



# **Annual Report**

**April 2020 – March 2021**



## **Out In Front !**

### **People First (Self Advocacy)**

A charity and company limited by guarantee

Charity number: 1057354 Company number: 03134827

Registered office: 336 Brixton Road, London SW9 7AA

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**The Management Committee presents its report and independently examined financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2021**

**39**

**Policy meetings  
attended**

**64**

**Online meetings &  
focus groups with  
self advocates**

**212**

**individuals  
received advocacy  
support**

**Increased  
Twitter  
followers to  
over**

**1000**

**11**

**Presentations  
at events**

**10**

**Articles &  
videos**

**5**

**Online  
newsletters  
sent to members**

**8**

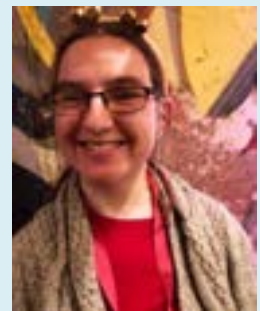
**Campaigns  
supported**

**People First (Self Advocacy)** is a national user-led self-advocacy organisation. We have both individual members and member self-advocacy organisations. Our Management Committee members and staff all have learning difficulties and our staff are supported through Access to Work to break down the barriers they face as professionals.

## **2020 – 2021: A year like no other!**

### **Message from the Chair** Christine Spooner

This has been one of the toughest years in our history, and it's been particularly hard for disabled people. I've been amazed at how People First, and many other self advocacy organisations around the country, responded to the crisis.



They were able to keep people connected and safe, and help them get the things they needed at a time when other support stopped. This is the reason self advocacy organisation should receive better funding. Covid has shown us that funding can be made more accessible and immediate.

I'd like to thank our funders and supporters, and of course the People First team; they've worked really hard to keep things going and continue to support our members. I'm sure we will go from strength to strength.

*C. P. Spooner.*

# Message from the Director

Andrew Lee



Since March 2020 we have all had to change and adapt the way we work. The pandemic has had a huge impact on our well-being and our way of life.



At the beginning of the year we reviewed our priorities and set a plan for the following six months.



We were able to apply for some of the emergency Covid-19 grants, and the money we got helped us continue our campaigning and policy work, and meet the increased demand for advocacy support.



Covid-19 shone a light on the inequalities we were already facing around access to health care, support and digital inclusion, and in particular accessible information and equal access to treatment for Covid-19.



Many people were left with little or no support during the first lockdown and were left isolated, scared, and forgotten about.



The number of deaths of people with learning difficulties, disabilities, and autism were six times more than the general population. We were also hearing about Do Not Resuscitate Orders being placed on people without any discussion or consent.



In April 2020 we set up and co-facilitated the Covid-19 Support and Action Group. Self-advocates from around the country met weekly and shared their concerns about some of these issues, and organised collective action.



We want to thank all of our team, our supporters, and funders for helping us to respond to this crisis. Our work was able to continue when most needed.



# Our people

## Management Committee Members

**Christine Spooner:** Chair

**Marie Emma Claire:** Vice Chair

**Michael Brookstein:** Treasurer

**Derek Stevens:** Campaigns Officer

**Kate Brackley:** Membership Secretary

**Ruth Caroline Carter:** Company Secretary

**John Elliffe:** Management Committee Member

**Bella Edwards:** Management Committee Member



## Staff Team

**Andrew Lee:** Director

**Ray Johnson:** SEOEP Co-ordinator

**Samantha Johnson:** Advocacy Co-ordinator



Our support team now includes a Team PA and a Book Keeper.



We also have a team of supporters who help us do our work. We fund this support through Access to Work.

# Vision



A UK which is free of barriers faced by people with learning difficulties.

Where people with learning difficulties have:

- Real choice, control and independence
- Access to user-led self-advocacy organisations, accessible information and the advocacy and support that they need to have real equality of opportunity and inclusion in society

# Mission



To promote the user-led voice of people with learning difficulties as equal and valued citizens. We do this by supporting people with learning difficulties and their user-led organisations to grow and have a voice both at a local and a national level.

