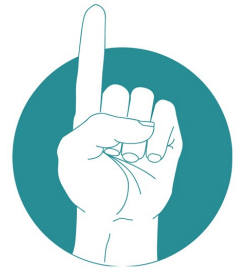


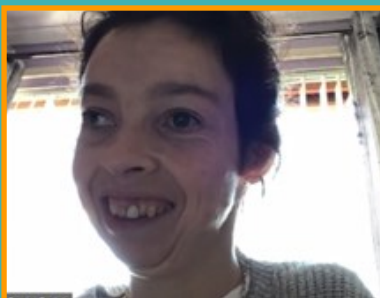
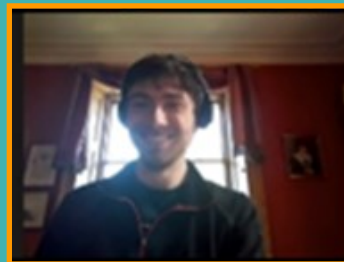
# People First (Scotland) Newsletter



January 2021

## What next?

We talk about what needs to happen to make life better for people with a Learning Disability in 2021 and beyond.



# Inside this issue



**Introduction** 1

**Listen to us, hear us!** 2

**Digital Exclusion** 3

**Laws that affect us** 4,5 & 6

**Support to live a life** 7

**Social Security** 8

**Accessible Information** 9

**Funding the strategy** 10

**Commissioner for Learning Disability** 11

**The experience of members during the pandemic** 12/13

**Contact Information** 14



**We have tried to make our Newsletter accessible. If there is anything that is not clear then please ask a People First worker to explain.**

# Introduction



**Scottish Government is asking how services should transition from what has been offered to citizens with learning disabilities during the pandemic.**

**Throughout December and January members of People First (Scotland) came together over video and talked about the top priorities for people with a learning disability.**



**Inequality and prejudice is the life experience of citizens with learning disabilities.**

**The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted that disadvantage even further.**



**This newsletter will describe the things that need to change to make life better for people with a learning disability.**

**We will talk about issues specific to Covid-19 and issues that we have been campaigning about for years.**

# Listen to us, hear us!



**Any discussion about making things better for people with learning disabilities must start by recognising that we have always been at the bottom of the list.**

**We have long been treated as second class citizens who are expected to accept less than others. Strategies such as the Keys to Life have not resulted in positive change.**



**It is a worry for People First (Scotland) that citizens with learning disabilities and our representatives will not be heard if a joint strategy is to be developed for learning disability and autism.**

## **WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN:**

**Focus has to be on learning disability otherwise change will not happen.**

**Voice of lived experience has to be heard and inform any strategy.**

**Increase the visibility of people with a learning disability.**



**“ I don’t think that we are reaching government, we are not being heard”**

# Digital Exclusion

Digital exclusion is a priority because it impacts ALL citizens who have a learning disability.

Throughout the pandemic people with a learning disability have been further excluded from all areas of life because of this lack of connection.

There are many reasons for this digital exclusion including-

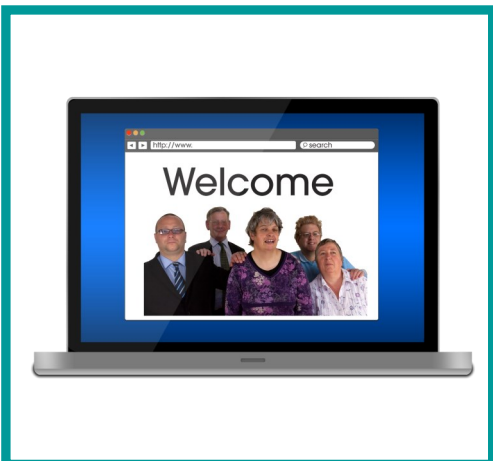
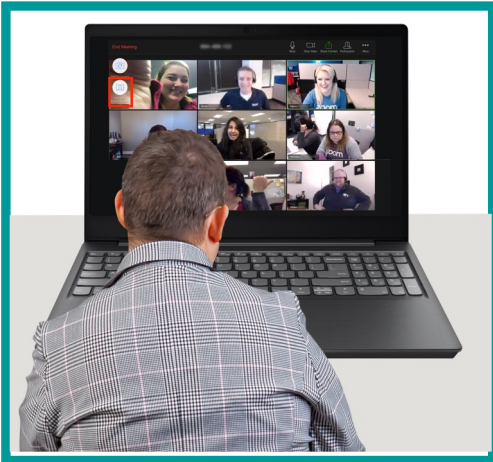
- Lack of devices
- Limited or no internet access
- Lack of support
- Financial
- No privacy to use devices

**WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN:**

Involve us in developing the Connecting Scotland scheme to fully include people with a learning disability.

Recognise how important the role of ongoing support is in helping people to get connected and stay connected.

