

We are People First.
Impact Report 2020/21.



30 Years

Listening. 
Engaging. 
Empowering. 

wearepeoplefirst.co.uk



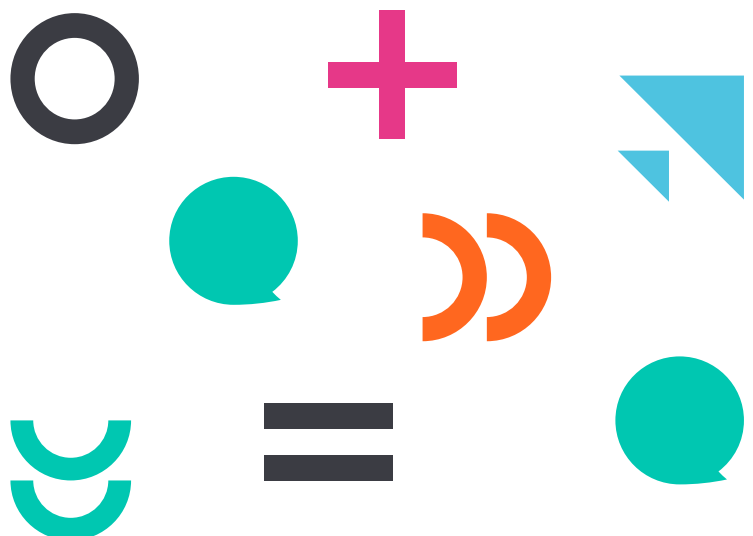
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Accessibility.

This report is designed to be an accessible document.

If you do need an alternative version please email us at hello@wearepeoplefirst.co.uk



We are People First. We listen, engage and empower.

For 30 years our work has been improving outcomes for people. **Listening through advocacy. **Engaging** with people on health and care services. **Empowerment** through training. We believe in supporting people to live their lives the way they want to.**

This report shows our impact from April 2020 to April 2021.

**We make a difference.
We are People First.**

Co-chairs' message. Rising to the challenge of Covid-19.

In this, our 30th year of operation, our customers have needed us more than ever before.



John Mills,
Co-Chair
Board of Trustees



Steven Corlett,
Co-Chair
Board of Trustees

● In the face of the pandemic, People First has proudly adapted our services to continue providing support in new and safe ways. By embracing technology, taking our services online and adjusting our approach, our team have worked together to ensure that we've played our part to support our customers in extraordinary circumstances.

As an organisation, we have committed to our role in the Covid-19 response effort, creating new projects and services. This includes 'Keeping People Connected' a project designed to help vulnerable people avoid isolation and loneliness across Cumbria, Lancashire and the North East of England.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the formation of the Self Advocacy Group that grew to become People First. Self Advocacy is the foundation of our organisation and continues to be a core part of our service offer, and we are honoured to have secured a significant amount of funding from Barclays UK which will enable us to expand our Self Advocacy Network. Self Advocacy empowers people to find the confidence and resources to voice their wishes and views and the impact of

this funding will be far reaching across Cumbria and beyond.

As always, the impact we make is made possible by the hard work and passion of our team. As such, we would like to thank every member of staff, volunteer, trustee and supporter for their dedication.

Through creativity, commitment and compassion, we've been a source of connection, reliability and understanding. On behalf of the public, we would like to thank the team most sincerely for their efforts.

Looking ahead, as we see the easing of restrictions and a pathway out of the Covid-19 pandemic, we are committed to learning from and embracing the most successful and impactful ways of working that necessity has encouraged us to explore. We will seek to expand our range of projects, allowing us to increase the amount of people we reach over the coming year, and ensure quality in all the work we do. ●

John Mills, Co-Chair
Board of Trustees

Steven Corlett, Co-Chair
Board of Trustees

Highlights 2020/21.



people provided with advocacy support.



people supported to find health and care services by Healthwatch Cumbria and Healthwatch Lancashire.



increased turnover from 2019/2020.



hours of blended learning delivered, despite the pandemic.



people shared their views with Healthwatch Lancashire and Healthwatch Cumbria through dedicated surveys.



separate Conference Centre bookings, supporting the Hospitality Academy and our wider work.



of people who received advocacy support said they were satisfied.



counselling sessions delivered by our Here Counselling service.



contacts made with vulnerable people through our Covid-response projects



young people engaged with through People First Youth Projects.



**We
Listen.**



)) We Listen.

We listen to people to truly understand their needs and wishes.

Our work enables people to feel respected, to be heard and to get the outcomes they deserve.



Advocacy. Working together. Working in partnership.

Advocacy is a powerful tool which supports people to speak up for themselves, have their rights and choices respected, and challenge inequalities.

● This year, through the dedication and hard work of our advocates, working in partnership with organisations nationally, and connecting customers through the Advocacy Hub, our service has supported thousands of people.

Open for business.

Our independent advocates are passionate about kindness, compassion and respect. This year they have worked tirelessly through the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure the people we serve have had their rights upheld.

Our message was clear from the outset of the pandemic, 'Advocacy is open for business'.

The impact:

we have worked flexibly to:

- meet demand
- continue to provide meaningful interactions
- develop our offer
- raise challenges to ensure human rights were upheld and respected.

National advocacy leaders.

This year, we have worked in partnership with many other advocacy organisations from England and Wales through a newly established 'Leaders in Advocacy Network'. This network was originally started to respond to the challenges presented by the pandemic.

Opposite page: Helen, Independent Advocate.