We also support decision makers and services to understand the barriers we face at all levels of society and the support we need to break down these barriers.



# Values



- People with learning difficulties are always the first point of contact within the organization
- People with learning difficulties should have the support to speak up, speak out and get heard
- Local self-advocacy organisations should be 100% user-led
- Society should be inclusive; with people with a learning difficulty having equal access to community life, employment and relationships
- People with learning difficulties should know and be able to exercise their rights
- People with learning difficulties can make decisions and have control of their lives with the right support

People First got expert advice from a lawyer to update the charity's Articles of Association. This is so we can make sure we keep to the law and so that the charity works better. The changes were agreed by our members by resolution at an Extra-ordinary meeting 20th February 2020.



# Our Campaign Priorities

Our campaign priorities were agreed by our membership at our 2017 AGM.

Everything we do is to promote what is important to people with learning difficulties across the UK.



All of our activity takes forward our campaign priorities set by our members.

## Easy Read and Accessible Information

Information is power!



Easy Read is more than just an accessible format; it is an important tool for making information empowering. It is about the whole process, from how people access the document to how people get support to act on the information in the document if they want to. It is seeing the information as empowering and something that people can use to make the changes that they need or want.

## Self-advocacy groups

Nothing about us without us!



Many people with learning difficulties have been told their whole life what they can't or decide. Self-advocacy is a process and each person uses their group in a different way. Self-advocacy groups aren't just a place to socialise; for many it is the place where they first realise that they are a person with opinions, desires, plans, and rights.



# Community Advocacy and Support

## Don't break my life up into pieces!



What we have realised from our work and our own life experience, is that many services and the processes for getting support are so inaccessible, we end up getting left out. Our life gets broken up into different pieces; we have someone to call about housing, someone to call about hate crime, someone to call about benefits, someone to call when we are sick.

The support we get often looks at just one area of our life. What happens is that we then go to our local self-advocacy group for support as they see us as a whole person with needs, wishes and ideas.



# Our Activities and Achievements

## The Empower! Enterprise Accessible Information and Communication Service



In 2020 we started a big review of our Easy Read service. We were able to do this after being accepted on to the Equally Ours, Enterprise Development Programme.



We wanted to develop the service so we could better support organisations to empower people with learning difficulties to not only access their information and communication, but to make decisions and be included in the process.



We continued to run a limited easy read translation service while we were doing this work and took on 35 easy read translation jobs. We will be launching the new service next year, in 2022.

# Supporting Each Other Equals Power (SEOEP)



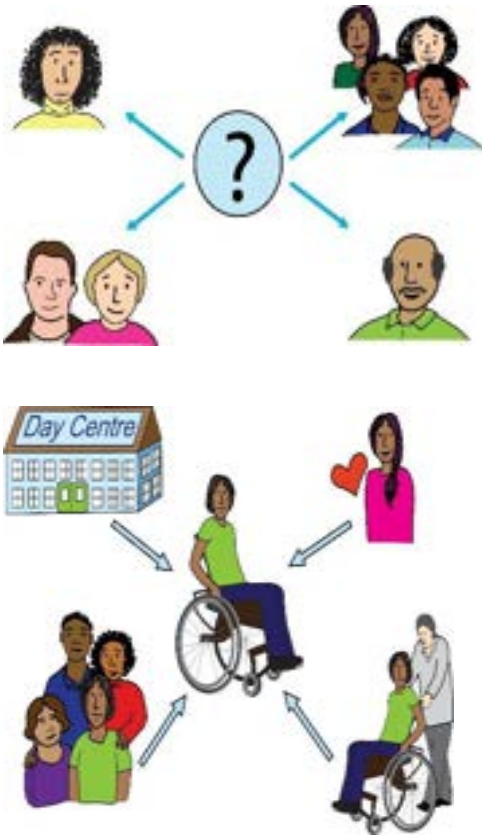
Supporting Each Other Equals Power (SEOEP) is a pilot **peer support** project in Lambeth which makes it possible for people to have social and leisure activities in their life. This work is carried out by Breaking out of the Bubble.

