



All Wales People First

Talk Back

*The National Voice of People with
Learning Disabilities in Wales*

Spring 2025



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Editorial

Welcome to the spring 2025 edition of Talk Back. We're busy making the final preparations for #LdAdFest2025 and we can't wait to see you all there on 24th & 25th June!



In March, the National Council talked about how All Wales People First communicates and how they and other members like to communicate. We learnt a lot!

National Council decided AWPf should stop using the X platform because it doesn't fit our values anymore. We are still on Facebook, Instagram & TikTok. You can follow us on our new Bluesky & LinkedIn accounts too.

We started a review of Talk Back. You can read more about the Talk Back review on page 12

Remember there are lots of ways you can let us know what matters to you. A diary update with Claire or Kelly; video interview; Talk Back article; speak with your National Council Rep; SATV with Gerraint. Get in touch with one of us if you want to get involved.

The AWPf Team



The Team

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National Council update

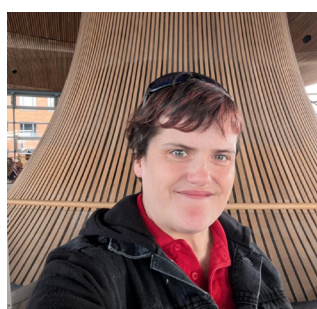


The National Council are a group of 22 elected members who represent every county in Wales.

We meet 6 times a year.

4 times in person and 2 times online.

We talk about what is important to members.



The National Council met in the Village Hotel, Flintshire on May 13th. We talked about the MIRROR Principles and if there was anything we wanted to change. Members decided to keep the MIRROR Principles but make some small changes to the wording.



We also added some ways of measuring how well groups are doing at meeting the principles. We will let you know the results at a later date.

We elected Lyn Griffiths to the Board of Directors.



We heard from members via National Actions. Reps raised issues around Transport, access to dentists, Universal Credit problems and

National Council update



other changes to benefits. Reps voted to invite Transport for Wales to a future meeting to see if we can solve some of these issues. Please send your transport experiences to Joe Powell.



We started to prepare for Learning Disability Week by recording some videos. This year's theme is Do You See Me?

Look out for Reps videos on Tik Tok the week beginning 16th June.

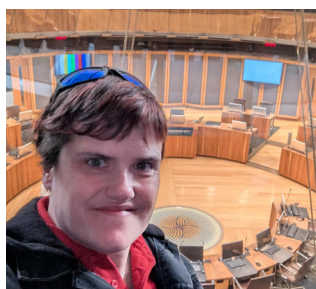


They talked about how they want to be seen, heard and valued. Finally, we got an update on Adfest.



We're looking forward to seeing everyone at Adfest in June.

See lots of you there!



Lucy Hinksman, National Council Chair

Consultation about benefits and support



You might have heard about the UK Government's plans to change benefits and support?

The Government's consultation is called 'Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working'.



We ran 4 online sessions in April and May, to talk about the plans. Lots of you have already had plenty to say about them.

We will use what you told us when we write AWPf's response to the consultation.



You can see an Easy Read version of the consultation by visiting the gov.uk website. There is a link to the consultation and other information on our website. Visit the Projects & Campaigns section.



Lots of people with learning disabilities rely on benefits and support, so it is very important to have your say if you want to.

It's not too late if you want to let us know what you think

email kelly@allwalespeople1st.co.uk

Out and about with Gerraint



On 12th March, I met with some of the National Council reps and guests Taylor and Jerry from Mississippi.

We went for a tour around the Senedd in Cardiff Bay.

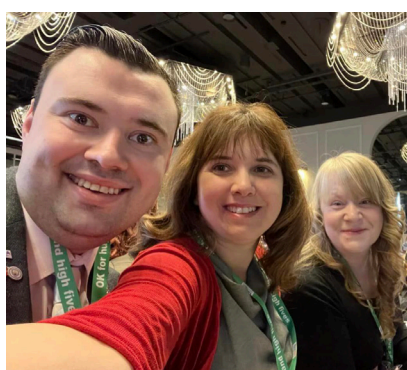
Taylor is a self advocate and he teaches people how to drive. He also teaches people to have a voice in the workplace.

We've spoken online before and we've interviewed each other for YouTube. It was fabulous to meet in person!

Taylor's YouTube channel is called Chit Chat Thursday with Taylor - have a look.

Taylor and Jerry attended a National Council meeting. They were very impressed and thought it would be great to have something similar in Mississippi.

At the same meeting, I also gave a presentation with Eliza from Cardiff University. We talked about research work.

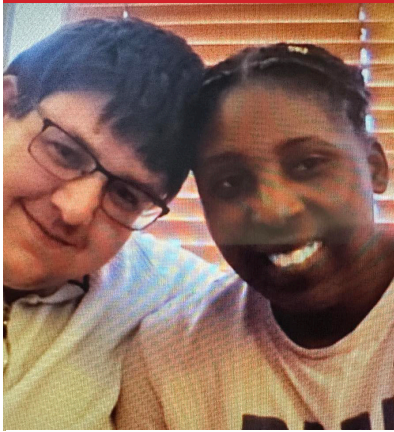


Don't forget SATV online the last Friday of every month, and Nightclub every 2 weeks. Both on Zoom. We have some exciting themes planned for both. We'll be announcing them on social media soon!