» The impact.

2696

People supported through our Advocacy Projects.

3687

Referrals made through our Advocacy Hub.





The impact:

through strong relationships and collaboration:

- We undertook a national advocacy survey of 435 independent advocates from across England and Wales to gather their feelings and experiences of providing advocacy during the pandemic. This resulted in the publication of the Valuing Voices report, which highlighted that people's rights were at risk.
- The report generated national coverage and became a reference point for professionals across the UK.
- We co-facilitated two webinars with Kate Mercer, Blackbelt Advocacy and Cloverleaf Advocacy on the use of Personal Protective Equipment when providing advocacy. These were attended by over 150 advocates.

Our growing advocacy offer.

This year we continued to deliver outstanding advocacy and developed new projects to reflect the needs of our customers.

Our Cumbria Advocacy Hub and Teesside Advocacy Hub have provided:

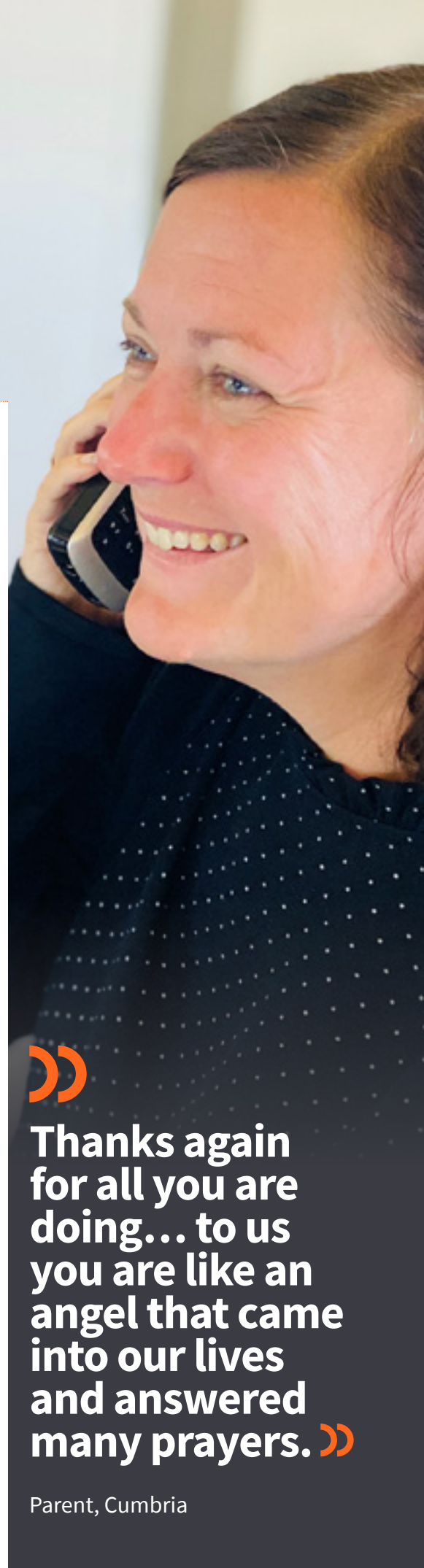
- Independent Care Act Advocacy
- Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy
- Independent NHS Complaints Advocacy

- Independent Mental Health Advocacy
- Paid Relevant Person's Representative (RPR)
- Non-statutory advocacy including for parents going through child care proceedings.

Our advocacy projects have grown to include:

- Middlesbrough Borough Council joining the Teesside Advocacy Hub
- Health and Social Care Advocacy for refugees and asylum seekers living in Lancashire and Blackpool (see pages 10/11)
- Health and Welfare Telephone Support Service for those who have been discharged from hospital and need some support resettling back in to their communities.

Looking ahead to next year, we will continue to build on our reputation, develop our projects even further and ensure that our customers continue to receive the exceptional service that we are so proud to deliver. ●



Thanks again for all you are doing... to us you are like an angel that came into our lives and answered many prayers. »

Parent, Cumbria

Advocacy impact.

Supporting refugee and asylum seekers rights.

Our Health and Social Care Advocacy project, funded by Lancashire County Council, works with refugees and asylum seekers living in Lancashire and Blackpool.



Thank you for your help for our family and our son. You have helped so much more in three weeks than we had in the last year. We are very grateful. »

Quote from advocacy customer.

- The main aims of the project are to ensure that:
 - refugees' voices, views, and experiences are heard
 - they are treated with respect and
 - the treatment they receive is fair and equal.

We do this by working alongside people to help them understand their rights to UK health and social care services, feel confident and develop skills to navigate health and social care processes and challenge inequalities.

Through one-to-one advocacy, group advocacy, training and awareness raising sessions, we have supported 33 refugees and asylum seekers to exercise their rights in 2020/21.

Among the customers we've supported this year is Farrid (not his real name).

Right: Samara, Senior Advocate, presenting a certificate at a Speaking Up training session.

Impact Case Study.