**Peer support:** this means when people use their own experiences to help each other.

It also gives an advocacy and **wrap round** support service. This work is carried out by People First. The project is funded by the Lottery. It is a partnership between People First, **Breaking out of the Bubble** and the **Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE)**, who organise the Steering Group meetings and will carry out the evaluation.

**Wrap round:** this is a way of supporting people and their families with mental health and other complex needs.





We are excited about the project, but it is also hard work and can be very stressful. The project has worked with over 100 people. Many of the people we work with have very complicated and upsetting problems.

Some of the problems are homelessness, complaints, benefit appeals, housing appeals, asking the local authority to offer more support and take responsibility for fixing the issues.

## Stepping Stones to Positivity



Portsmouth needed a user-led self-advocacy group for people with learning difficulties. The group was needed so people could:

- Get self-advocacy skills.
- Get peer support to deal with advocacy issues.
- Campaign on the issues that affect their lives.





Until the group was set up, people didn't have a chance to talk about the things that affected them.



Portsmouth Social Service gave funding to the group to get started. People First has supported the group to grow, by helping it to develop as a charity and giving management committee training. Over time, the voices became stronger and we worked on ideas and plans to take the group forward.



In January 2020, Stepping Stones to Positivity became a charity. But because of Covid-19, it has been really hard to take the group forward at the pace we want. We now have 30 members.



We were successful in getting some funding from the Grocers Charity to fund an Assistant to the Management Committee.



**The Assistant to the Management Committee has supported SSTP to:**

- Buy computer equipment and give one to one training to



make sure that the Management Committee can work to take the group forward in virtual meetings.

- Develop Website, Facebook and Twitter, and a leaflet about the group to grow the membership. SSTP are taking forward their membership plan
- Make sure that SSTP understand and represent the needs and issues of people with learning difficulties in Portsmouth. We do this at Partnership Board meetings. Easy Read is the area we are taking forward first.
- Work on a Big Picture Plan to set up and The Supporting Each Other Equals Power project, which is a Peer Advocacy project.
- Develop and take forward a fundraising plan and set up a bank account

## Engage Britain

### Engage Britain



We were one of the national facilitators for [Engage Britain's](#) 100 Community Conversations about health and care.

We ran three events with self advocates in England, Scotland and Wales.

Thank you to our colleagues at People First Scotland and All Wales People First.

## The Covid-19 Support and Action Group



In the second week of April we set up the Covid-19 Support and Action Group for self-advocates around the country. We wanted to provide a safe online space for people to share concerns, information, and ideas. It was also an opportunity to discuss the coronavirus guidance, which many people found confusing.

You can listen to People First Director Andrew Lee talk about the group [here](#).



At the start of the lockdown people told us that they had less support, and in some cases it stopped altogether. This meant that people were more isolated.



We learnt about other risks due to less face-to-face contact, support and monitoring during the lockdown. This included scamming of people who live alone, increased isolation, higher incidents of domestic abuse and neglect.



We provided practical support for people to get online and use Apps such as Zoom, WhatsApp and Microsoft Teams.

The group has been meeting ever since. Member Chris Burns is our resident artist and has been creating art to represent the discussions at each meeting.







As the level of peer support and trust between members of the group increased, people started to share their fears and concerns about issues such as 'Do Not Resuscitate' and Shielding. People also spoke about other world events such as Black Lives Matter.

This resulted in the group producing the following statements:

- Our Statement in Support of the Statement Covid-19 and the rights of Disabled People.  
<https://peoplefirstltd.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus-Statement-from-People-with-Learning-Disabilities-21.04.2020-1.pdf>

- Assessment and Treatment Unit Position Statement <https://peoplefirstltd.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Assessment-and-Treatment-Units-Position-Statement-1.pdf>
- Covid-19 Support and Action Group Research Statement <https://peoplefirstltd.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/COVID19-Support-and-Action-Group-Research-Statement.pdf>
- Covid-19 Support and Action Group Black Lives Matter Statement <https://peoplefirstltd.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Black-Lives-Matter-Statement-June-2020.pdf>



Policy people approached the group to take part in consultations.