**“People should be supported to build their skills online”**



# Laws that affect us



**Laws in Scotland discriminate against people with a learning disability and do not recognise us as equal citizens.**

**Guardianship legislation takes away our right to make our own decisions.**

**WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN:**

**Replace Guardianship with a system of Supported Decision Making.**

**Give us the right support to allow us to understand all the options.**

**Let us learn from our mistakes like everyone else.**

**Invest in proper communication support.**

**Introduce a pilot scheme of supported decision making so people can be supported to make their own decision about the Covid vaccine.**



**“Too many people are losing the right to make their own decisions”**

# Laws that affect us



Removing learning disability from the definition of mental disorder has been a top People First (Scotland) priority for many years.

This definition allows us to be detained against our will on the basis of our learning disability.

Recent reviews recommend learning disability being removed from the definition but still allow for us to be detained.

People with a learning disability can end up living in hospitals for years.

## WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN:

Remove learning disability from the definition of mental disorder now.

End detention in hospital.

A new law for people with a learning disability.

Provide people with the right support to allow them to live in the community.

**“We need more support, not less freedom”**



# Laws that affect us



There have been various recent reviews of the legislation that affects us.

The Rome review published its findings in December 2019 and we were pleased that they said learning disability should no longer be defined as a “Mental Disorder”.



The Scottish Mental Health Law Review, chaired by John Scott, is currently underway. This review is looking at all the laws that mention ‘Mental Disorder’ in Scotland.

It looks like this Review will agree that learning disability should not be seen as a Mental Disorder and we’re very happy about that.



However, these reviews still leave room for us to be detained. The Adults with Incapacity reform team talk about ‘graded guardianship’ but what we need is to replace it completely.

People First (Scotland) has long campaigned for incorporation of UNCRPD into Scottish legislation and is a signatory to this position statement by The Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities.

# Support to live a life



**For years we have seen cuts to social care.**

**Different local authorities use different criteria to assess how much support we get.**

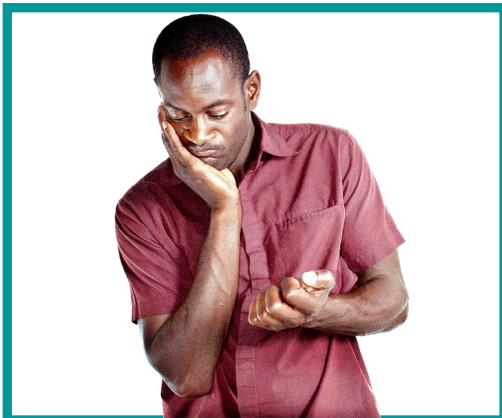
**Support is limited so we have to make difficult choices.**

**During the pandemic, the situation has got worse for many people.**

**Support and advice services are not happening.**

**Situations have to reach crisis point before Social Work get involved.**

**Loneliness is getting worse.**



## **WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN:**

**Involve us in planning and decision making.**

**Processes have to be accessible to allow this to happen.**

**We need support that allows us to truly live a life like any other citizen.**

**We need long term investment and funding.**

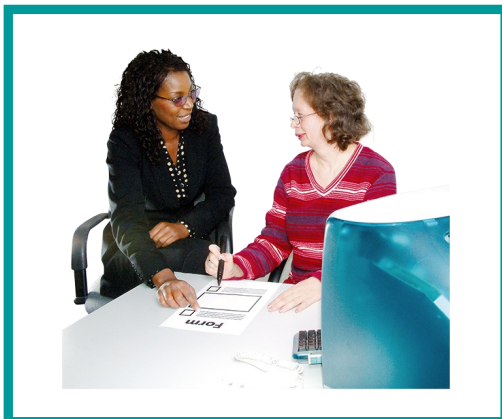


# Social Security



**Making Social Security Scotland information and services accessible is a priority because when that does not happen it affects every aspect of our lives. It often uses up all or any of the support time that is in place.**

**We are pleased that the language used by Social Security Scotland talks about Equality, Fairness and Respect.**



**People First (Scotland) have given various input into the development of the new social security system. That has not always happened in a useful and consistent way for us.**

## **WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN:**

**Work with us and listen to what will help.**

**Accessible information across the whole system.**

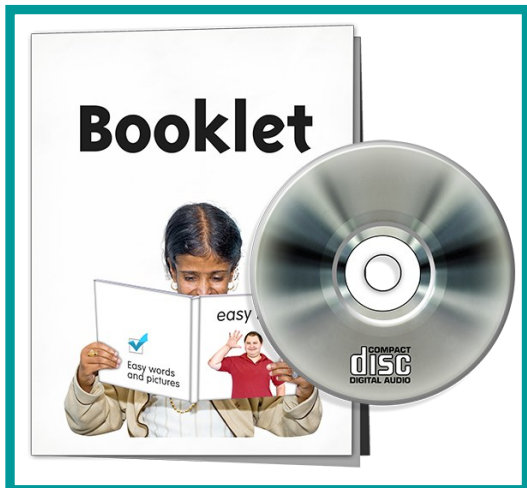
**Different options for engaging.**

**Support through the whole process.**

**Assessments should look at our whole life experience and not just questions that seem to want to catch us out.**

An 'easy read' form for filling in personal details. The form has a light blue background and a white border. At the top, it says 'Please fill in this easy read form' next to an icon of a woman holding a sign that says 'easy read'. Below this are three input fields: 'Your name' with a person icon, 'Address' with a house icon, and 'Phone' with a mobile phone icon.

