People First Scotland
Nothing About Us Without Us
25th Anniversary 1989—2014
# People First Scotland

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People First (Scotland) is 25 years old. It came out of a conference held by the Lothian Rights Group, one of the first self-advocacy groups in the UK. The whole conference in 1989 voted to set up an organisation of people with learning disabilities that would be our own organisation and belong only to us.

Since that time, our organisation has grown and has been active in many campaigns and worked with local authorities, Health Boards and the national governments both in the UK and in Scotland. We have very strong links with other People First organisations and other self-advocacy groups across the UK, across the whole of Europe and in the rest of the world including the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Our members tell us often that they think it’s really important to have our own organisation and they get a lot out of being members and taking part. Lots of people with learning disabilities don’t get treated very well in our society.

We still get the message that we’re different from other people and that we can’t do things as well as everybody else. Sometimes we get told we don’t have the same rights as other people. In People First, we learn that we are important; that we can do important things and do them well. We know we deserve respect and we can get the support we need to tackle difficult issues. We understand that we do have rights and we should expect them, even if they’re still hard to get sometimes. It’s a place where nobody can tell us what we have to do and we get to decide everything about the organisation and we’re trusted to do that.

As People First grows and gets stronger, it’s because our members have learned to work hard, to have pride in what we do and to take our responsibilities seriously. It’s been an important part of our lives and we are committed to seeing change for all people with learning disabilities in our own country and across the world.
Steve Robertson, Chairperson of People First Scotland.

Monica Hunter welcomed everyone to the celebration

Steve called on Monica Hunter to speak. Steve said: “Monica wasn’t the first chair of People First but she has been the longest serving. She took over from James McNab in the early nineties and stood down from the Board in 2010.

Monica served as Chairperson for over 15 years and she was a great ambassador for People First Scotland – not just in this country but in many others as well.”

I’d like to welcome you all to this celebration of 25 years of People First. People First is a very unusual organisation, there are lots of organisations that are set up to give people with learning disabilities support or advice or respite or sometimes even employment or short holidays. There are still places that think they look out for us by keeping us in day centres or in care homes or locked wards.

People First is the only organisation in Scotland where people with learning disabilities are the only ones who own the organisation. Where people with learning disabilities are the only ones who have a say in staff appointments, where we are the only people on the board of directors.

We have links with other organisations in the People First movement across the UK, Europe and North America. In Scotland we have more than 1000 members who meet in about 100 local groups.
Local members meet in groups all over the country to support each other in talking about and dealing with problems and to campaign on issues which are important to us. Local members in each area are the ones who elect representatives to the national board of directors of People First.

I should say why we’ve worked hard to keep the organisation going for 25 years. It’s because a lot of things in our lives are not good and there are a lot of things we want that we haven’t got yet.

We believe we have a right to the support we need to take part in society and to live an ordinary life. We want to be fully included in all areas of our lives and to be treated as equal citizens.

We want our rights as adults and citizens to be respected as outlined in the human rights act, the European convention of human rights and in the United Nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.

We want to make our own decisions about our own lives, and we want to be listened to and consulted when plans are being made about us.

We want to choose where we live and who we live with.

We want to live without fear of being punished and made fun of.
We want to have friendships and relationships, including sexual relationships, just as other people do.

We want to have proper jobs with proper wages and have enough money to live on.

We want people with learning difficulties to be included in mainstream education, with good support. And we want to be able to get into mainstream college courses that give proper qualifications and help us get into work.

We want access to the criminal justice system and to have the same rights as other people. We want the right to start a family with good support if we have children.

We want good health care and good housing.

We want a life like other people.

Thank you
The Management committee formed with directors elected from different parts of the country.

Branches in Edinburgh, Musselburgh, Peebles and Dundee. All with volunteer advisers.

People First Scotland conference held at Stirling University.

10 members attend People First conference in Toronto.

New Branches in Glasgow, Dumfries, Motherwell. Volunteer Advisers recruited.
1995—2000

2 advocacy workshops run in Ayrshire together with Strathclyde Council.

Staffing Committee elected by the Board to appoint the first staff to People First (Scotland).

Conference on Day Services together with SHS.

Scottish Office Section 10 funding starts

Glasgow Health Board funding to work in Lennox Castle.

Workshop on violence against women with learning difficulties in Glasgow.

Registered as a Charity and a Limited Company.

Round Table held in Edinburgh.

2 members run “sex matters” workshops with Pavilion Publishing.

