### **Bookings close on 26th May**

For more information about AdFest and to book your place go to our website or email [info@allwalespeople1st.co.uk](mailto:info@allwalespeople1st.co.uk)



**#LDAdFest2023 #LDMIRROR**

**The AWPf team**

# The Team

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# Member article

Faye Parrington

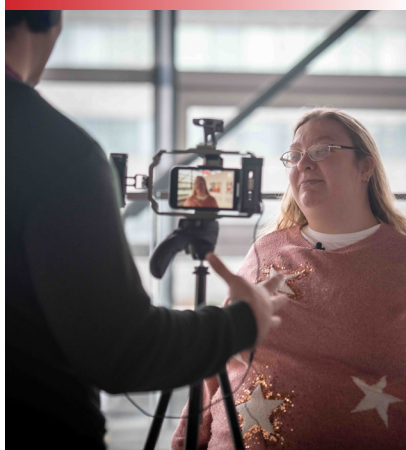


Hello, I'm Faye Parrington, member of Carmarthenshire People First and Our Voice our Choice Ceredigion.

I'm staying at a respite place in Swansea at the moment. I have a two-week stay here every 6 weeks. I'm supported to make food, go shopping, do activities and to generally have fun. I've made some friends here and the staff are lovely. Respite plays such a big part in my mental health now.



I've struggled with mental health since I was 12, and have had many stays in mental health hospitals. My longest stay was when I was detained in a Carmarthen facility for 7 months. Those were very dark times for me. The restraint I experienced had a bad impact on my wellbeing.



It's been two years since my last stay at a mental health hospital. I get down days but my busy routine and respite help to keep me focussed most of the time. If I feel down, I listen to music or talk things through with my Mum and both of those help.

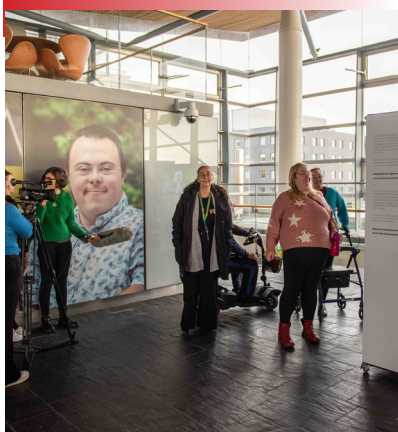
# Member article

## Parrington



My routine is busy most days. Keeping busy seems to help how I feel.

I volunteer at Carmarthen People First on Mondays. Have a Maths lesson on Tuesdays. I work in a shop in Cardigan on Wednesdays and Thursdays. On Fridays I go out with my Personal Assistant.



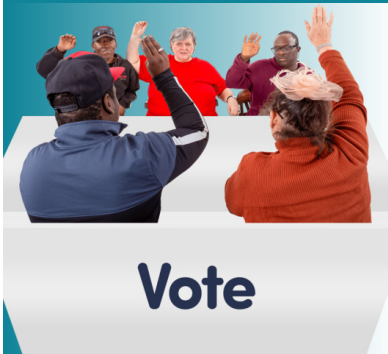
I attend Mencap Ceredigion Gateway Club social events three evenings a week. Affordability is getting tough for me and my friends who attend though. We're having to start paying subs to cover the higher venue costs. That's a lot by the time we pay for raffle and transport. It's already difficult meeting transport costs. Taxis are way too expensive for me and buses don't run after 7pm where I live. I often have to rely on lifts from family.



I hope the social events won't have to stop in future because people can't afford to attend. They are important to helping us to connect with friends. They play a big part in helping my mental health.

**Faye Parrington**

# National Council update



Every 2 years the Reps on the National Council must stand down. Groups can then hold an election to choose who represents them over the next 2 years. Reps can be on the National Council for a maximum of 6 years in a row.



This year, the new National Council Reps met for the first time in March at a 2 day residential meeting. The meeting was in Newport, South Wales. They spent time getting to know each other and learned more about the work of the National Council.



At the residential meeting, Reps were asked to elect a Chair and Vice Chair. The Chair and Vice Chair work together to run the National Council meetings and represent the National Council at other meetings. They also join the Board of Directors of All Wales People First.



