

All Wales People First

Talk Back

The National Voice of People with

Learning Disabilities in Wales

Spring 2024



"Through Our Eyes"

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"Through Our Eyes"



Editorial

Welcome to the Spring 2024 edition of Talk Back. The year has been a busy one so far and lots of plans still to come.

AdFest 2024 was amazing! We're chuffed to bits that so many of you joined us in person at the Future Inn Cardiff. Keep a look out for our AdFest report over the next few months!

For the first time ever, we're excited to be attending this year's National Eisteddfod in Pontypridd at the end of July. We will be launching Through our Eyes on Tour. If you're planning a day out at the Eisteddfod, please stop by the Third Sector hub to say hi and do a #ThroughOurEyes0 selfie.

If we haven't managed to catch up with you in person this year, there are lots of ways you can let us know what matters to you. Here are just a few ways - doing a diary update with Claire or Kelly; a video clip; an article for Talkback; speaking with your National Council Rep; attending SATV with Gerraint.

Get in touch with one of us if you want to get involved.

The AWPFF team

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Member article

Anita Clasby



It has been a very difficult time for me recently. I want to share my experience in the hope that speaking up will stop the same thing happening to others.

I had a surprise letter about my Personal Independence Payment (PIP) to say that my benefit had stopped with immediate effect. I haven't had a PIP review recently and it isn't due for 2 years. It was a big shock and is causing me a lot of stress and anxiety.



The letter didn't give any reason for stopping my PIP and I have not been able to find out any more through calling the PIP office. The letter says that I might have to pay back about £49,000! All the PIP office could tell me is that their computer system confirms my PIP has been stopped even though my review wasn't due for another 2 years.



Because I don't know a reason why PIP has been stopped, it has been difficult to challenge the decision. I cannot use the usual process called *Mandatory review* because I don't have any information to

Member article

Anita Clasby



base my challenge on.

I had a call about my Carer's Allowance benefit a couple of weeks before the PIP letter came. The person insisted on doing a telephone review for Carer's Allowance immediately. I explained that I have a learning disability and needed to arrange support. They agreed to call back in a few hours. I wasn't given any choice about a convenient day or time. It's a big worry if the same is happening to others. A lot of people with learning disabilities don't have access to good support for these sorts of things at short notice.



The questions they asked me for the Carer's Allowance review were very confusing. At first it felt like a friendly chat. I can only assume they did a PIP review at the same time without telling me. It's frightening how dishonest and inaccessible the whole experience has been. I haven't heard any news about my Carer's Allowance yet.



I'm grateful to my Housing Association for supporting me. It all feels very confusing and inaccessible to me as a person with a learning disability and Autism.

National Council update



The National Council are a group of 22 elected members who represent every county in Wales. We meet 4 times a year. We talk about what is important to members. In March, Reps met for 2 days. We played some games to get to know each other better. We talked about a new business for All Wales People First.



The most important thing we talked about though was the Homes not Hospitals campaign. Reps agreed to support the protest outside the Senedd on 17th April. We came up with slogans for banners and agreed who was going.



It's important that All Wales People First speaks out for all people with learning disabilities, especially people locked away. We heard from Simone Aspis from Inclusion London. Simone told us about the Free Our People Campaign. Reps voted to join the campaign.



In June we heard about Reps experiences in the polling stations. Reps feel the new rules about using photo ID to vote are another

National Council update

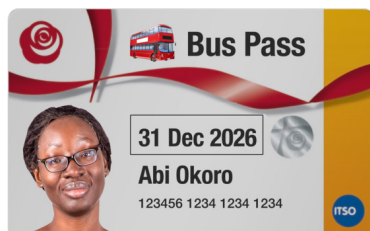


barrier to them having a say in important decisions.

I urge all TalkBack readers to use their vote on July 4th.



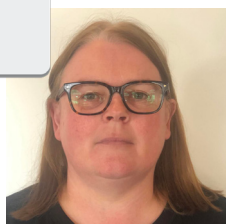
Reps talked about safeguarding and what a new safeguarding policy for All Wales People First should be like. Reps want to be treated like adults and be included in decisions about their safety. Although members can feel vulnerable at times, we don't want our rights to be ignored when decisions are made about our safety.



Reps also told us about issues in their areas. The main issue continues to be transport. Applying for a bus pass is difficult to do without support. Tom from Denbighshire said support workers are refusing to use their cars in work because of insurance costs. Taxis are expensive. Without transport, members find it hard to go out and do the things they want to do.

September

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The next National Council meeting is on 3rd September in West Wales.

by Chairperson, Tracy Austin

General Election 2024:

Member interview - Sarah Griffiths

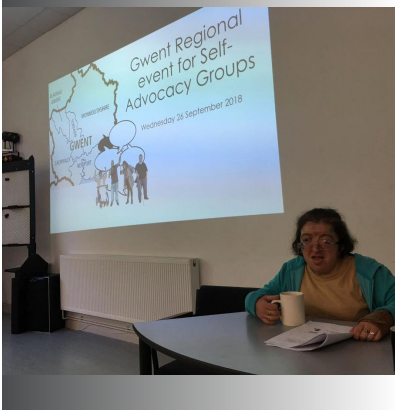


Do you vote?