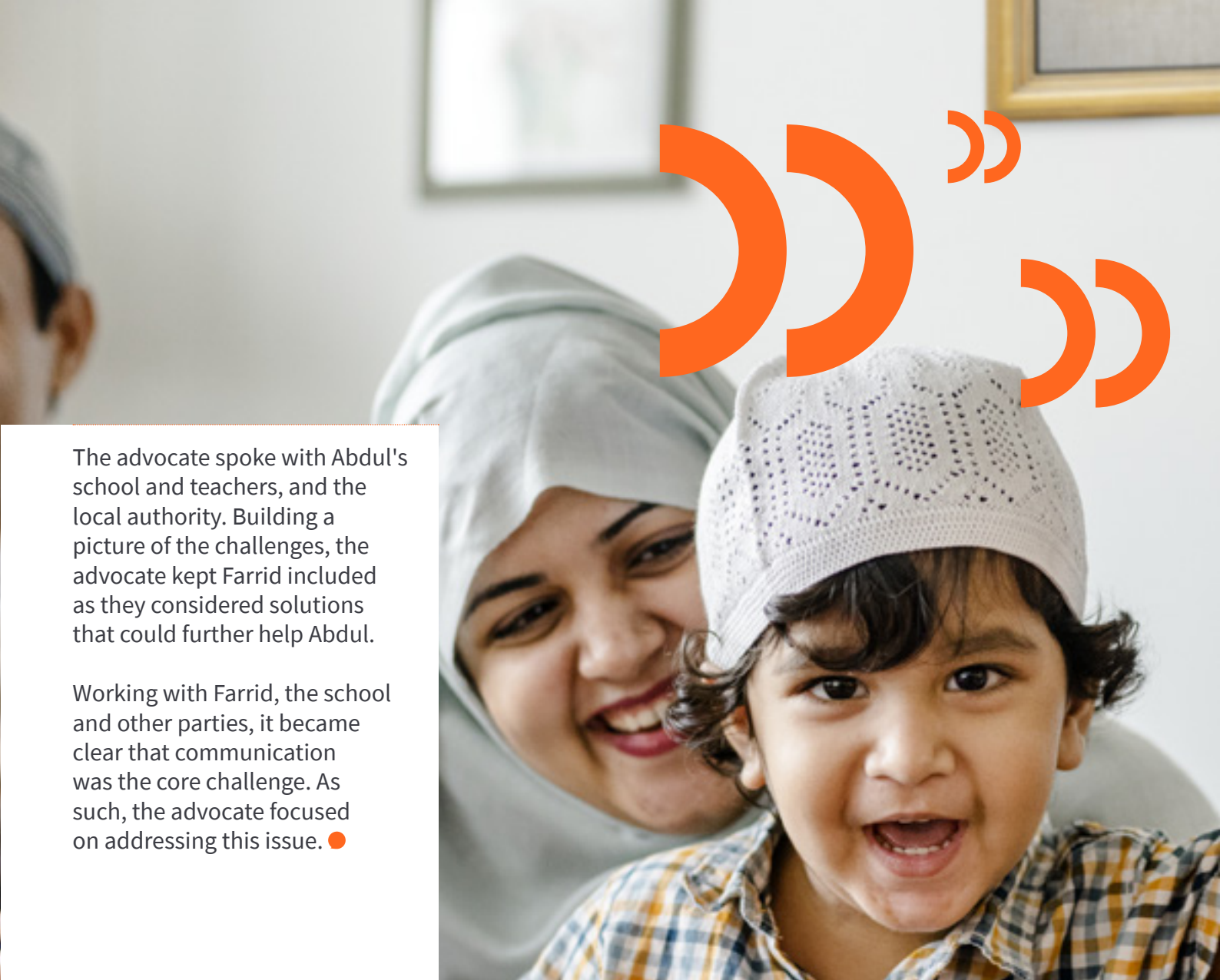
Farrid and his family resettled in Lancashire from Syria as part of the Syrian Refugee Resettlement program. One of Farrid's children, Abdul, started at the local high school not long after arriving in the UK.

Abdul has speech and hearing difficulties. He uses hearing aids and struggles to understand and pronounce Arabic language. This has impacted on his ability to learn English, settle in and progress at school. Farrid wanted to check that his son and his family were getting all the support they were entitled to.

Support from an advocate.

At an initial meeting that included interpretation, our advocate walked Farrid through the support available for his son, which included access to technology and equipment that could have a positive effect at school.





The advocate spoke with Abdul's school and teachers, and the local authority. Building a picture of the challenges, the advocate kept Farrid included as they considered solutions that could further help Abdul.

Working with Farrid, the school and other parties, it became clear that communication was the core challenge. As such, the advocate focused on addressing this issue. ●

» The impact.

- The advocate facilitated a meeting between Abdul's parents and the school, which included an interpreter.

Abdul's parents were able to explain what Abdul liked about school and what he found challenging. They were also able to talk about what support they thought school should be providing and were able to raise another issue regarding another student's behaviour towards Abdul.

The teachers were able to ask how they could offer more support and offered to loan Abdul a school laptop which he could work on at home.

Both Abdul's parents and the teachers agreed the meeting was very helpful and another meeting was held, including more of Abdul's teachers.

This approach has laid the groundwork for a more connected relationship and a more supported environment in which Abdul can learn and thrive.

Abdul's mother said "Thank you for your help for our family and our son. You have helped so much more in three weeks than we had in the last year. We are very grateful."

Introducing Here. Our new counselling service.

**For 30 years
People First has
been supporting
people to live
their lives the way
they want to.**

● Engaging, listening, supporting; we have worked together to encourage individuals across our region to speak up, be heard, and respected.

in September 2020, recognising the mental health crisis created by the Covid-19 pandemic, we built on our experience to launch a new, dedicated and free counselling service for people across the North West.

Here connects people with fully qualified and experienced counsellors to provide high quality, free or low-cost counselling and psychotherapy that adheres to the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and UKCP guidelines.