3 Scottish members attend People First Conference in Anchorage, Alaska.

Launch of “It’s a Crime” Campaign.

Chairperson gives keynote speech in Frankfurt to People First Germany.

Work with Orkney Council interviewing their service users.
People First involved with Same As You committees:

- SAY Implementation group
- Hospital Closures Group
- Day services Group
- Employment Group
- Children’s working group
- Advocacy working group

People First involved in Scottish Government committees:

- User and Carers group.
- Consortium advisory group
- LAC group.
- Advocacy Standards Agency advisory group.
- SCLD schools group.
- SIAA steering group.
- Appropriate Adults work with Justice Department.

Visit from People First Deutschland.

Benefits of Banking campaign.

Crime and Criminal Justice campaign.

Programme taken into schools to tackle harassment of people with learning difficulties by school students.

2 members work with NDT on Quality Network.

Members take part in Cross Party group on Learning Disability.
2 members speak at a conference in Galway about the need for change to institutions.

2 members supported to sit on NHS QIS Learning Disability Project Group.

Member sits on Joint Inspection Steering group.

Member sits on Mental Health Act Implementation Group.

Members take part in Ayrshire & Arran Joint Inspection.

12 Members take part in NHS QIS inspections across Scotland.

Member is part of the Borders Joint Inspection.

Members sit on 21st Century Review of Social Work groups.

Round Table Weekend in Dunblane.

People First Europe conference in Edinburgh and People First Europe is formed.
2006—2010

Members give training to Mental Health tribunal members.

Meeting between Children and Families Unit of Scottish Executive and People First to discuss issues for parents with learning disabilities.

Meeting in Stockholm, Sweden as part of People First Europe.

Members lead workshop with social workers at SWAN conference.

Clackmannanshire members give talks to new police recruits at Tulliallen college.

Work with Humbie group to seek apology for abuse.

Work with Crown Office diversity staff on application of the Equalities Bill to learning disabled people.

Member supported to carry out inspections for Royal College of Psychiatrists AIMS reviews.

Member sits on SIAA Board of Directors.

Members supported on User and Carer groups at Edinburgh University and Stirling University social work courses.

Visit from People First Wisconsin.

People First Scotland Policy Conference.
Parents Group formed.

Work with Independent Living in Scotland including members supported to sit on their Steering Group.

Member invited to speak at BILD conference in England.

Members work with Lothian and Borders Police on Hate Crime reporting and on police staff training.

People First signs national petition over Winterbourne View.

Chairperson invited to Tullamore to help start member organisation in the Republic of Ireland.

People First (Fife) Hate Crime Training Group created.

Hate Crime campaign gets busier.

Keys To Life Launch – chairperson gives speech.

Member sits on Self Directed Support Core Reference Group.

4 members attend meeting in Birmingham with English and Welsh People First groups.

People First held Citizens’ Grand Jury 2011
2011—2014

Members involved with Scotland on Adult Support and Protection.

Member visited Wigan and Leigh People First “Safer Places” project.

Parenting project worker appointed.

Parents group give training to social workers, health professionals, etc.

Chairperson gives speech at Friendship event.

Criminal Justice worker appointed.

Human Rights campaign to get review of Guardianship orders and detention orders.


Work with Scottish Government and Independent Living in Scotland on Government report to UN.


Work with all our members on registering and voting in the Independence referendum.

Member chairs SAY Criminal Justice and Forensic working group.

Intensive work with Police Scotland and Inclusion Scotland on Hate Crime.
Keith Lynch, vice-chair of People First led the vote of thanks to members for the work that they’ve done.

Keith is a really hard worker for People First. He’s taken the lead on the Hate Crime Campaign. He’s not only the vice chair and works with Steve to take recommendations to the Board, he also sits on the Staffing committee and the Jury next steps committee.

Keith said: “It’s a big responsibility being a director of a national company. It means coming to meetings every six weeks in Edinburgh and Glasgow; it means being on sub-committees and attending all sorts of meetings. It means learning how to put forward the views of our members and not your own point of view”.

“Awards...”

“The members who are elected to the board make all the important decisions about the running of the organisation. These include decisions about staffing, checking the finances and deciding on the priorities for the organisation to focus on.”
Thank you

Owen Johnstone, Alex Gibson and John McAloney, for working with Stirling University’s User and Carer forum.

Keith Thompson and Douglas McPhilips, for working with Robert Gordon University’s User and Carer forum.

