Our Business Strategy 2025 - 2028

1. Strategic Aims: We aim to support people with learning difficulties to have equal access to all areas of life through breaking down the barriers to access.
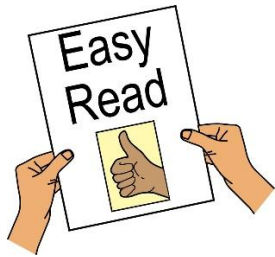
The 3 pillars for access to independent living are:

Self-advocacy and speaking up: Supporting the growth of user-led speaking up and self-advocacy groups so that people with learning difficulties have the support to speak up, build confidence and break down barriers together.
Nothing about us without us!

Accessible information and Easy Read: Supporting access to information through more accessible information, processes, communication and wider use of Easy Read, so that people have the information to make decisions and have control.
Information is power!

Local community advocacy and support: Supporting access to good, flexible independent local advocacy and support that treats each person as a whole.
So that people have the support to do what they want in life and have full access to independent living, choice and control.
Don't break my life up into pieces!

2. Our Strategic Goals:

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	1. **Strengthen People First as an effective two-way channel for local self-advocacy groups to have a national voice in politics and national decision-making structures:** People First (Self Advocacy) wants to strengthen its position as an organisation that listens to and works closely with self-advocacy groups and knows how to best engage with groups about policy and campaigning. People First needs to present complicated processes and information in an accessible way to user-led self-advocacy groups, so that they can be involved. The government, local authorities and decision makers need to understand the access needs of people with learning difficulties and just how inaccessible politics and decision-making processes are. Our task here is to campaign to make sure processes are more accessible and the voice and information from self-advocacy groups reaches decision makers and has as much impact as possible.
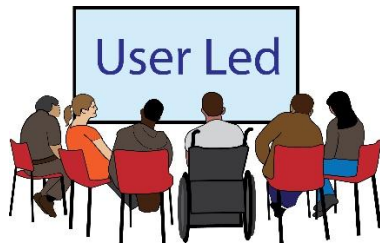
2. Raise the profile of and increase access to good advocacy (including self-advocacy) and support:

As people with learning difficulties we know what works and we know what we need, the main problem is getting local and national decision makers to listen. There is a lot of misunderstanding around what good advocacy and support is and how empowering it is when people and organisations get it right. Advocacy and support organisations are still based on a medical model or charity model of disability where disabled people are seen as people with a problem or people that they feel sorry for.

We want to promote the strength and effectiveness of good user-led self-advocacy groups. We want others to understand how important self advocacy groups are on a personal level, for speaking up about issues, making change happen and moving forward in our lives.

Our task here is to provide evidence through our local and national Advocacy Matters work. We will then use this evidence to influence national policy and commissioning practices.
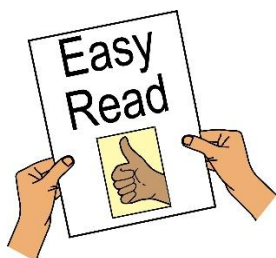
3. Developing our Empower Enterprise service to support access to information, wider use of Easy Read and financial independence for People First (Self Advocacy)

People with learning difficulties have the right to high quality accessible information and communication. They need it to be able to make meaningful and informed choices and be fully and equally included in society.

Accessible information and communication lead to more choice, control and independence for people with learning difficulties.

We want to continue developing our Empower service, by producing Easy Read translation, delivering Easy Read training and offering mentoring to establish more accessible ways of working. We also offer other organisations the opportunity to buy our Picture Bank.

Our task here is to have as much impact with our translation, training and picture bank service, supporting others to make their information, communications and working practices as accessible as possible. We also want to generate independent income for the organization through this service.

4. **Strengthen the operational management and support structure of People First (Self Advocacy)**

Behind any successful organisation is strong governance and operational management and a strong support structure. The way that People First works is unique, as we have people with learning difficulties in decision making roles and supporters who assist them in these roles.

The support structure, policies and systems need to work well and be regularly reviewed and updated. We need to have people who have the right skills and values in the team. They need to understand the values and ethos of user-led organisations and be able to facilitate people with learning difficulties lead the decision making.

We also want to make sure that the Management Committee are more involved in the work of the organisation and receive ongoing training and development to support the Director. We want to take advantage of their skills and experience. We are also looking to recruit new trustees.

Our task here is to make sure we are running well, with good systems that are understood, accessed and led by the team and Trustees.