This included the NHSE shielding consultation, which informed a Prime Minister's briefing, and the Commission on Social Security.



We took part in UK Parliament Week in November 2020, and had training about how Parliament works in January and February 2021.

The group also planned an online event for June 2021  
**Oi! – Out in Front**

## **The Accessible Information campaign**

The need for accessible information was even more important during the pandemic. We found that information about Covid-19 and the lockdown was not being made accessible at the time people needed it.



We had a meeting with other Easy Read services in May, and in June we joined forces with other self-advocates around the country and Learning Disability England.

The Accessible Information campaign was launched soon after. We gathered over 300 signatories from individuals and organisations by September 2020 and sent them to the Government and other policy people.

[https://peoplefirstltd.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Campaign-Letter-about-Accessible-Information\\_Easy-Read-October-2020-2.pdf](https://peoplefirstltd.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Campaign-Letter-about-Accessible-Information_Easy-Read-October-2020-2.pdf)





Although it was difficult to keep up with the changing guidelines, the Government and services started to make more effort to produce accessible information about Covid-19 and the restrictions when they were needed.

We also produced videos on the importance of accessible information.

Watch **Olcay Lee**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBx0ZLqsSK0&t=20s>

and **Ray Johnson**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JtjD-zbfr8>

## London Groups

From September 2020 - March 2021, we worked with 10 leaders of self-advocacy organisations across London to find out how they managed over the first 6 months of the pandemic. We were able to support each other, share ideas and do things together.

We found out that many of the groups struggled to get their services and activities online; taking up to 6 months or more. We have continued to work with some groups, helping them look at how they can strengthen their work.