Paul Stevenson for being our representative on Dundee University User and Carers Group and taking part in updating the Induction Pack.

Bianca Wood, Sandy Cruikshank, Katrina Robertson, Brian Smith and all the other members of the parents’ group, for their hard work in the Scottish Parenting Network, training social workers and NHS staff and campaigning for better support for parents with learning disabilities.

Tommy Dallas, Garry Stonebanks, Brian Scott, Liam Moran, Jackie Campbell, Margaret Wilson and Billy Lindsay, for their work in South Lanarkshire and the close working relationship they have with the Council there in running a very successful joint conference every year.

Edward Stanton, Margaret Cassidy, Pamela Niven and Idem Lewis, for their work with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde staff to improve health services. Edward was awarded the Health Board Chairman's award as patient ambassador for his work.

Vicky Walker, Vicki Chalmers, Steven Wynne. Thanks for all the hard work in presenting Disability Hate Crime to 1st Year pupils in Fife and helping them think about their attitudes.
Brian Scott, David Ledner, Tracey Scott, David Tawse, Geraldine Docherty and a number of others for their work on the Care Homes focus group with Scotland Excel.

Billy Lindsay for his work on Adult Support and protection for WithScotland at Stirling University.

David Tawse was the very first chair and I’d like to thank him for his work with Pavilion Publishing doing training on sex matters; Toronto and Alaska conferences. For many years he was chair of the Galashiels People First group and was a leader in People First Borders.

Robert Smith for reading the Musselburgh group minutes at every meeting for over twenty years.

Ronald Aitchison who is the representative on the Midlothian Self Directed Support Communication and Implementation Group and has recently taken over the chair of the Dalkeith Group.

All the other members who attend their local groups week in and week out, chairing, taking minutes, collecting tea money, putting away the chairs, giving each other support and looking out for each other. Please give yourselves a big hand.
It has meant a lot to me...
People First has given me the confidence to stand up and speak to a big gathering like this. It’s given me the confidence to meet with Westminster Government officials and tell them about the needs of people with learning disabilities.

Without People First, I wouldn’t have been able to sit on the Equality 2025 committee for two terms of office. It’s been a very important part of my life for many years and I’m proud to be a member.

“We are going to be strong and going to make changes for the next 25 years”.

Fiona Wallace
“Meeting so many wonderful people.”

“I go a lot to People First. I did not know who they were at first, and one of the things I liked was that I was welcomed and I could feel comfortable and speak up for myself.”

“It is the most humble, respectful and loyal organisation that I have ever been part of— I will hold it in my heart forever.”

“This organisation would not have existed without us.”
I think People First has helped me to become an adult – it’s helped me to grow up and to expect to get treated like a grown up.

I think I’ve had the chance to get respect for some of the things I’ve done.

It’s also helped me to face things I was afraid about.

You should have seen me trying to get on the plane to Toronto – every step of the stair, I was saying “I canny do this.. I canny do this” but I did it.

People First has changed the way I see myself and I think it’s changed the way other people see me.

Monica Hunter
Dream tree...
for your hopes and dreams

My dream is to help people

Keep having holidays

Better support for parents who have learning disabilities

Help other people have a voice and get their voices heard

To be treated with respect

To be able to walk again

Encourage more people to speak up for themselves

To get help with support to make it better. Get just 1 to 1 support

Change the way people see us

Educate people about hate crime

People with learning disabilities free to make choices about their sexuality

Change the way people think about young adults with learning disabilities

I dream of getting a job I love and get paid for it

To make our voices heard

For People First to keep giving people confidence to speak up

To be on the Board of Directors in a couple of years

Stop getting bullied and discriminated against

To make our voices heard

Going to work and college

Speedier decisions on benefits

People with learning disabilities free to make choices about their sexuality

For People First to keep giving people confidence to speak up

To be on the Board of Directors in a couple of years

Stop getting bullied and discriminated against

To be on the Board of Directors in a couple of years

To get help with support to make it better. Get just 1 to 1 support
Wishing Line

To eat in a healthy way.

Keeping Health appointments and taking medication.

For People First to continue.

Take the dogs for a walk.

Better support for parents with learning disabilities.

I wish more people would speak up.

Feeling confident – the world would be a better place if people were nice to each other, treat people with respect.

There will be no charges for support.

Wish people to have better chances of their voices being heard.

To bring people together to get better support through advocacy.

I wish people would listen to others.

I wish for People First back in Ayrshire.

Own home, own life, to do my own thing.