Gerraint Jones Griffiths

Member article

Sammy & Chloe



Big congratulations to Sammy and Chloe, who got engaged on Valentine's day! This is their story....

Sammy: Chloe and I first met in Brynmawr about 2 years ago. Outside a pub in Brynmawr.

We met before Chloe got involved with People First.

First of all, I asked her if she wanted to come to People First.

Chloe said yes, so we went to see her Mum about it. We gave her Mum the details.

I knew Chloe about 3 years before we got engaged.

We started dating while we were at People First, and we've been seeing each other for about 2 years.

Chloe: Sammy popped the beautiful question while we were on a date at an Italian restaurant in Brynmawr. That's where we had our first date. It was beautiful.

He was very romantic. We had lovely food and when he asked me that beautiful question asking me to marry him, he gave me

Chloe, From the first dinner we shared here, our lives has been filled with unforgettable moments, you are my joy my love, and my future, will you marry me.



Member article



a beautiful ring and flowers.

Sammy: We haven't thought about what kind of marriage ceremony we might want.

Chloe: I can see us living together one day but we need to work on some things behind the scenes before we can say we want to live together.

We've been working a few things out with our mums and social worker.



Sammy: A funny thing, before we got together, my brother said a few times that Chloe and I were in love with each other. That was before we were in love.



Chloe: Yes he did say that and abracadabra, it happened!

Chloe: If anyone asked me for advice about getting engaged, I would say do not rush in to things. Make sure it's the right person for you. Make sure the person you want to be with loves you like Sam loves me. Make sure he or she is asking the right questions.



Chief Executive's update



All Wales People First have had a busy time campaigning.

We recently took part in two demonstrations. The first one was on 27th March outside 10 Downing Street in London.

It was about the UK Government's proposed changes to benefits and support.

It was organised by Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC).

I was joined at the protest by members Samantha Hall, James Tyler and Events and Engagement Assistant Jessica Keeble.

It was great to see other campaigners from Wales at the event too.



On the 29th April, our Board Co-Chair Sophie Hinksman and I attended a protest about people with learning disabilities being held in hospitals.

It was called 'Bring Our People back Home'.

It was held at Parliament Square in Westminster, London.

Sophie and I were interviewed by BBC Wales about reforms to the Mental Health Act. They asked us whether the changes would make a difference to people with learning disabilities being placed in hospitals.



Chief Executive's update



Sophie spoke about her own personal experience of being in a secure unit. We also gave a presentation at the protest event.

Campaigners then marched to the Department of Social Care in Westminster to hand in a letter to Baroness Merton.

The letter asked for a meeting to discuss our concerns.

All Wales People First does not take part in protests like this very often.

We try to effect change through our policy work.

But these issues have such a big impact on our members, we need to make sure our voices are heard and known in public spaces.

We still use our policy work too.

These are the most challenging times for our members that I have ever known.

Sometimes our members issues cannot be resolved by only sitting around a table and talking.

It is crucial we stop these injustices now at the consultation stage.

Joe Powell



Talk Back review



Talkback is changing...

Maybe a little bit, maybe a lot.

It's up to you to let us know what is important to you.

Some changes are needed because doing lots of paper copies of Talkback is very expensive. We can do our bit for the environment if we reduce the amount of paper and postage we use too.

It is important that All Wales People First uses its money in the best way possible to meet the needs of members.

We know some people with learning disabilities do not have access to smart devices or computers. The National Council said it is very important for us to keep doing some paper editions of Talk Back by post. That way, members who do not use technology can stay connected with AWPf.

Not all members need a paper copy though. Members who have access to technology can access Talk Back on the website and by email.

Talk Back review



Please can you get in touch to let us know if you need a paper copy of Talk Back by post?

If you want to continue getting your Talk Back by post, please let us know by getting in touch on Facebook Messenger

Or email claire@allwalespeople1st.co.uk

Or telephone Claire on 07399059631



We will not stop sending your Talk Back by post until we have asked you. We will get in touch with everyone by February 2026

Some other ideas

The National Council suggested that we do 2 editions of Talk Back each year instead of 4



They think we should do some video editions of Talk Back too.



Do you have any other ideas to make Talk Back better or do it in a different way?



Send us a message to share what you think, or give us a call for a chat.

Annual General Meeting



Annual General Meeting

10.30am

25th June 2025

The Kimmel & Kinspa, Abergele



More information:
admin@allwalespeople1st.co.uk

News from groups



Carmarthenshire People First

Since 8th February 2024 we have held a weekly self-advocacy group called All About Me.

The aim of the sessions is to empower members to learn about themselves and to gain real life skills.

We held feedback sessions and asked "What do you want to learn about to be able to be more independent?"