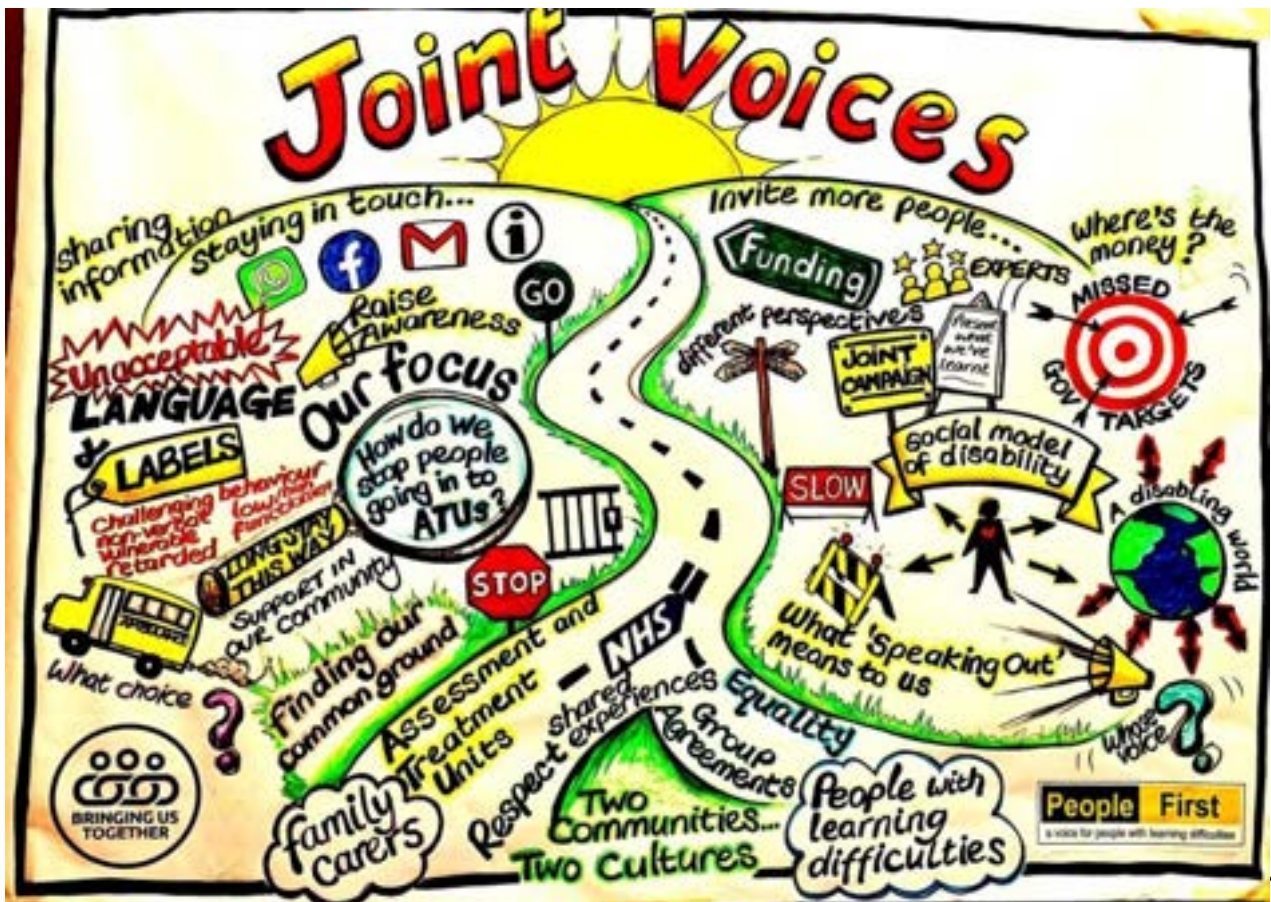


# Joint Voices

In January 2020 we joined forces with the family carers group, Bringing Us Together to work on a campaign called 'Joint Voices'. We co-facilitated six sessions. Our main aims were to:

- Look at how we work with family carers equally and positively
- Plan how we can best campaign on stopping people being admitted to Assessment and Treatment Units and asking the Government why targets are still not being met.

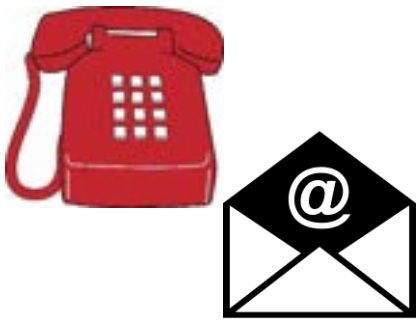
We will be looking for funding to continue this work next year.







# Advocacy, Signposting and Advice Project (ASA)



The Advocacy Signposting and Advice (ASA) project is a telephone helpline for people with learning difficulties and workers. The project runs across the country. It aims to support people to look at services close to their home.



These services can support them to get advocacy or support with issues they are struggling to find help with.

During the year, People First supported 120 calls which came from all around the country.

Here are some of the issues that people have needed support with:

- Being supported at court cases
- Advocacy to deal with issues around benefits
- Housing issues
- Complaints around health and social services





It's clear that lots of workers are not used to working with people with learning difficulties. They don't know how to meet their needs or know. They don't know who to ask for advice about this and they haven't got the information they need.



Advocacy Signposting and Advice at People First supports these workers to have more information about the needs of people with learning difficulties. They can tell them about groups which might be able to support them.

### **ASA during COVID-19 and going forward**



We have carried on running our service during the pandemic and will do so in the future. However, less people have a need for this service. We think this is because people have been facing very immediate issues and have had to find support from local workers and supporters.