We offer eight sessions for those who find it difficult to access private therapy.

Being Here: our first year. Here has launched amid a time of mental health crisis. We have heard how the isolation and anxiety surrounding the pandemic has impacted people in profound ways.

In this context, our counsellors have provided therapeutic support to help with a range of challenges, including anxiety, PTSD, bereavement and addictions.

Here^o
People First Counselling.

» The impact.

154

counselling sessions
delivered since
September 2020.



“

People First and my Here counsellor have changed my life. I want to let everyone know how good my experience has been. »

Here customer.

Accessed through our website, or by calling our helpline, Here has begun to develop a reputation within the region as a provider of high-quality counselling.

In our first six months of operation, we've grown our counselling team to include four counsellors and created partnerships with influential health and care services.

Looking ahead, Here will continue to grow, extending free, friendly and impactful mental health support as we continue to uncover the longer-term mental health impacts of the pandemic. ●



qualified and experienced counsellors



Keeping People Connected. Responding to Covid 19.

People First's mission is to help people live their best lives. In a year shaped by the Covid-19 Pandemic, the importance of that mission has never been greater.

● Covid-19 has had a profound impact on our communities, our families and our customers. Through new projects and existing services, we have worked together to provide support and connection in a time like no other.

As a friendly voice and a trusted ear, our response to Covid-19 has included a cross-county project designed to overcome isolation, called Keeping People Connected.

A collaboration built on a simple idea, Keeping People Connected was supported by Inclusion North, The Learning Disability Network and partners across the North East, Cumbria and Lancashire regions. Funding was provided by North Cumbria CCG, Northumberland CCG, the Cumbria Community Foundation, People First and Lancashire County Council.

The project ran from March 2020 through until January 2021.

The purpose of the project was to contact people with learning difficulties and/or autism during the pandemic, to ensure people had access to the support they needed.

» The impact.

People told us they found Keeping People Connected phone calls invaluable

“

I have been really lonely; it has been great speaking to someone.”

Keeping People Connected customer.

6839

Interventions delivered, including phone calls, video calls, messages and emails.





Participant canoeing on River Eden.

Support was offered through a range of channels including telephone calls, texts and video calls. Through generous funding we were able to extend the impact of this work by providing IT equipment to enable people to connect online.

Through 'check in calls', our callers connected with people who had self-referred or had been referred to the service.

Our callers provided:

- A listening ear
- advice & guidance
- information to help address and overcome problems and concerns

From chats around Covid-19 guidelines, to conversations around physical and mental wellbeing, to general 'check ins and catch ups', calls became a reassuring part of our customer's days. Regular telephone calls allowed the opportunity for people to unload their worries and feelings, ask questions and seek advice and support.

The Keeping People Connected project supported hundreds of people to better understand the pandemic, develop coping mechanisms, get support and helped people to prepare for the transition out of lockdown. ●

431 

People supported across Cumbria, the North East and Lancashire.

4815 

Supporting phone calls made.



We
Engage.

+ We Engage.

By engaging with people and communities we find out what really matters to them.

We use this information, and people's stories, to influence decision makers, to improve services and improve people's lives.



Fundraising.

A year of generosity.

In a year dominated by challenges, the generosity and kindness of our donors, funders and sponsors has enabled us to support more people than ever before.

Through inspiring support, they have helped us to highlight just how vital advocacy services are during a national crisis, and notably, the role of self-advocacy in local communities. As a result, we have been a vital lifeline for our customers, whilst gaining new supporters and partnerships from across the North West.

Remembering Kevin Twigg.

● In April 2020, our friend, co-founder and beloved local Cumbrian legend, Kevin Twigg passed away after contracting Covid-19. Kevin was a core part of the People First family; a selfless man who had contributed massively to our work and the lives of so many.

In his passing, Kevin's kind spirit continued. His story and life achievements touched the hearts of many, and a fundraising campaign was set up to honour his legacy.

The campaign raised over £2,000 for People First, including a remarkable donation of £1000 from Manchester based investment firm AJ Bell's Wage War on COVID Fund.

Even now, Kevin's impact at People First and in Cumbria's communities continues to be extraordinary. Thank you.



“I knew Kevin really well. We worked together for around 20 years. He helped me to set People First up in the West of Cumbria and without him we would definitely not be the organisation that we are today.”

David Blacklock, People First CEO

£2000

Raised in memory of Kevin Twigg.
[justgiving.com/rememeringkevintwigg](https://www.justgiving.com/rememeringkevintwigg)

Expanding our network: Regional and national supporters.

● This year, our support network has expanded across the region and beyond with funders and supporters from across the UK backing our work and our mission, including:

Barclays UK.

In November 2020, People First became a Barclays UK charity partner. This is People First's first ever national charity partnership and is also the first time that self-advocacy has received independent funding.

Via their community relief fund we were able to provide vital self-advocacy services to ensure that people with learning difficulties stayed safe and well throughout the pandemic and beyond.

Tesco Mobile and DevicesDotNow (The Good Things Foundation).

Tesco Mobile donated 100 mobile telephones, and DevicesDotNow donated 20 tablets, meaning that we were able to provide vulnerable people with the means to stay connected to their loved ones and vital services.

Samaritan's Purse and the National Business Response Network.

By receiving a PPE Community Care Kit from The Samaritan's Purse and an outstanding 3500 disposable masks from The National Business Response Network, we shared safety equipment with staff, visitors, clients and other third sector organisation providing vital services.