5 people wanted to be Chair or Vice Chair. They each gave a presentation about why they would be a good Chair. They used the role description to say what experience they have.

# National Council update



Reps voted. The person with the most votes became the new Chair and the person with the next highest votes became the Vice Chair.

## **Meet the new Chair and Vice Chair of the National Council**

### **Chair – Tracy Austin.**

Tracy represents members on Anglesey in north Wales.

"I am a North Wales Flyers Coordinator for all 6 counties of North Wales. During the summer months, I volunteer for the National Trust and I do Karate in my spare time, which I am working on my 1st Kyu."



### **Vice Chair – Samantha Hall**

Sam represents members in Carmarthenshire.

"I work for Carmarthenshire People First, helping out and I work for Barod on the Assist My Life App. In my spare time I love to paint."



Tracy and Sam will be busy over the next few months getting ready for the next National Council meeting on 6th June and preparing to chair Adfest.

## Labels - a necessary evil or empowering banner?



Every few years, All Wales People First asks members what term we should use to describe the thing all members of AWPf have in common. Back in 2018, when we asked last, members chose to keep the label People with Learning Disabilities.

This year we asked National Council Reps what term they would like to use from now on.

Before Reps voted on the decision, Member Engagement Advisor Tracey Drew, talked with Reps about the difficulties with using this term.



All Wales People First believes that every person experiences their impairment or condition in their own way. It might cause you pain, or frustration or difficulty in doing things by yourself but how you experience these things is unique to you. For example, 2 people may both have Down's Syndrome but how they experience it will be different.

Your impairment or condition is not what disables you.

All Wales People First believes that it is the way people are treated or the way society sets things up that disables people. This is called the social model of disability.

For example, you might find it difficult to read



# Labels -

## a necessary evil or empowering banner?



because of the way your brain processes information. If a café only has a written menu, you are disabled by the café. If the café has a menu with pictures, you are not disabled by the café.

Another example. You use a wheelchair and need a support worker to help you use a toilet. At the shopping centre, there are only male or female toilets that are too small for 2 people. If there was a Changing Places in the shopping centre, you would not be disabled by the shopping centre.

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The social model of disability can also be seen in the way words are used.

When we talk about having a disability, people hear that the disability is yours and for you to deal with. This is not social model language because it is not the impairment or condition that disables you, it is the way people treat you.



Disability is the way you experience being disabled by others – it is not how your impairment or condition affects you.

# Labels - a necessary evil or empowering banner?



When we talk about society disabling people; it means that society can do something about it. This is social model language.

That doesn't mean that if society changed everything to be accessible, you would no longer have the condition or impairment, you would. BUT, you would not experience all the barriers that make it harder for you.

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The difference in words might not seem that big to you but disabled people have fought for a long time to get the language around disability to change to be more social model.

The wider disabled people movement do not like the term people with learning disabilities. They see the term as not being social model language.

The term learning disability mixes up your impairment with how you experience society disabling you. The term means you are disabled by the difficulty you have learning things. It is not your fault society does not teach you in a way that works for you.



## Labels - a necessary evil or empowering banner?



Members of the National Council talked for a long time about these differences in words and how they experience their impairments.

They talked about whether they want to be seen as a person first and their impairment second or whether it's important to identify proudly as part of a community. Most Reps agreed that it's important to be seen as a person first. There are still too many times they are not thought about or ignored.



Reps asked questions about the different words and came up with several other terms that could be used instead of people with learning disabilities.

Here are some of the things Reps said.

"I want something that makes me feel like a normal person." - **Harry**

"I'm autistic. I also consider myself to have learning disabilities. We need a label to help people know who we are." - **Bethan**

"People judge us no matter what label we use" "We need to be valued." - **Sammy**



## Labels - a necessary evil or empowering banner?



Reps also talked about how language changes. Some of the terms Reps found the most hurtful were terms used in the past, like 'mental age'.

Reps finally decided on 4 terms and voted. The 4 terms were

- Additional learning needs
- People with learning disabilities
- Learning difference
- Learning difficulty



After a very close vote between learning difference and learning disability, Reps chose to continue using people with learning disabilities.