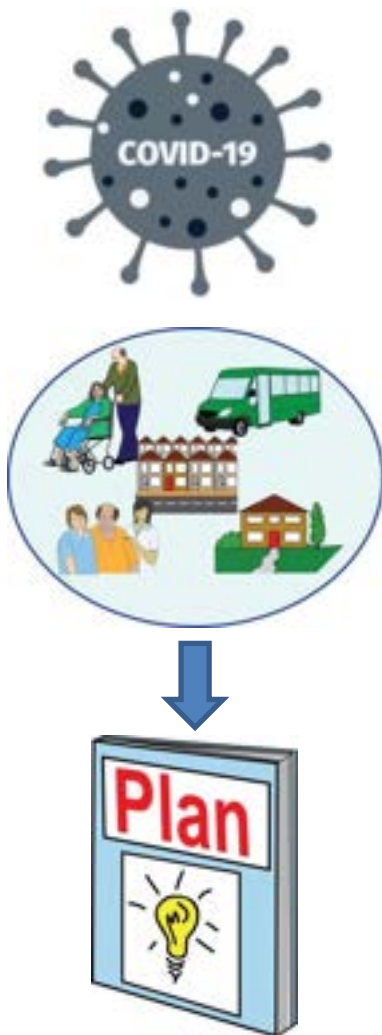
# Our Policy work

## Reclaiming Our Futures Alliance (ROFA)



We are a member of the ROFA Steering Group and we support the National Independent Living Service (NILS). We have also produced videos to explain the difference between Social Care and Independent Living [https://www.rofa.org.uk/nilss\\_project/](https://www.rofa.org.uk/nilss_project/)

## Social Care Covid-19 Taskforce



Andrew Lee was invited to join the Covid-19 Advisory Group for People with Learning Disabilities and Autistic People in the summer of 2020 to help the Department for Health and Social Care to understand and respond to the impacts of Covid-19 on people with a learning disability and autistic people. We helped to shape recommendations for the Social Care Taskforce report and Adult Social Care Winter Plan. The group met again early in 2021 for three meetings, to look at the progress made on the main recommendations:

1. Accessible information
2. Day support and other services which stopped during the pandemic
3. Loneliness and exclusion

## Workforce Expert Advisory Group



After 18 months co-facilitating the Workforce Expert Advisory Group (Supporting Skills for Care, Health Education England and NHS England with workforce development) People First resigned as co-facilitators of this group. This was due to a process of recruitment being introduced at a time when people needed continuity and calm.



The language of co-production was used but the practice of co-production was not. We felt strongly that this should be challenged.

## All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs)



In June we were asked to present at **All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Learning Disability**. We spoke about the things our members told us were impacting them during the pandemic and what the Government should look at when they do their inquiry into the pandemic.

We also attended the meeting dedicated to the 10th Anniversary of Winterbourne View Scandal and the Future of Transforming Care.



## DWP Taskforce on Alternative Formats



### Department for Work & Pensions

We have provided a lot of input into how the DWP can improve how it communicates with people. This is at a time when a lot of their information is going online. We continue to push for more accessible formats and reasonable adjustments for people with learning difficulties.



Some of the topics this year have included:

- Raising awareness of Easy Read amongst DWP staff and customers
- Disability awareness training within DWP, with a specific focus on accessibility
- Implications of DWP moving towards a more digital service
- Improved support for people with learning difficulties.



## Campaigns and consultations



As well as our own campaigns, we have supported local and national campaigns that align with our work. We have also responded to numerous consultations and contributed to published articles and reports.

# Our Organisational Development



At the beginning of 2020 we produced our new Organisational Strategy for 2020-2023. This was after six months of review and planning in our 'Big Picture' meetings.



Because of the pandemic we had to review what our plan was for the immediate 6 months (March 2020 – August 2020).



Our overall plan didn't change but the order of what we did and how we did it had to change.