A big thank you.

● We would like to thank all our donors, funders and sponsors for their amazing support and generosity.

- Barclays UK
- Carlisle City Council
- Children in Need
- Community Foundation for Lancashire
- Cumbria Community Foundation
- Cumbria County Council
- Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner
- DevicesDotNow
- Dobies
- Hadfield Trust
- Inclusion North
- Innovia
- Lancashire County Council
- Morecambe Bay Foundation/ Lancaster CVS
- National Business Response Network
- National Lottery
- North East and Cumbria Learning Disability Network
- Roselands Trust
- Samaritan's Purse
- Tesco Mobile
- The Good Things Foundation
- The Social Enterprise Support Fund
- Vinci Foundation

Responding to Covid-19.

● The support of our funders has enabled our teams to proactively respond to the changing context of the pandemic. Thanks to generous support, we have:

Developed new Covid-19 response projects:

such as the 'Here' counselling service, our Keeping People Connected project, which connected our staff with isolated people, Discharge Pathways and a range of youth projects.

Ensured the continuation of existing services:

including adapting our premises and delivery for the health and safety of customers, staff, clients and visitors; from donations of PPE, funding for specialist sanitation stations and thermometers, to funding for additional staff to support our Hospitality Students – we are grateful for every form of support.



Healthwatch Cumbria. Engaging in new ways to champion experiences.

Healthwatch Cumbria connects with thousands of people across Cumbria each year. Listening to people. Sharing experiences. Shaping services.

● This year, the team's connection with Cumbria's communities has remained at the heart of our work. Despite restrictions and lockdowns, we have adapted our approach, embracing digital tools. Through online focus groups, workshops and events, we've ensured that our role as Cumbria's champion of health and care experiences has continued to have an impact for local people.

Expanding our reach through social media.

In a year of innovations, we have established online communities that have broadened our reach and connected us with people from diverse ages and background. This includes:

What Matters to You: an online group of over 55s, covering a wide range of health and social care subjects. The group meets monthly. Each month the group connects with guest speakers from within the health and care system.

Group impact:

The Group has frequently acted as a 'sounding board' for proposed service changes and contributed to case studies that have become a part of improvements.



This and opposite page: Kate and Amy, Healthwatch Cumbria Engagement Officers.

healthwatch
Cumbria

+ The impact.

over **3.5k**

Social media interactions

584

People helped to access local services.

5185

Engagements with the public.



Chatty Heads: brings together young people from across Cumbria through video calls and social messaging. In addition to meeting with staff from the University of Lancaster to assist with the Children, Young People and Mobiles project, the group has also worked with Barnardo's (reviewing documentation and gauging views about mental health support within schools).

Group impact: The Group has worked with Commissioners to co-produce a revised CAMHS support delivery plan.

Through new methods and new approaches, Healthwatch Cumbria has acted as an essential barometer of the changing priorities and needs of local people. We have been a vocal amplifier of experiences in an extraordinary time. ●



+
If you read only one thing from this Bulletin, make sure it's the most up to date report from Healthwatch... As always, the report is well worth a read. +

Clare Edwards (Cumbria CVS Health Partnerships Manager)

Healthwatch Lancashire. Hearing views. Influencing improvements.

Healthwatch Lancashire listens to the views of local residents about their health and care experiences.

● Each year, the team engage with thousands of people across Lancashire; they connect experiences with health and care leaders to influence meaningful change. Against the backdrop of Covid-19, Healthwatch Lancashire's engagement activity has increased and diversified. In a period where accurate health and care information was essential and public health had never been more public, the team expanded their work to fit the needs of our customers. This included:

Amplifying Covid experiences:

Together with Healthwatch Cumbria, Balckburn with Darwin, and Blackpool, we launched a cross-county Covid-19 survey as a vehicle for local people to have their say.

Project Impact.


The survey was completed 1621 times. We heard key concerns, ideas and suggestions for improvements, all of which were shared with local leaders to influence service design and delivery.

Hearing care home experiences:

Where we have previously visited care homes to hear the experiences of residents, staff and families, restrictions altered our work. The team adapted by undertaking a powerful piece of engagement work, speaking with Care Home managers, staff, residents and families to capture their experiences of the pandemic.

healthw@tch
Lancashire

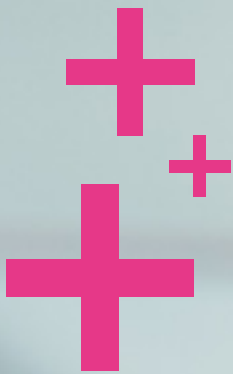
+ The impact.

over **39.5k** 

engagements through the Healthwatch Lancashire website.

Through **16**  **reports**

we made 83 recommendations for improvements in health and social care.



Project Impact.

Hearing from people spread across the Lancashire footprint, we identified key themes that were consistent from home to home. Visits, staff-wellbeing, access. Themes were shared with the local authority and have become part of the wider conversation along with key recommendations for improvements.

