



# All Wales People First

# Talk Back

The National Voice of People with

Learning Disabilities in Wales

## Summer 2024



"Through Our Eyes"

## Through our Eyes at the Eisteddfod

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**"Through Our Eyes"**



## Editorial

Welcome to the Summer 2024 edition of Talk Back. We haven't stopped since the last Edition of Talkback! We're already thinking about next year's AdFest. The planning group will be meeting in a few months. We look forward to sharing this year's AdFest report soon.

Thanks to you all for continuing to engage with us on our social media platforms, through SATV online and in person, and through other events. It's thanks to your contributions that we've been able to respond to consultations about PIP; Social Care; Mental Health; Housing and Support; Charges for care. Keep reading to see what the team has been up to over the last few months.

If we haven't managed to catch up with you in person this year, remember 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 AWPf team**

# The Team

**Joe Powell**  
Chief Executive  
[joe@allwalespeople1st.co.uk](mailto:joe@allwalespeople1st.co.uk)



**Kelly Stuart**  
Policy and Communications Manager  
[kelly@allwalespeople1st.co.uk](mailto:kelly@allwalespeople1st.co.uk)



**Victoria Sidwell Brown**  
Business and Finance Manager  
[victoria@allwalespeople1st.co.uk](mailto:victoria@allwalespeople1st.co.uk)



**Tracey Drew**  
Membership Engagement Advisor  
[tracey@allwalespeople1st.co.uk](mailto:tracey@allwalespeople1st.co.uk)



**Claire Morgan**  
Communications Officer  
[claire@allwalespeople1st.co.uk](mailto:claire@allwalespeople1st.co.uk)



**Gerraint Jones-Griffiths**  
Outreach Worker  
[gerraint@allwalespeople1st.co.uk](mailto:gerraint@allwalespeople1st.co.uk)



**Jessica Keeble**  
Events & Engagement Assistant  
[jessica@allwalespeople1st.co.uk](mailto:jessica@allwalespeople1st.co.uk)



# 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. Reps met in Cardiff in Swansea on 3rd September.



We had 3 visitors to the meeting. Gerraint and Elisa came to ask about a new research project they want All Wales People First to run. The project will help people with learning disabilities to be researchers and will collect information about people across Wales. They hope this will help everyone know more about people with learning disabilities.

Elisa is a researcher for Cardiff University.



Researchers ask questions and look at data to find answers to set questions. The results of research help to inform services and government policy. Cardiff University would be a partner in the project.

Other partners would be Learning Disability Wales and The All Wales Forum of Parents and Carers.



Reps all agreed the project was a good idea. Jon Day from Social Care Wales also came to the meeting. Jon talked about the Social

# National Council update



**Support**

Care Workforce Development plan. Many members are concerned that there are not enough support workers or social workers. The plan says what Social Care Wales is doing to recruit new support staff and to make sure the people already in jobs are happy and well trained.



Reps told Jon that not having enough support staff stops them doing the things that are important to them.

“Not having enough staff means people are missing doctor and hospital appointments. We can’t go out or do the things we want.”

“We need more staff who can drive. There are no buses after 5pm and if there is no driver on I can’t go out. We have to plan a long time in advance.”



Reps also told us about issues that members in their areas have. Karl in Torfaen told us that disability hate crime is a problem.

Adam from Swansea told us that members are worried about energy costs going up and the cost of living.

December

3



The next National Council meeting is on 3rd December in north Wales.

**by Chairperson, Tracy Austin**

## Member article

Zarah Kaleem



I am a Shia Muslim woman with a learning disability. I didn't have an official diagnosis until 2008. I personally feel supported and valued by my family and friends, but I think learning disability is often hidden and not spoken about in Muslim communities.



I used to go to community parties and Mosque regularly, but I felt people would look at me in ways that made me feel uncomfortable. Like I wasn't a real adult. It wasn't good for my wellbeing so I don't go any more. I follow my faith in other ways though. Like daily prayer and Ramadan.



I think there are a lot of extra barriers for people with learning disabilities who are Muslim. In my experience we are rarely seen in paid jobs. Maybe some do volunteering, but most seem very much hidden out of sight.

When I started a paid job it was a big surprise for my family and friends. At first they wondered how I'd managed it. They didn't quite understand. They're very proud of me. I'd love to see change happen for more people with learning disabilities in Muslim

## Member article

Zarah Kaleem



Communities. I wish I had the courage to be part of making those changes happen. I think a start would be to make an appointment to speak at my local Mosque.

