



People First (Scotland) statement on the development of the Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodiversity Bill



We are the Powerful Voice of People First (Scotland).

We are the Disabled Person's User Led Organisation (DPULO) for Learning Disability in Scotland.

We have been campaigning for a new law for over 20 years.

When Scottish Government announced their commitment to the development of a new law for people with a Learning Disability, People First (Scotland) welcomed it.

We remain hopeful that there is potential for Scotland to be a world leader in reforming the law to realise and protect the human rights of citizens with a learning disability.

However, we have concerns that as the planning for, and actual consultation takes place, the process continues to be inaccessible for people with a learning disability.

We are motivated to offer our opinion and invite discussion of our concerns in our role as 'critical friend' and partner. We share that because we want to see transformational change for people with a Learning Disability in Scotland.

Our powerful voice says Nothing About Us Without Us.

Article 4 of the **UNCRPD, ratified by the Scottish Government**, calls on states parties to **‘closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities through their representative organizations in decision-making processes.’**

People First (Scotland) is our organisation, an active DPULO but;

- Directors of People First (Scotland) were excluded from applying to the LDAN Lived Experience Advisory Panel on the basis that they were involved in the day-to-day running of the charity.
- Other members of People First (Scotland) were also prevented from sitting on the panel as representatives of their own organisation.

People First (Scotland) offered suggestions of ways to make specific aspects of engagement accessible when we met with Scottish Government colleagues in June 2022.

However, since then various barriers to accessibility continue, we list some below;

- Having to request an ‘Easy Read’ application form. This was then provided, but later than the original documents.
- The application process was complicated and has not always felt transparent. For example, one member of People First applied to the Panel. That applicant was not given a place. No reason or feedback on that decision provided. After a short time this same member was told a mistake had been made, they were then offered a place.
- The panel meetings themselves are not accessible for people with a learning disability. The meetings are fast-paced, use complex language and jargon and inaccessible presentations.
- Retrospective attempts to put support in place have resulted in numerous extra meetings, and more communications and further time demands placed on members of the panel.

Member feedback is that it feels as though members of this organisation, all Scottish citizens who have a Learning Disability, are unheard.

At our recent governance meeting I said the following to fellow directors;

We note respect shown to other representative organisations. We are not valued the same way and observe their influence and visibility as invited more often, given more attention.

We keep telling them that we are the experts, we are humans. But the approach means that we are still invisible and ignored.

We expect things to change.

If they are listening and hear us, if the words spoken, written and repeated by partners and colleagues are sincere then change can be significant.

The change could be absolute; it could really transform our lives.

Then we would experience the Scottish citizenship that we are entitled to.

We share the points above in partnership, urging action to acknowledge and reflect, to develop with us aspects of processes that have, so far not been accessible.

We hope to support discussion of ways we can work together most effectively in the future.

Yours Sincerely,



*Maggie
Wilson*

Maggie Wilson

Chairperson