I wish to see someone getting better support. My friend is not getting good support.

If police see people being called names they should take action.

For people to change their attitude towards us, to respect us.

Continue to help us speak up at meetings, conferences, etc.

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Continue to help us speak up at meetings, conferences, etc.
More control.

It is important to stay active to say what you care about in the future. And don’t be nervous to speak up, right to speak up.

Stop bullying and name calling.

I would like more help for myself and I would like to help others.

I would like someone to pal around with, it is sad being on my own.

My wishes are for everyone out there that’s hurt us or bullied us in the past; is to label jars not people!

Just because we have Learning Difficulties doesn’t mean we should stop having a relationship.

My next wish is to have a paid job.

I wish I was on a cruise or in Canada to see my cousins.

I like going to meetings and also to the church.

I wish all information was in easy read. That would mean everyone would have the information they need.

To meet more friends.

I wish I was on a cruise or in Canada to see my cousins.

I like going to meetings and also to the church.

I would like to go on holiday to Blackpool.

We should be listened to more.

I want to be happy. I’m worried about the future.

Have a job.
Having more people in People First groups.

Hope my girlfriend gets better soon.

Get more long-term funding for People First.

More People First conferences.

Go to see Manchester United and City derby.

People First to be more powerful and bigger in size.

I wish politicians would treat us as equal and help us change things.

To be more independent.

To have a relationship.

To have sex.

To have more choice and control for the future.

Cut out racism.

I wish people would talk to me instead of my support worker because it makes me feel invisible.

To be a member of People First for the next 25 years.

I wish I could get support to go on holiday.

To be involved in more People First meetings.

To get married.

To be seen as a person not a thing.

I just want to be very happy and I’d like to see my son grow up.

To have a girlfriend.

To go on a coach tour.

Better support for parents group and mums and dads.
I don’t like when people say nasty things

I hate discrimination

I don’t like when people say nasty things

Keep families together with better support

I can’t go out at night because of kids

Stop splitting up families and help me find my brother

Get my own place

I don’t like sharing my house

Bullying and threatening should stop

Buses could be better – they go too fast

You can’t get on a bus

I don’t like being talked down to

Don’t call me names

Other people control my life

No bullying

People’s attitudes are wrong

People should have more respect

People stand in front of my wheelchair

Disabled toilets not always good

I need more money

I hate the way some people mistreat us for the way we are

I’m not recognised enough for my contribution to learning disability

The government should be fair to everybody

I’ve got a qualification but only get unpaid volunteer jobs

Not enough employers willing to take people on

Not having a wage

We don’t even get the minimum wage
The topics discussed were:

- Being Healthy
- Staying Safe
- Having friends and relationships

The conference broke up into 6 groups, each led by a senior member of People First and supported by a staff member. At the end of the discussion, groups fed back their main points to the whole conference and the Chairperson promised that the points raised by the groups would help to shape the People First approach in the next few years.
One interesting thing that happened was all of the groups raised some of the same points even though they were discussing different issues. It became clear that you cannot look for different solutions to the different problems we face if the basic conditions about how we are treated are not tackled.

The main issues on all of the topics came out as: being treated like children, not being listened to, not being given time to understand, not being included, not being accepted and not being helped to learn.

One member said it would be like building towers without solid foundations.

It was important to build the strong foundations first and not just try to tackle the issues of health inequality, crimes against us and loneliness and lack of relationships. They are all part of the same thing and they are all connected up by the way we are seen and how we are treated.
Having Friends and relationships

We should get the chance to learn how to be a friend and how to make friendships.

Services and support workers should understand that we need friends of our own just the same as everybody else.

Support workers shouldn’t scoff at our friendships or feelings of love.

Being healthy

Easier to read prescriptions and directions on labels.

If we had more money it would be easier to eat healthy food.

If we had more friends and jobs there would be more point in staying healthy.

Learn to cook.

Exercise – like walking.

Staying safe

Reporting hate crime.

Thinking for yourself and not just doing what you’re told.

Keeping your PIN number safe and secret.

Don’t let strangers in the house.

Don’t fall for scam phone calls.

Good long-term support.

Build your confidence.

Keys to Life

Take us seriously

Change attitudes towards us

Include us

Give us time

Respect our rights

Help us learn

Support our relationships

Accept us

Be honest and tell us the truth

Treat us as citizens
People First (Scotland)

People First (Scotland) is the independent Disabled Persons’ Organisation of people with learning difficulties in Scotland.

We are linked to the international People First movement.

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