I do, I put my vote in by post. I used to do it by going down to the election place but I found there were too many barriers.

Why do you think it's important?

Yes! it's important to have your say.



Is it easy?

By post is easy but at my local polling station, the last time I went there, there were too many barriers for me. Barriers for getting my wheelchair in to the building, the table being too high, and information that isn't easy to understand.



Would you prefer to vote by post or in person?

If the polling station was more accessible I'd prefer to put my vote in there myself. It's not really the same doing it by post. I don't feel confident that my vote has been received at the right place and recorded.



General Election 2024:

Member interview - Sarah Griffiths



How could voting be made easier for more people with Learning Disabilities?

I think polling stations should be accessible for everyone who wants to vote in person. They need to have good access for wheelchairs and accessible information.



If the buildings can't be made accessible then I think they should move the voting to somewhere else.



I think there should be more information available in Easy Read. I don't understand a lot of the information about how to vote and who to vote for.

If you could pick one thing for the new government to sort, what would it be?

That's a good question! I'd ask them to think more about people with learning disabilities. Think about better services and facilities.



Thinking about our local gathering centre, we don't have much room at the moment, it's too crowded and not ideal for long term.

General Election 2024:

Chief Executive - Joe Powell



On Thursday 4th July 2024 , there is to be a General Election. The General Election decides who runs the United Kingdom. The UK Government runs some things in Wales such as:

- Benefits
- Justice (police and courts)
- Human Rights

This means that the decisions made by the UK Government affect us in some things.

The UK Government also funds the Welsh Government.

Welsh Government then uses this money to fund the things we need in Wales.

Such as: The NHS, transport, housing and social care. The future of Wales relies partly on how well the UK Government funds and supports it.

This is why it is important that people with learning disabilities vote in the General Election.

It is up to you who you vote for. Find out what each party is saying. And who you think will do the best job. And most importantly of all.

Have your vote on the 4th July 2024.

Lets take our place as active citizens in Wales.

Victory for self-advocacy.

Joe Powell



Out and about with Gerraint Jones Griffiths



It was good to catch up with members at the National Council in March. We did some video clips for Tik Tok. Interviews with Richard, Zarah and Sam who shared what it's like being a National Council Rep. We did a clip for International Women's Day too. If you missed them on Tik Tok, take a look at our account **@allwalespeoplefirst**



On 22nd April, we started filming for a new member video. All I can say for now is 'watch this space'. I'll keep you posted!



During SATV on 26th April we talked about charging for Care. Your contributions helped to write a consultation response. I look forward to seeing you for the next SATV on 29th June, when we will be talking about the General Election and voting.



Don't forget to keep in touch by joining me on Zoom every other Tuesday night for Gerraint's Nightclub. Joining details are on Facebook and Insight.

Gerraint Jones Griffiths

News from groups



Caerphilly People First recently took part in the 'Counting Your Way to Good Health' programme with the Skills for Life Multiply project. We talked about health, what might affect your health, and how to improve your health.



Some members recently worked at the University of South Wales where we role-played patients who had been admitted to the hospital with various health conditions. The training was provided to third-year student nurses, and it was great to see the knowledge the students have about learning disabilities and the adjustments that need to be made when someone is admitted to hospital.



Ffion and Christy recently travelled to Aberystwyth where Ffion delivered a relationship course to Mencap Ceredigion and Our Voice Our Choice. Ffion covered friendships, how to make friends, how to deal with arguments, what makes a good boyfriend and girlfriend, and online safety.



News from groups



Powys

Theatr Wildcats is an inclusive theatre company, who use drama, music, movement and dance as a way to get our voices heard. The group meets every week at Theatr Brycheiniog in Brecon to create and rehearse original pieces of performance.



So far the group have performed in venues across Powys including theatres, art centres, football clubs, older person homes and even a church. We have performed several times for Brecon Jazz as well as the Unity Festival in Cardiff and we are building up quite a following!



We are very excited to announce we been awarded a National Lottery Awards for All grant. This will enable us to run two weekly Theatr Wildcat groups from September for two years. Over the summer we will be running taster sessions for those who are thinking about joining but unsure what it is all about.



Follow us on Facebook @theatrwildcats to find out what we are up to next!

News from groups



Newport

For our Saturday Social we went to another hidden gem called Newport Rising. It's a volunteering place dedicated to the Chartist Movement.

It is on the high street of Newport city centre. It was a lovely break especially for those of us who aren't too keen on shopping.



It was awesome getting nuggets of the Chartist March history. All 4 walls of the shop were covered in memorabilia and we got to take selfies while holding a replica gun each!



We are planning another visit where we will ask if more members want to join us and learn a lot more about the chartist movement.