The idea of losing a label that everyone recognises and makes it possible to identify your needs when asking for health or social care services won this time. Reps understood that the term does not fit with the social model of disability but also recognised the importance of choosing your own labels.



All Wales People First will continue to use the term **People with Learning Disabilities** until the members decide on a different term.

*Tracey Drew*

# Out and about with Gerraint Jones Griffiths



Hello all, there's lots been happening in my role as Outreach Worker since the last Talk Back.



On 1st March I spoke at the Developing Evidence Enriched Practice (DEEP) conference about my personal experience of autism and the challenges it has brought due to people's lack of understanding. It was a good event and great chatting with people and making some new contacts.



It was lovely to catch up with a few members for the Zoom SATV on 12th May. We talked about taxis. Are they easy to book? are they suitable for our needs? Are they too expensive? Is feeling safe important when we take a taxi? What makes us feel safe?



Gerraint's nightclub is going well and we always have a good crowd attending once a fortnight. If you fancy a bit of a chat, listening to some cool tunes and a chair dance, why not drop me an email for more information on how to get involved? The next nightclub is happening on 6th June.

**Gerraint Jones Griffiths**

# Chief Executive's update



All Wales People First are writing their MIRROR Strategy. This is our Business Plan.

The National Council are going to tell us what is important to them and what should be in the MIRROR Strategy.



We are also going to review our current MIRROR Strategy 2019-2023.

This will help us to look at what we did well and what we could have done better.

I was very pleased with the MIRROR Strategy 2019-2023 because it took honest feedback from our members, staff and the third sector and pledged to make improvements.



Unfortunately, Covid 19 had a big impact on our MIRROR Strategy because a lot of it was based on working in person with members. And to persuade local authorities to work in co-production with local groups to design services.

We still did a lot of the work, mostly online.



It seems to me that there are big challenges ahead and that inequality is bigger now than ever before.

There is less money to spend on services.

# Chief Executive's update



The NHS is struggling.

Many people are much poorer than they used to be.

Governments have so many problems to address.

These added pressures make it even harder for disabled people to achieve equality.

We need to really think about this for the next MIRROR Strategy.

We need to help the Welsh and possibly UK governments to think of better ways to do things. This of course will not be not easy.

I call on all members to speak to your national council representatives.

To tell them what you think the most important things for All Wales People First are. This will shape our MIRROR strategy.

Looking ahead to next year, a General Election in 2024 could be very important to the futures of disabled people.

We need to look very carefully at what political parties are offering.

We will share impartial information ahead of the General Election so that members can make up their own minds when it's time to vote.

**Joe Powell**



## News from groups



**Caerphilly People First** has been running weekly cookery sessions. This project encourages people to eat healthier and become more independent. 30+ people have attended each week. It has been lovely to see everyone coming together, learning new skills, becoming more confident in the kitchen, catching up with friends, and most of all, having fun.

In February we launched our wellbeing project. We provided everyone with a copy of the health profile and a guide on how to fill it out. Health Profiles give people important information about you, which will help them to give you the right care at the right time.

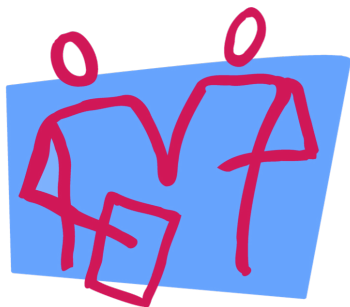


We have also been taking part in music and wellbeing sessions with RecRock, an organisation which helps people improve their skills and confidence through music and other creative activities.



We have been enjoying relaxing mindfulness sessions with Dr Andrew Lewis from Equanimity at Libanus Lifestyle Centre in Blackwood. We have learned how to practice mindfulness and how it can overcome anxiety.

# News from groups



putting people first  
rhoi pobl yn gyntaf



## People First Bridgend

It has been an exciting period for People First Bridgend. Our membership is growing. We have welcomed several new members to our Advisory Team, including some that we lost contact with during the pandemic.

We have been trying to recruit a new manager for the past 6-months, but we couldn't get the right person. Adam is staying with us and we're hoping to recruit 3 new staff.