## Key things to tackle

**A** Raise the political presence of people with learning difficulties

- Raising awareness
- Policy profile + time
- Directors
- Make politics accessible
- Strengthen work relationships with members
- Build confidence of members

**B** Strengthen governance of People First

- Support for trustees to support the Director
- Recruit management committee Assistant

**C** More advocacy + support in the community + more funding for local self-advocacy groups

- Building capacity confidence + build of self-advocacy groups
- Raise profile of 'wrap around' self-advocacy + show value
- Continue to run SEEP project
- Share learning work with others

**D** Encourage wider use of easy read

- Strengthen easy read standards + guidance
- Scope + plan the national sticker campaign + digital barriers
- Set up strategy group
- Consult on stickers
- Scope sticker campaign
- Work with SEEP + Portsmouth

# Finances

## Part 1: Legal and Administrative Information

Charity Name: People First (Self Advocacy)  
Charity registration number: 1057354  
Company registration number: 03134827

Registered Office and operational address:  
**336 Brixton Road, London, SW9 7AA**



## Independent Examiner

**Dick Maule FCA**

3 Penlee View Terrace, Penzance, TR18 4HZ



## Bankers

**Barclays Bank PLC**

Bedford Square Business Centre  
PO Box 314, 6 Bedford Square, London  
WC18 3TD



## Part 2: Report of the Management Committee

### 2.1 Risk Management

**Risk management:** this means when an organisation looks at things that might go wrong and thinks of ways to stop them from becoming a reality.



The Management Committee has spent time looking at what things can go wrong. We often look at ways to make sure the charity faces less risks.

For example:

- We have rules for checking things, such as paying bills
- We follow rules to make sure there is good health and safety for staff, volunteers and visitors
- We make sure that Privacy and **Safeguarding** are reviewed often and put into practice.

**Safeguarding:** this means putting rules into place to make sure that people who could be at risk, can live safely.

- We look at the way we do things often, to make sure that we are still doing them right and that they carry on meeting our needs.



We keep facing risks to funding. This year, we increased our unrestricted funds and we have increased our income from our Easy Read Service.





We were successful with an application to Esmee Fairbairn for a grant of £150,000 over 3 years for core funding, and we were successful in gaining COVID-19 emergency grants from a number of funders.

**Unrestricted reserves:** this is funding that we can spend on anything for the organisation. It is not given to us for a specific purpose.



We didn't realise how much the success of a project could affect the main work of an organisation. We are now working to make sure that the project work of the organisation has lots of funding.

## 2.2 Structure of the Organisation



People First has a Management Committee of up to 12 members who meet at least six times.

They are responsible for agreeing on the aims and policies of the charity.

## 2.3 Day to day Management



The Director of People First does the day-to-day work. He makes sure the charity meets its targets. He makes sure that staff can do their jobs and carry on building their skills and working well together.

## 2.4 Reserves Policy

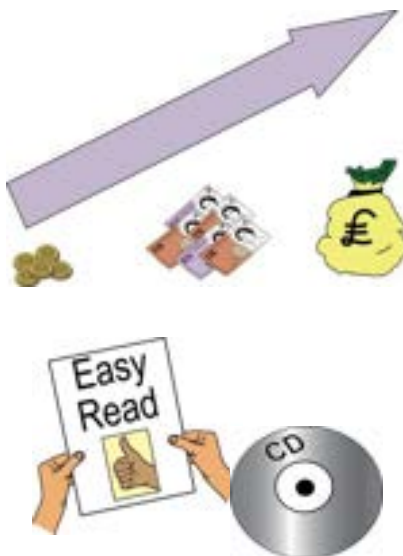


We must aim to have reserves to cover the organisations running costs for 6 months.



Our unrestricted funds as at 31st March 2020 were **£14,400**.

The balance on our unrestricted reserves as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 is now **£20,853**.



We are aiming to increase this during 2021/2022, as our Easy Read Service becomes more established through **The Empower! Enterprise** - Accessible Information and Communication Service.

We aim to raise this level of reserves through our Easy Read Service and picture bank sales.



We have also taken forward core funding applications which have been successful in the 2020/21. We have succeeded in gaining core funding from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation of £150,000 over 3 years, and a number of COVID-19 applications amounting to £50,000.



We have also developed training and consultancy contracts amounting to £30,000 in the year 2020.