Zarah Kaleem

News from groups



Conwy Connect Forum

We have continued to meet weekly to discuss issues that affect us living in Conwy. Recently we got involved in a Focus Group to discuss Changing Places toilets. Everyone had a chance to say where facilities are needed in their local area.



We had a visit from a Maltese Delegation. Members got together in the office to talk to the visitors about their lives and all of the amazing things that Conwy Connect offer which enhance their lives.



One of our members Richard Redmond was nominated for a Learning Disability and Autism Leaders' List award. He was nominated in the work and education category. As a finalist, Richard travelled to London to the O2 Arena for the event. He then found out that he was the Award Winner.



Winners are featured in national newspapers, on national radio and their stories are seen by thousands of people online. Huge congratulations to Richard!

News from groups



Your Voice Advocacy

We had a visit from a local MP to talk about transport problems.



We sent letters to the other local MPs about transport too.



Our group made interview questions for new Social Services staff and one of our members was on the panel.



We met the new staff and our members were very happy with them. They will help sort problems out for people using social services.

News from groups



We have had more funding for our cooking group and are setting up more cooking groups in new areas.



Some of our members did a food and hygiene level 2 course and 1 member used these new skills to get a job.



A member trustee chaired our AGM and our board is member led now.

We are looking for new professional trustees to support the charity.



We are planning a voting workshop to make sure that everyone feels able to vote for the General Election.

News from groups

People First Bridgend
Pobl Yn Gyntaf Pen-Y-Bont



putting people first
rhoi pobl yn gyntaf

People First **Bridgend** have had a very busy and exciting few months.

Adam Bartle has done a brilliant job spreading the word about People First Bridgend. He has met with different services to give a presentation about what People First Bridgend does. Adam had lots of positive things to say: "It (the self-advocacy group) helped me to build new skills, to live more independently and to feel more in charge in my own community".



Craig Channell, Chairperson of the Regional Community Workgroup, recently gave a presentation at the 'My Community Event', at the University of South Wales. Craig understands the issues that people with learning disabilities face in the community, like employment and volunteering opportunities, travel and daytime opportunities. He is passionate about being a strong voice for learning disabilities.

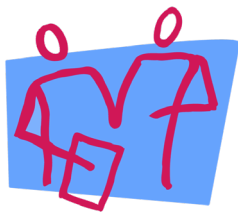


We have been doing more work with Swansea University Social Work department. This includes interviewing people who want to



News from groups

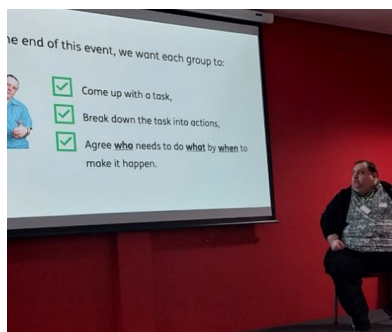
People First Bridgend
Pobl Yn Gyntaf Pen-Y-Bont



putting people first
rhoi pobl yn gyntaf

go on the social work course and delivering learning disability awareness and communication training to the students.

We have been working hard with South Wales Police too! We really enjoyed helping them with their Specialist Interview Course at the Police Learning Centre in Bridgend. They wanted our help to get better at interviewing people with learning disabilities. Members watched a short video clip of a crime and were then interviewed by a police officer. The tour around the learning centre was very exciting!



We have had 'Strategy Days' where we have looked at opportunities and challenges for People First Bridgend, and they have included the voices of members from the self-advocacy group, BSSG, and staff and trustees.



A nice finish to all our Strategy work was welcoming Joe Powell to our group! He taught us so much about Self-Advocacy and helped us to think about our rights and why we need People First Bridgend.

facebook®



All Wales People First, Chief Executive - 8 May

Was a real pleasure to join with Mencap Cymru on behalf of the LD Consortium in Wales to support Dawn Cavanagh and Stolen Lives to meet Jayne Bryant MS re the Stolen Lives manifesto. We were also supported by Sioned Williams AS/MS Chair of the Cross Party Group on Learning Disability. I thought it was an excellent meeting and I look forward to feeding back to the All Wales People First National Council in June.

Dawn lead the process excellently and did parents and people with learning disabilities across Wales proud.

Learning Disability Wales All Wales Forum of Parents and Carers. - AWF
Down's Syndrome Association Cymorth Cymru

Round up



All Wales People First, Chief Executive - 22 May

Attended the 10th meeting of the Disability Task Force on zoom this morning. It was the first meeting co-chaired by Leslie Griffiths MS, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice, replacing the previous minister Jane Hutt. Leslie re-iterated the Welsh Government's commitment to working in co production with people with disabilities. This afternoon I spoke about my experiences of employment at Policy Insight Wales ' Neurodivergence in the workplace wales conference.' Was lovely to see Angela Kenvyn and Gerraint J Griff at the event too. They spoke about the Engage to Change project.