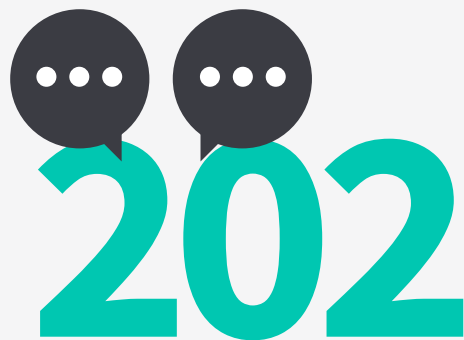
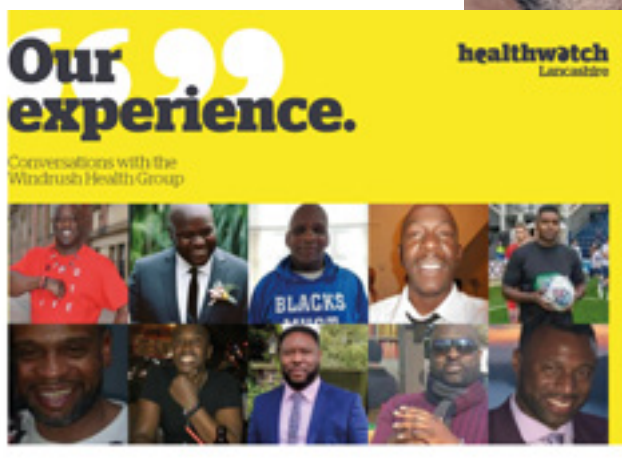
Championing Windrush experiences:

Through our previous work, we identified a need to engage with more diverse communities. As a result, this year, Healthwatch Lancashire has actively sought to engage with more people from ethnic minorities. This has included establishing a prominent link

with the Windrush Health Group in Preston - consisting of Black Caribbean men, African Caribbean communities and refugees in Lancashire.

Project Impact.

We're grateful for the information and enthusiasm that has been shared through these connections, which has led to powerful reports and a developing relationship with Lancashire's diverse population. This work has enabled seldom-heard voices to collaborate and together provide the foundation for high-profile pieces of work. ●



people engaged with from 'seldom heard groups'.

The People First Conference Centre. Adapting our offer.

The People First Conference Centre is a unique place that brings together an excellent hospitality service and life-changing learning.

● Although unique, the Centre has not been immune to the challenges faced by the Hospitality Sector this year. However, the Conference Centre Team have embraced creativity and innovation to adapt our hospitality offer and to keep our Centre busy.

Where the pandemic could have closed our doors, we invested into safety equipment for our customers: our team, including Hospitality Academy learners, showed resilience in adapting to PPE, temperature checks, regular deep-cleaning and one-way systems.

Where restrictions on face-to-face meetings changed hospitality, we enhanced our technology offer to provide virtual events: our new Hybrid equipment connected customers with guests from around the globe, keeping us a state-of-the-art venue.

Where venues were closed, we provided our spaces for vital, critical training for key NHS workers: with complimentary room hire and drinks, our team used our resources to play our part in the community's Covid-19 response.

Below: Hybrid event run by the Triple A Project in November 2020.

Right: New signage and glass vinyls within meeting rooms.

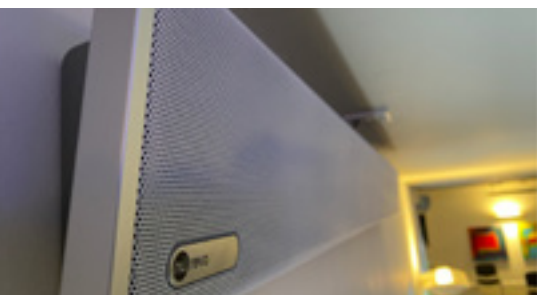
Far right: Virtual conferencing technology installed summer 2020.





Challenges often lead to innovations; this is the case for The People First Conference Centre. In adjusting to the pandemic, the Centre has secured impressive bookings, enhanced its reputation, introduced more people to the mission of People First and has broadened its offer through hybrid conferencing equipment.

It's been an extraordinary year, but we've adapted with creativity and vision. ●



What does a perfect conference centre look like? THIS! I have been using the facilities since the conference centre opened - at least one event a year. Without exaggeration, I can testify (from many visits) that The People First Conference Centre ticks ALL the boxes - consistently! +

Helen Story, MBE.



+ The impact.


468
Bookings made.

Hosted international events, connecting Carlisle with Japan, the USA and beyond.



Supported key workers with

 **46 days**
of room hire and over
2000 
cups of Fair Trade coffee.

We Empower.



➤ We Empower.

Our role is to support people to empower themselves.

We create the environment and conditions in which a person is supported to take control of their own future.



Education and Research. Shaping lives and services.

Education and Research is a core part of what we do at People First.

“
People First have helped me to speak about myself. I have learned more, I understand more and have made more friends.”

Ricardo, Learner, pictured opposite.

● For our customers, our Centre for Learning provides life-changing education. For our learners, our Hospitality Academy provides an environment to gain impressive workplace skills and qualifications.

This year, our team has ensured that learning has continued despite national restrictions; we've supported our learners to build resilience and overcome the isolation of working from home. We have also increased our projects to further our impact including working in partnership with the NHS and other organisations.

It's been a year full of opportunities and achievement.

The Hospitality Academy.

Through workshops, training and projects, we took our learning online this year. In the face of extreme change, our learners maintained their focus and commitment. Restrictions didn't get in the way of outstanding achievements.

Making the most out of e-learning and being back in person when we could, our learners have gained Level 1 Certificates in Hospitality and Catering and are advancing to further study. On top of gaining these qualifications, all our learners have impressed this year with their fortitude and hard work.

The Hospitality Academy has also seen new learners join us who have quickly become a part of the team.

▶ The impact.

Over **1200** 

hours of blended learning delivered, despite the pandemic.