## 2.5 Public benefit Statement



The company's objectives and principal activities are to:

- Support groups and individuals with learning difficulties to speak up about what is important to them
- Raise awareness of the rights of people with learning difficulties
- Develop the skill base of self-advocacy groups and individuals



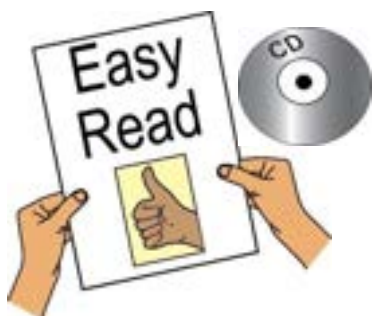




- Make sure that the voices of people with learning difficulties are heard at local and national government policy level
- Work at a national level providing support, information, advice and training to individuals and user-led self-advocacy groups.

## Part 3: Summary Accessible Accounts for the year 2020/21

### Accessible Accounts report by: The Treasurer



The full independently examined accounts for 2020/21 are shown at the end of this report. They are not very easy to understand so I have made an easy read version



The next few pages explain the money information in a different way to make it clearer.

### What the Independent Examiner Thought of the full Accounts!



Because we are a company we have had our finances independently examined. They said we kept good records and that we spent money correctly

### Where we got our money from!



**Grant Money** that we got from funders:  
Grant from Charitable Trusts and COVID-19 funding

**Total Grants – £159,436**



**Access to Work: Money for workers' support**

**Total – £61,132**



By **selling things**, giving training, making documents accessible

**Total – £29,299**



**Donations and other  
Total £3,055**



**Bank Interest  
Total - £0**

**Total money coming in: £279,607**

**What did we spend the money on?**



Money was spent mainly on wages for staff, rent and running costs for the office and funding local self-advocacy group projects.



**Total money going out: £242,631**

Did we have any money left over at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021?

**Yes, we had: £51,377**

## **Part 4: Statement of Financial Activities**

### **Responsibilities of the Management Committee**



The Management Committee, who are also known as the Trustees, are responsible for keeping proper accounting records. These records must show clearly how we are doing with our money at any point in time. The Management Committee have to make sure that the financial statements follow the rules of the Companies Act **2006**.



The Management Committee is also responsible for looking after the assets of the charitable company, such as computers and furniture, and for taking reasonable steps to stop or prevent anyone from stealing or cheating.



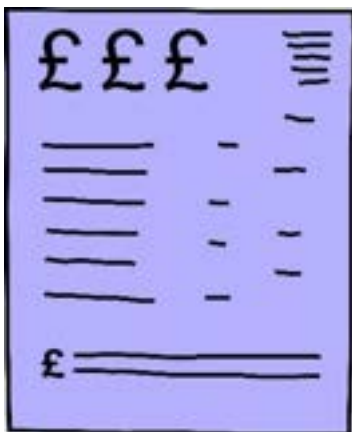


The names of the Members of the Management Committee who served during the year and up to the date of this report are set out on **pages 3 and 4.**



The next part is a statement of the Trustees responsibilities for the purposes of Company Law and is declaring that that we have met these responsibilities.

### Trustees' responsibilities statement - Charitable Company



The trustees (who are also directors of People First Self Advocacy for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).



Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for the year

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.



The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006.

They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.



In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant information of which the charitable company's independent examiner is unaware; and
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant **information and to establish that the examiner is aware of that information.**

Dick Maule FCA will continue as independent examiner



This report has been prepared in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, the Charities Act 2011, and the Companies Act 2006.

**Approved by the Management Committee**

**Date:**

**and signed on its behalf by:**

*C. P. Spooner*

**Christine Spooner**





The People First Management Committee submits its statutory Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021.



The Trustee's Report and Financial Statements have been prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006, the Charities Act 2016 and comply with UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (GAAP). They also comply with the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard, also known as the Charities (FRS 102) SORP.



### **Public benefit statement**

In reviewing our aims, objectives and activities, the Trustees have taken into account the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit. The Trustees ensure that the activities undertaken are always in line with the charitable aims and objectives as set out in People First's governing document. This annual report does not include exemptions from disclosure.