Joe Powell from AWPf visited us and did a presentation on self-advocacy and human rights and the bill of rights. We decided to write a letter to the government asking them to consider how the bill of rights would affect people with learning disabilities.

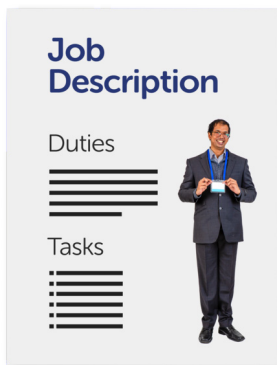
As part of our council's learning disability development plan, the film Heavy Load was shown at the Porthcawl Pavilion. It was supported by BAVO, Gig Buddies and First Choice Housing Association. The film's director and Heavy Load's bass player did a question-and-answer session.

Bridgend council invited us to speak about our experiences at the council's chambers. It was part of a scrutiny meeting, where councillors check social services' plans to make sure they are okay. Two of our self-advocates, Raymond and Adam attended the meeting and spoke on behalf of people with learning disabilities.

## News from groups



**Conwy Connect** - During our last face to face Forum meeting in April, Leanne Davies came to talk to us. Leanne who works for Conwy Connect told us some exciting news. Conwy Connect are hiring someone for a new job. This job is for a Regional Self Advocacy Officer.



The new Officer will be travelling around the six counties in North Wales helping Self Advocacy Groups to get more people involved in their local groups. Also, to help adults with Learning Disabilities set up new Self Advocacy groups in their local area.



This was the exciting part...

Leanne asked us if we would be happy to be interviewed for a short film. This film would help to advertise the job.

Each member of our Forum group had a chance to explain why Self Advocacy is important and why we like coming to our Forum meetings.



We were all so happy to be involved in this film and be able to share our views about the importance of Self Advocacy.

Here is the link to the Forums webpage, the film is shown here.

[www.conwy-connect.org.uk/forum](http://www.conwy-connect.org.uk/forum)

# News from groups



## Newport People First

Last Friday we held our AGM which was a great success after the long and dreadful absence because of Covid and lockdowns. It was brilliant seeing familiar faces after a long time! We started off with Zarah doing a PowerPoint presentation, explaining about our projects from the previous 6 months. It was a great experience for Zarah to brush up on her public speaking skills and involve the members in adding their own feedback and experiences of taking part in each project!



Joe Blackley, Linda and Alex Perry spoke about the different roles and their own thoughts on Chair, Treasurer and funding regarding NPF and what to do this year. We nominated the future Trustees, Treasurer, Chair and Complaints Officer. We then talked about the new job roles for the upcoming Project Co-ordinator and an Admin replacement job vacancy to fill aswell. We finished the meeting with a celebratory meal of scrumptious piping hot fish and chips!



# facebook®



**All Wales People First, Chief Executive - Joe Powell - 22 March**

Was lovely to meet with ADSS (Associated Directors of Social Services) today in Oswestry. We were discussing the possible way ahead re the new advocacy strategy which looks to try to produce a plan for the Welsh government that can strengthen and safeguard all forms of advocacy.

The ADSS researchers will be delivering a workshop at AdFest in June and they want to hear the views of members about their experiences. This work is part of the new LD strategy, partly as a result of us raising the concerns of members and groups about the general state of advocacy following Covid 19. We also pledged to focus on saving/strengthening self advocacy in our 2021 Manifesto.

The meeting was very positive. We will make sure members and local self advocacy groups accross Wales are included in this work.

## Round up



**All Wales People First, Chief Executive - Joe Powell 20 March**

Was lovely to meet Gemma the CEO of Infinity Cymru his morning at the Ramada Plaza hotel in Wrexham. We met to share ideas of better ways to deliver good life outcomes for people with support needs and how both organisations could possibly work together to share our learning. Infinity Initiatives is well established in Manchester but it looking to establish itself in Wales. We will assist them to do so in anyway we can. Infinity Initiatives takes a very human and dignified approach in reducing inequalities. It's refreshing to meet another like minded organisation. For more about Infinity Initiatives please see link below.

<https://infinityinitiatives.com>