Working in partnership to increase accessibility.

This year we have worked together with influential organisations to share and connect the lived experience and knowledge of our members and customers. This includes powerful work with the North Cumbria LeDeR Action from Learning group.

We were invited this year to oversee the administration for the group – to connect people with lived experience to shape agendas and accessible communication.

LeDeR refers to ‘learning from deaths of people with a learning disability’. The essential programme scrutinises the context around deaths and seeks to achieve positive service change to reduce health inequalities.

Together with our members, we have worked to ensure that

the group is as accessible as possible. We’ve worked with the Chair and Co-Chair to set the agenda, record minutes of meetings and maintain an action log, all in Easy Read format to make sure that all members of this group can understand the contents of each meeting.

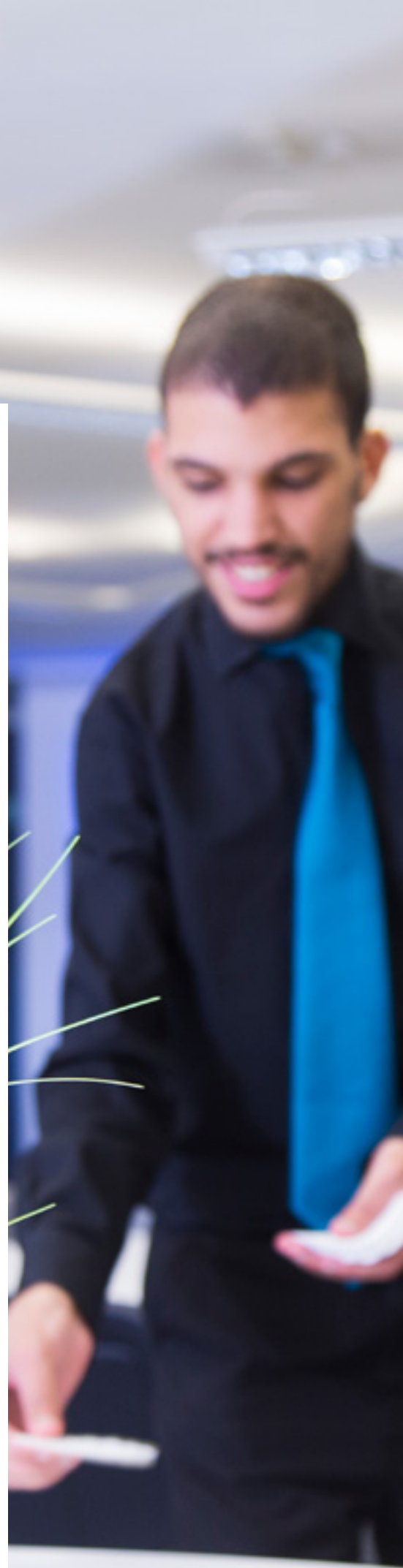
Looking ahead this work will continue into the new year; it will form the basis for more learning for our members, and more learning for the health and care system based on lived experiences.

Impact: After demonstrating the importance of accessible information, we were asked to produce an Easy Read version of the North Cumbria Report on LeDeR. This report was well received and reflected the style and format of the longer report. The report has been circulated across the county, been seen by highly influential system leaders and continued to show the power of accessibility. ●

“

This is an excellent piece of work well done. Thank you for mirroring the content of the main Annual Report in this accessible way.”

Kate Holliday, Quality Improvement Manager, North Cumbria CCG.



Youth Projects. Building confidence. Developing skills.

Our Youth Projects enable us to engage with even more young people with learning difficulties.

● This year we expanded our youth offer to include Next Steps, a new Covid-response project. Next Steps joins our existing Talk-Active project to provide local young people with powerful preparation for adulthood.

Next Steps: funded by Children in Need, supports and prepares young people to transition from lockdown back into everyday life.

Talk Active: encourages young people to develop key skills and knowledge. The aim is to nurture personal development and enhanced wellbeing. Through these projects, both online and in person, our team supported 113 young people with learning difficulties and/or autism in 2020/2021.

Taking things online.

To overcome limits on face-to-face gatherings, our team worked together with young people to transition our activities online. With workshops, activities and socials, we provided opportunities to develop key life skills and knowledge.

Our online workshops, including art therapy and quizzes, supported young people to develop awareness around a range of topics including Covid-19, how to stay safe online and mental health.

From keeping connected to learning, from virtual escape rooms to mental health sessions, Youth Projects became a reliable part of the routine for vulnerable people in the middle of national change.

Opposite page: Sam, Youth Project Worker, with participants on a trip to the coast.

➤ The impact.



young people supported in 2020/2021

“
I am enjoying a different way of learning. This has been a good way of getting to know someone else and building up my confidence.”

Young participant.



Back in the community.

As restrictions eased, we re-introduced community-based activities, including a trip to the wildlife park, tennis and an activity day at Bendrigg Lodge.

Focused on fostering independence, confidence and resilience, face-to-face activities became an opportunity for young people to take supported steps back into their communities.

As a result, young people took up new hobbies, developed new skills and made new friends.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, we have built on the success of last year to grow the number of participants taking part in our activities. ●

“

This (project) has given my child much-needed structure and social interaction during the epidemic and her vocabulary is much improved. ”

Parent of participant.



Our volunteers. Increasing our impact.

Every year, our team of skilled and dedicated volunteers contribute their time, knowledge and skills to support our work, and this year was no different.