That would take a lot of courage on my part though. I'd like to do it, but I don't feel ready yet. I wouldn't be able to choose a support worker to go with me to a Mosque. That doesn't help my situation. My support would have to be a Muslim woman.

Gareth who supports me at Newport People First couldn't support me. That would go against the cultural rules.



Things are so different when I'm working at People First, I feel equal, I feel valued and surrounded by like-minded people. A few other members follow the Muslim faith like me, some are Christian, and some don't follow any faith. We're a good team.

I'm well connected with other People First Groups too. During the years I've been part of People First and around self advocacy my confidence has improved.

***Zarah Kaleem, Newport People First***



# Out and about with Gerraint Jones Griffiths



**On 12th July** I visited Newport People First for SATV. SATV has been online a lot lately so it was great to get the show back on the road! Members shared their views and experiences about PIP, which helped our response to an official consultation.



**On 19th July** I attended the Trust Matters Conference at the University of South Wales. The event focused on diversity and the work the University is doing to include everyone in research. As you might have guessed, I enjoyed networking and talking about diversity with people who attended.



**On 24th July** I went to Birmingham with Jenny from Cwm Taf People First. I'm representing AWPf on the group's project with the British Institute of Human Rights.



**On 6th August** Jess and I visited Cardiff People First for SATV. We talked about wellbeing and a consultation on housing and support.

Please let me know if you want me to come along to your group to do SATV.

Join me on Zoom every other Tuesday night for Gerraint's Nightclub.

***Gerraint Jones Griffiths***



# Through our Eyes at The Eisteddfod



We had a stall in the voluntary hub at this year's National Eisteddfod in Pontypridd. We were talking about our plans to tour the Through our Eyes photography Exhibition across Wales.

The Through our Eyes project finished in December 2022. It produced a series of pictures showing people with learning disabilities how they like to be seen - Doing jobs, hobbies, socialising, spending time with their partners, their children and their families. Lots of visitors were keen to see the exhibition in their area. They put a spot on our map of Wales to show us where they'd like to see us. Thanks to everyone who stopped to chat and to support the tour with a selfie in the #ThroughOurEyes0 #TrwyEinLlygaid0 selfie frame.



Do you recognise some of our Eisteddfod stall visitors in these pictures?

You can see more pictures and video clips on our Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Tik Tok accounts.

Next we're off to Pontio at Bangor University with the full exhibition. More information soon.



# Chief Executive's update



This year's General Election was very interesting. There was a landslide Labour win, meaning Labour won a lot of seats across the country. It was bigger majority win over other parties than when Labour won the General Election in 1997. The Conservative Party won the second highest number of seats.



The Liberal Democrats returned as the third biggest party in Westminster. Reform's Nigel Farage won his first ever seat as an MP. Any new Government brings hope of a positive change,



But the positive changes which the political parties promised in their manifestos did not include positive changes for people with disabilities.



It seems we are still politically invisible. Whichever party won the General Election was going to face huge challenges and have to make difficult decisions.

There is a lot of debt and a lot of problems, especially with health and social services, such as:

- The NHS
- Care Service Staffing
- Day Centres

These are extraordinary times.

# Chief Executive's update



This uncertainty can be worrying for us as disabled people.

We need to keep doing what we have been doing.

Speaking up to make the new Government understand the challenges we face.

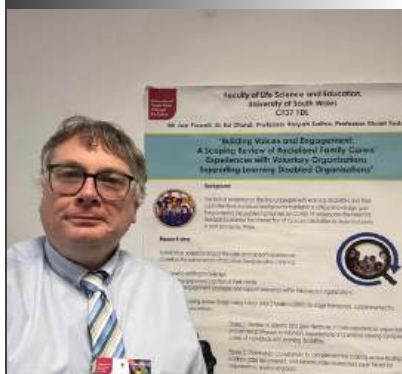
Things are a little uncertain right now

We hope the UK Government's new autumn budget will make things a bit clearer in lots of ways .

Especially since the Welsh Government will be able to plan and decide how to spend money from the UK Government.

We have a new First Minister for Wales and there have been some changes in the cabinet. This means we need to build some new relationships.

We will continue to work with members and the Welsh Government to promote the importance of self-advocacy.



Nothing is certain except our determination. To work and influence change together.



We will keep you updated and included as ever.