# Accessible Information



We have said for many years that we need accessible information to participate in all areas of life and to have equal access to up to date information.

Access to information during the pandemic has become even more important.

People First (Scotland) has been involved in creating Easy Read information during the pandemic.

Sharing this information is challenging because of the digital exclusion that exists.

## WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN:

A joined up approach to creating accessible information across all areas of Government.

Support for people to access information and to understand it.



“People First and SCLD have provided information on the lockdown rules...if I didn't have my ipad from People First I would be lost as I get the information mainly through Facebook”

# Funding the strategy



**People First (Scotland) usually gets its messages across by sharing collective lived experience and raising awareness.**

**We aim to challenge systems, processes, policy, law, prejudice and the negative attitudes that offer us a lower value in Scottish society.**

**Local representation is not happening in all areas of Scotland.**



**Collective advocacy is underfunded and most decision-making systems are not accessible to citizens with learning disabilities.**

**We are the experts but we are excluded.**

**Although government is required to support Disabled Persons' Organisations financially, this is not happening to an extent that allows for consistent, nationwide input.**



**“[Funding] should be a priority for the Scottish Government because it is too difficult for people with a learning disability to feel like our voices and opinions matter, even for our own rights.”**

# Commissioner for Learning Disability



**People First (Scotland) has, over years supported the proposal for a Learning Disability Commissioner in Scotland.**

**We see a role for someone who would work in honest partnership with members of People First (Scotland).**

**Someone who recognises the expertise we have to offer.**



**Someone who has the authority to campaign for and bring about real change.**

**Someone who can challenge the human rights abuses experienced by people with a learning disability in this country.**

**Someone who recognises that we are human beings who are entitled to be recognised as equal citizens in law.**



**“We would like a commissioner for people with a learning disability and we would like to be a part of the panel interviewing the person”**

# The experience of members during the pandemic



**The Supporting Offenders with Learning Disabilities project continues to highlight issues within criminal justice and digital arrangements during the pandemic exacerbate the barriers.**

**People First (Scotland) will continue to advocate that Appropriate Adults should be a professional service employed as Appropriate Adults and nothing else throughout the country.**



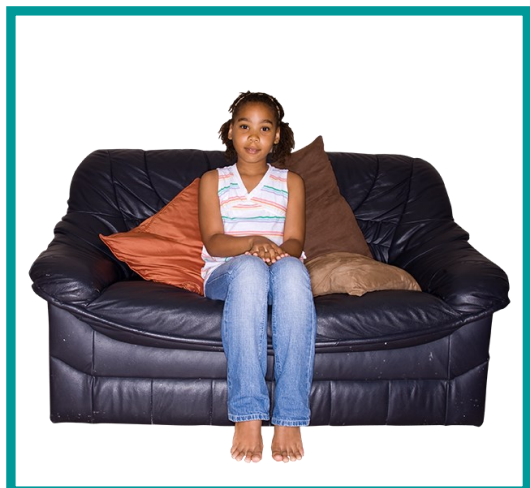
**Parents with learning disabilities have long campaigned for the flexible, individual, consistent and long-term support required to parent.**

**During the pandemic many supports have been removed and for some of us it has meant that any existing support for our children to remain in our care has also been removed.**



**Some of our children have been placed in emergency foster care. Covid-19 restrictions have been stated as the reason that parents have been prevented from visiting or meeting with our children in person.**

# The experience of members during the pandemic



**One member was prevented from seeing her son as the foster carer deemed it unsafe in March. She saw him for a small period during the summer and now no more. This has taken place despite shared childcare arrangements being described within the guidelines.**



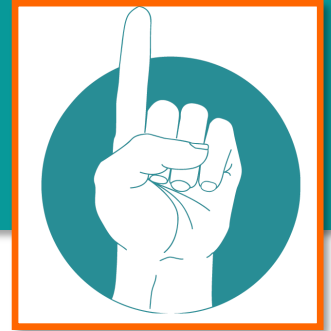
**Citizens who live in Residential settings or hospital assessment and treatment units are isolated already. Figures from England illustrate an increase in the use of restraint. Reviews and reports regarding abuse within residential settings are documented.**



**In at least 2 local areas the units where members live have been shut most of the time. Travel restrictions have meant that family members have not been able to visit. Members have been constrained to the buildings since March.**

**In one unit there is a small courtyard but that is all the access outside the ward that has been on offer for 10 months now. Wards are short staffed and support for members to use devices is not prioritised or easily available.**

# Contact Information



If you would like more information about People First groups then please contact the National Office in Edinburgh. You can find the contact details below.

**YOU CAN STILL SEND MAIL TO THE OFFICE , WE WILL RECEIVE IT.**



**People First (Scotland)  
77-79 Easter Road  
Edinburgh  
EH7 5PW**

**Phone 0131 478 7707**



**Email [admin@peoplefirstscotland.org](mailto:admin@peoplefirstscotland.org)**

**Website [www.peoplefirstscotland.org](http://www.peoplefirstscotland.org)**



**Search 'People First Scotland' on Facebook!**



**Malcolm Cochrane  
Photography**