Members told us that they wanted more information on these topics:

- Healthy Relationships and Sexual Health
- Being Healthy and Personal Hygiene
- Independence and Boundaries
- Social Life and Wellbeing
- Budgeting and Financial Safety



Izzii runs the workshops and makes sure each one is accessible for everyone. The brilliant thing about self-advocacy is that every person takes something different away from each session, but leaves feeling empowered to make their own choices and live as independently as they can!



News from groups



Caerphilly People First started an exciting filming project with the Primary Care Learning Disability Team. During filming we talked about Annual Health Checks - how they feel visiting the doctor, what to expect, reasonable adjustments that can be made to support people at appointments. We can't wait for the big launch!



Thanks to Jenny from Cwm Taff People First for two fabulous days at the My Beautiful Life hackathons. We worked with other People First groups to explore what matters to us in health & social care, community, and housing. We brought our discussions to life through art, music, and drama.



We have been working with the Communication & Engagement Officer to review the Easy Read version of the Gwent Police Crime & Justice Plan. We identified difficult words and replaced them with easier ones. We suggested adding lots of photo symbols to make it clearer. It's great to be involved in making important information more accessible for everyone!



News from groups



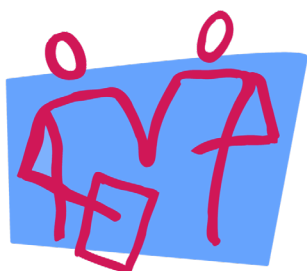
Newport People First

We used a new venue for our All Members Meeting. The Hive in Newport City centre. It was a great venue and everyone made us feel very welcome.

Our guest speakers were Kurt Marshal from Vale People 1st and Beth from Innovate Trust. They gave a presentation about the environment - Their project Save The Planet. We will be working on designing an Easy Read poster on recycling household rubbish and also working at a local allotment to grow our own food.



People First Bridgend
Pobl Yn Gyntaf Pen-Y-Bont



putting people first
rhoi pobl yn gyntaf

People First Bridgend delivered teaching on Learning Disability Awareness to Social Work Students at Swansea University. We spoke about People First and gave some tips for good support and communication.

We were also on the panel to interview candidates for the Social Work course. We also started doing some work with Tracy who will help us tell our stories. Swansea University Social Work Department introduced us to Tracy We are excited to get creative and share our stories in different ways.



News from groups



Blaenau Gwent People First

In January we launched our song-writing for self-advocacy sessions. We work with a song writer who helps us to think about things that are important to us and how we can put them in a song. The sessions have helped us to get new members and new ideas.



We have just finished writing a song about our 'Homes' and what we would like to see in the future to make sure people with learning disabilities have more choice about where they live and who they live with.

We are practicing ready to go to the recording studios at Able Radio in Cwmbran on 12th May to record it.



We also volunteered with the Blaenau Gwent Foodbank. It has been a good way for us to learn new skills and meet you people.



Chloe said *“working at the foodbank is life-changing and it inspired people like me and Sammy and Davey to be able to help other people who are struggling and to also talk about what struggles we have in our lives...”*.

News from groups



Torfaen People First finished the Stepping Out Into Nature Accessibility Audits. Over 50 people came to the celebration event and helped us to think about what to do next. We did safe space training with 3 libraries and talked about making libraries more accessible.



We are working with Torfaen Access Forum and have meetings with our local MP and ministers in Welsh Government.

We finished our Game of Rights card game with the British Institute of Human Rights. We are now thinking about VIVA Fest on Monday 11th August at the ICC Wales in Newport. Get your tickets on Eventbrite and join us!



The My Rights and Me Radio show has been good and busy! Guests from People First Groups interviewed student social workers to find out what they did on their People First placements. We also did shows on the right to life, fighting discrimination and love and relationships. If you're interested in coming on the show to talk about human rights email jenny@rctpeoplefirst.org.uk



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All Wales People First, Chief Executive - 13 March

Tracey and I met up with Jerry and Taylor from the University of Mississippi along with Elisa, Andrea and Gerraint from the National Centre of Mental Health at Cardiff University today to talk about some possible future working together.

The NCMH team met Jerry and Taylor at a conference in Spain last year and found we all have so much in common in terms of our ambitions for employment and self-advocacy. It was a really positive meeting and we will keep members updated on any progress.

Thanks to the NCMH team for your hospitality today.

We wish Jerry and Taylor a safe journey back to Mississippi



Round up



All Wales People First, Chief Executive - 8 April

Attended the SPARK Research Showcase on Disability event at Cardiff University today.

At today's event students shared some of their research experiences and chairs of the Disability Task Force sub groups gave feedback to the research based on their group experience. In my case Access to Justice.

Gerraint J Griff spoke about the Engage to Change project and Zhara Kaleem and Menna spoke about their research work on accessible architecture.

Was lovely to see many things that All Wales People First are involved in showcased today including SPINN (severe period pain is not normal) project. And of course lovely to see so many familiar faces