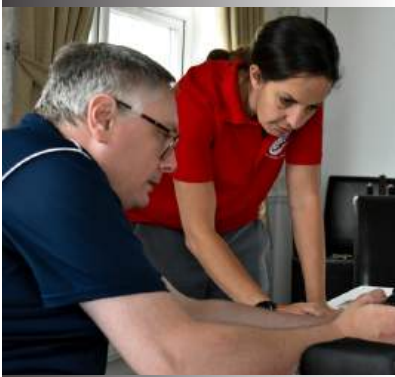
Victory for Self-Advocacy!

# A Personal Assistant's job

Paul Sutton



One of our Board Members, Paul Sutton has shared his experience of being a Personal Assistant (PA). Paul has another full time job too.



PAs are employed by people who have been assessed as needing support. The person is given money to buy their own support instead of being given a service. In some areas there are organisations who can help to recruit PAs. Paul Said "I like working with a person who has real control and choices. I know that if I'm not suitable I can be stopped from working" Some PAs work full time, but lots work part time like Paul. The kind of things that PAs do include support with personal care, taking part in activities, providing companionship, driving, cleaning or shopping.



Paul thinks some people with learning disabilities who get direct payments may like to have a PA. Having a PA can give choice and control to the person needing support. Paul also thinks that some people with a learning disability could do a paid PA job.



What do you think? would you like to learn more about having a PA or doing a PA job? Let us know.

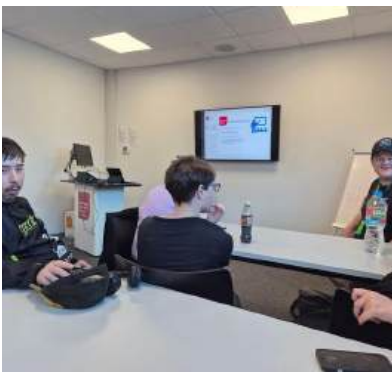
## News from groups



**Caerphilly People First** attended a co-production lunch to talk about how to make Gwent healthier over the next ten years. The goal was to share ideas and work together to improve health services in the area. We discussed how different groups can work together to improve healthcare.



TRAC members Ffion, Amy, Natalie, Gethin, and James took part in panel discussion with learning disability nursing students at the University of South Wales. We shared our lived experiences of healthcare services. We offered the students a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by individuals with learning disabilities.



The session was a powerful reminder of the importance of listening to and learning from those with lived experience in order to drive meaningful change in healthcare.



We met with Social Firms Wales to discuss barriers to employment for individuals with learning disabilities and physical disabilities. We also hear how Social Firm Wales support employment needs.

# News from groups



**Cardiff People First** is run by people with a Learning Disability for people with a Learning Disability. We have a meeting every week, this is a representative meeting to feed into planning.

We deliver Learning Disability training.

We give out free period products to prevent period poverty.

We have Bucket Club for people to have adventures. Members have been to authentic world food places. They have done sponsored zipline at Millennium Stadium.



Sarah Thomas runs a bereavement project. It aims to support members to start their own groups in their local area. The meetings give opportunities to talk about personal experiences.



Community voices by Zarah is for people with a learning disability from diverse ethnic communities, who are struggling being part of their community. Lots of work is needed to raise learning disability awareness in multi faith communities. We are trying to connect with community leaders about this.



# News from groups



**Carmarthenshire  
People First**

An organisation of and for  
adults with learning disabilities



**Carmarthenshire People First** have asked members what they wanted for self-advocacy in the future. Did they want to keep the same groups as before Covid or something a bit different?

Members said “let’s do something different!”. Members said they didn’t understand why people needed to be together just because they had a learning disability, learning difficulty and/or neurodiversity. Members asked for smaller groups that were activity focussed so when people got together they had common interests and lots to talk about. We held some Taster Sessions to see how this new way was going to work. We have regular weekly activities, monthly events and seasonal events like a summer barbeque, summer trip, visit to a Christmas market, the Ball and the Annual General Meeting. People can dip in and out of the activities depending on what interests them.

Members discuss their lives and help each other to solve day to day issues. Members can access our Professional Advocacy team and all our training as well.

# News from groups



**Your Voice Advocacy** joined the Disability Network Group at the Waterfront Museum for a One Stop Info Shop.

We were asked to plan questions for an awareness session with student nurses at Swansea University.



We worked with the Paul Ridd Foundation at Morriston Hospital to make sure staff know about and use Health Profiles.

RCT People First joined us to talk with the Health Board about training staff to reduce Restrictive Practices.



Neil did a talk at the workshop about why Easy Read is so important and we heard from other groups and companies too.

We took part in a Transport workshop with West Glamorgan Regional Partnership.