3. Strategic Objectives:

These are the areas of work that will support us to meet our strategic goals above:

1. Communications and influencing
2. Membership and partnership work
3. Organisational development, capacity and growth
4. Finance and fundraising and business development
5. Governance

Strategic Objective	Priority workstream	KPI – Measurable outcome
1. **Communications and influencing** • Strengthen internal and external communications and systems • Increase meaningful engagement and the ability to influence through clear messaging and increased communication with	Internal and external communications: 1. Improve internal communication systems for all staff and trustees. 2. Set up project management support and mentoring for Digital Transformation and Modernisation programme. 3. Develop key messages and systems for support staff and trustees to work to. 4. Establish easy read communication standards with all staff and trustees. 5. Website content kept up to date. 6. Produce quarterly e-newsletters. 7. Increase social media activity and profile (BlueSky/X/Facebook/YouTube)	An up to date Internal and External Communications Strategy which is regularly updated based on stakeholder feedback (Staff, members, partners etc.) • Monthly team meetings • Bi-monthly supervision sessions • Devices for home working • Team WhatsApp groups used • All databases clean and up to date • All staff using centralised systems e.g. Office 365 (Outlook, SharePoint, Teams), database, website, campaign tool. • Annual team and trustee away day

	Meaningful engagement:	• Communications with members in line with changes to Articles of Association
members and other stakeholders	8. Collate members' views, experiences and priorities in a variety of ways, to shape clear messaging and powerful campaigns for different stakeholder groups. 9. Establish different ways of working with members for different access needs. 10. Develop tools and systems for all stakeholders to make politics more accessible. 11. Secure policy coaching/training for staff and trustees. 12. Build knowledge of and contacts with local and national decision-making structures/commissioners to enable a more effective policy into practice approach to implementing the 3 pillars for Access to independent living.	• Up to date data documents of members issues and requests • Member's Manifesto • Present members issues at key policy meetings • Clear 'terms of engagement' policy and briefing • Target of 3000 social media followers by April 2027. • Engage with 2 local decision-making structures and two national structures.
2. Membership and partnership work • Improve the People First membership offer • Increase partnership working	1. Review and agree full People First membership offer for individual members, self-advocacy group members and supporters. 2. Strengthen direct relationships with self-advocacy groups and individual members	• Recruitment of Membership and Communications Worker by September 2026 – launch of new membership offer by January 2027. • Six visits to group members per year.

	3. Increase partnership working with organisations. 4. Produce a membership recruitment plan and pack.	• Two formal partnerships and joint working on campaigns per year with self-advocacy groups • Increased membership by 5 groups and 20 individuals per year
3. Organisational development, capacity and growth ● Improve operational management, finance and administrative systems. 	1. Annual review and update of all communication and administrative systems 2. Increase project, operations and administrative support and capacity (staff resources) 3. Secure pro-bono business development support/mentoring 4. Develop and produce support model guidance - define support structures for different roles/jobs in the organisation and people with different support needs.	• Updated database and integrated/automated system – membership joining process, email mailing group – reviewed every quarter • Quick Books set up and fully functioning by April 2025. • Secure funding for an Operations Manager and Team PA recruited by April 2026 • Review of Business Plan and individual project and work plans every April. • All posts are supported via Access to Work hours in-line with support model
4. Finance, fundraising and business development ● Increase core funding and diversify funding sources	1. Customise an accounting package (QuickBooks) to meet the needs of People First, to ensure up to date and accessible financial information. 2. Continue financial mentoring and support	• Produce a Financial Manual and Management Policy • Activate online banking

	3. Increase core funding for operational and campaign work growth 4. Seek funding to support the set-up of self-advocacy groups in local areas 5. Increase donor legacy income by producing a donor and legacy fundraising strategy. 6. Develop marketable services and products such as Easy Read translation and training, Forum Theatre and other consultancy contracts.	• Secure additional funding of £70,000 per year for expansion of the core operational and policy and campaigning team • Increase trading income to 50% of total income • Launch a donor and legacy fundraising strategy by October 2026, leading to donor and legacy income of £20,000 per year for unrestricted funds • Deliver the Empower Business Plan with a target of £30,000 income per year.
5. Governance • Strengthen the governance of the organisation in relation to their legal responsibilities and financial oversight. 	1. Strengthen the capability and diversity of the Management Committee to: • Carry out their legal duties • Ensure that People First is a well-run organisation • Protect the 'user-led' ethos of People First 2. Increase understanding of the governance roles, rules, responsibilities and relationship between the Board and Staff Team 3. Recruit new Trustees	• All trustees are people with learning difficulties with skilled support to fulfil their roles • Recruit 2 new Trustees • Six Management Committee meetings per year • Triennial Annual Meeting held during 2026 • Produce a Scheme of Delegation by April 2026. • Annual Trustee/Team Development Day • Deliver the Trustee training annually.

January 2025

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People First
a voice for people with learning difficulties