We are starting our Count Me In project in Gorseinon, to build links across the community.



# News from groups



**Gwynedd Tea at Three** talked about politics at our recent meetings. We discussed the General Election, candidates, party manifestos, and what the election means for us as a community.



The manifestos didn't seem to reflect our needs or concerns. We couldn't see any plans for us. We couldn't help feeling overlooked.



We were very disappointed after the last Welsh Senedd Elections. A local candidate promised they would fight for a dedicated Disability Minister. After the election we found it hard to get in touch to find out if it was raised for discussion at the Senedd.



Tea at Three think that we need to be more active. We talked about the importance of continuing to self-advocate for our needs. During elections and beyond.

We need to keep asking questions, and holding our elected officials accountable.

# News from groups

People First Bridgend  
Pobl Yn Gyntaf Pen-Y-Bont



putting people first  
rhoi pobl yn gyntaf

**People First Bridgend** - Congratulations to Craig Channell on his MIRROR Award! Craig was nominated for all his hard work as Chairperson of the Regional Learning Disability Community Workgroup.

Swansea Bay NHS visited the Advisory Team and did a workshop on Restrictive Practices. What we said in the workshop will be used to make staff training better so that Restrictive Practices are used less and only as the last option.



Leanne interviewed candidates for the Social Work Courses at Swansea University.

We met with the Corporate Director of Social Services Bridgend. We shared our experiences of the Council's social care services over the past year. We've had great experiences with our social workers and support staff and are treated with dignity and respect. But there are not enough social workers and support staff. Staff shortages mean we have less choice about what we can do and when we want to do it, this is a problem. Services should not determine our life; services should help us lead the life we want.



# News from groups



**Vale People First** - Liz Davidson will be leaving us after 20 Years in her role as Manager/service coordinator.

Liz has been amazing to keep us going, running our events, getting funding for us with a variety of projects and much more. Liz has always put members first. If it wasn't for Liz, Vale People First wouldn't be here today.



Liz's work has been outstanding and members of Vale People First appreciate her passion and dedication to the organisation.

I am the Chair-Trustee of the group and it has been an honour working with Liz for so many years.



We are now looking for a new Service Coordinator.

Whoever takes on the role must have passion, dedication and work hard, always putting the members first. They need to go above and beyond to help get our member's voices heard.



***Kurtis Marshall***

# facebook



**All Wales People First, Chief Executive - 19 July**

Attended the 'Trust Matters' conference at the University of South Wales in Treforest today along with Tracey, Gerraint and Jessica.

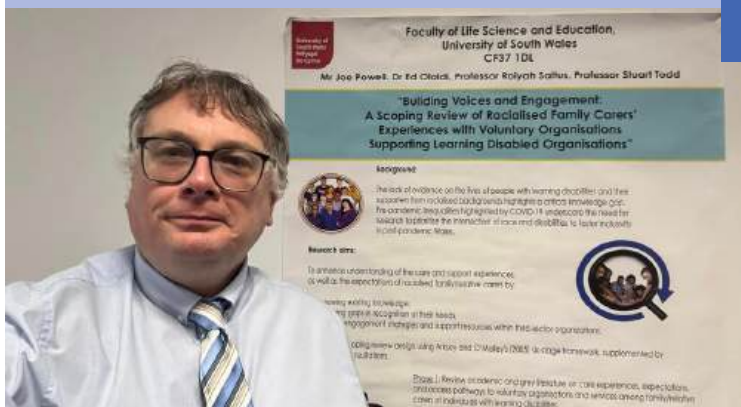
The event focused on Diversity and the work the University are doing to include everyone in inclusive research.

Something Professor Ruth Northway instigated many years ago and the University are keen to continue. Ruth Chaired today's event too.

Zarah Kaleem from Newport People First and Cardiff People First spoke about her excellent work too.

University students including myself showcased the research that they are doing to increase inclusion and diversity with the USW.

Diversity is a big priority for All Wales People First and it was a pleasure to have been involved in and gain invaluable knowledge from the event.



# Round up



**All Wales People First, Chief Executive - 2 September**

Today members of Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) attended a meeting with MPs in London to talk about the deaths of disabled people as a result of benefit reforms and to leave a copy of John Pring's book for every MP in Westminster.....

These are very worrying times for disabled people. This could be our last chance to make the case for disabled people before the October budget. ITV were there to film it and I really hope they do justice to what happened today.

Here is a picture of me outside the DWP main offices in London and with Simone Aspis of Inclusion London who spoke to our National Council last year