● Despite a national pandemic many of our volunteers continued to put others first by supporting us to extend our services to as many people as possible. Making a huge contribution to our work and the lives of others, our volunteers are an inspirational team and we are profoundly thankful for their commitment and hard work.

Volunteer Impact.

Volunteers are a core part of People First, carrying out a variety of roles, including: Advocates, Keeping People Connected Callers, Youth Workers, Group Facilitators and Healthwatch representatives. Contributing to our work, and experiencing the personal enrichment of volunteering, our volunteers include **Ted Wiggins** and **Susan Plaskett**.



Ted Wiggins Volunteer Conference Centre Assistant.

● I have volunteered for People First for 3 years. I initially joined during a gap year from university to gain work experience. I volunteered within the Advocacy and Education, Research and Inclusion Teams, supporting the Hospitality Academy Learners. I loved both opportunities so much that I resumed my volunteer role upon completion of my degree, and I currently volunteer several times a week. Throughout lockdown, and since, I have mainly been volunteering with the Conference Centre Team fulfilling reception, administration, and clerical duties. I enjoy volunteering at People First because I feel like I make a difference to people's lives. Volunteering has provided me with opportunities to learn and develop knowledge and skills by gaining hands-on experience in a range of roles. ●



Susan Plaskett.
Volunteer Advocate.

● I joined People First over 3 years ago as an Independent Advocate. This ranged from supporting people in official interviews to generally giving support over a coffee and a chat, so they could feel that someone was listening.

There's a special feeling when you see how your volunteering impacts our customers. It never ceases to lift me when you hear the obvious relief in someone's voice when you speak for the first time and for their heartfelt thanks when you have guided and supported them through what can be an emotional and sometimes even harrowing time and process.

It's at times like this when I'm struck by the power of what we do, and I am proud to help people have their voice and concerns listened to. ●

“
I enjoy volunteering at People First because I feel like I make a difference to people's lives.”



**A big
People First
thank you.**

To each and every **People First volunteer** thank you for your time, effort, support, commitment and passion.

CEO message.

An unprecedented year.

People First has responded with strength and flexibility to maintain all our vital projects and expand our offer in a uniquely challenging year.



● This year has been one of adaptation; we have kept our services ‘open for business’ in spite of challenges and changes.

Transitioning our services to remote working has allowed our Advocacy, Healthwatch, hospitality and education services to support thousands of people across the North West. Investing in new technology has enabled us to connect with customers to overcome their isolation. Working together, as a team, has allowed us to adapt our offer to meet ever-changing needs.

2020/21 has also been a year of development; we have launched new projects, new methods of support, to extend our offer and to respond to the changing needs of our customers.

We have established Covid-response projects to offer additional support when it was most needed. This has included our Keeping People Connected helpline which has provided nearly 4,000 vital connections for vulnerable and isolated people across Cumbria, Lancashire and Northumberland. Recognising Covid’s impact on mental health, we created a new counselling service, Here. Here has provided counselling at no or low cost to those in need, and this project will continue to grow and develop in the new year and beyond.

This year has also been our 30th year of operation and it has come at a powerful and meaningful time.

People First was founded around a kitchen table as a Self-Advocacy Group. Our mission then is our mission now, to help people live their best lives. In a year like no other, the importance of that mission is paramount and we have seen its power shine through clearly.

“

Our founding members had no way of knowing that in 30 years’ time, the ball they set rolling would become a vital lifeline for thousands of people, spread across hundreds of miles. ”

Our founding members had no way of knowing what their organisation would grow to achieve. They had no way of knowing that in 30 years' time, the ball they set rolling, would become a vital lifeline for thousands of people, spread across hundreds of miles, at a time of global crisis.

We are proud to carry the mission of our founders, and we are grateful to every original member, every staff member, volunteer, customer and supporter who has been a part of our journey so far.

Looking ahead to a new year, our work will continue. We have risen to the challenges brought by Covid-19 and we are ready to adapt again in the year to come as restrictions lift. I speak for the full People First team when I say that we are committed to our values of listening, engaging and empowerment across the north of England. This year has shown how vital these values, and putting them in to practice, truly are. We will continue to impact people's lives and be the difference that individuals and communities need.

David Blacklock.
CEO, People First.

Our money.

People First operates as two registered charities, **People First Independent Advocacy (PFIA)** and **People First Services (PFS)**. Both charities share premises and a vision but have distinct roles and purposes.

Overall combined income 2020/21

£1,759,561

Previous year 2019/2020: £1,643,254

Combined surplus

£244,491

Combined Reserve Funds

£901,173

People First Independent Advocacy.

Income

£1,540,116

Expenditure

£1,377,965

Surplus

£162,151

Reserves

£818,833

made up of unrestricted funds of **£777,897** and restricted reserves held of **£40,936**

People First Services.

Income

£219,445

Expenditure

£137,105

Surplus

£82,340

Reserves

£82,340

of which **£75,913** was unrestricted and **£6,427** was restricted

The above is a summary of our 2020/21 accounts. For full accounts information please visit the [Charity Commission Website](#)

We are People First.



Contact us.

0300 303 8037
hello@wearepeoplefirst.co.uk

In Carlisle.
**The People First
Conference Centre.**
Milbourne Street, Carlisle CA2 5XB

In Barrow-in-Furness.
Cavendish House
78 Duke Street Barrow-in-Furness
Cumbria LA14 1RR

In Leyland.
Lancashire Business Park
Leyland House Centurion Way
Leyland Lancashire PR26 6TY

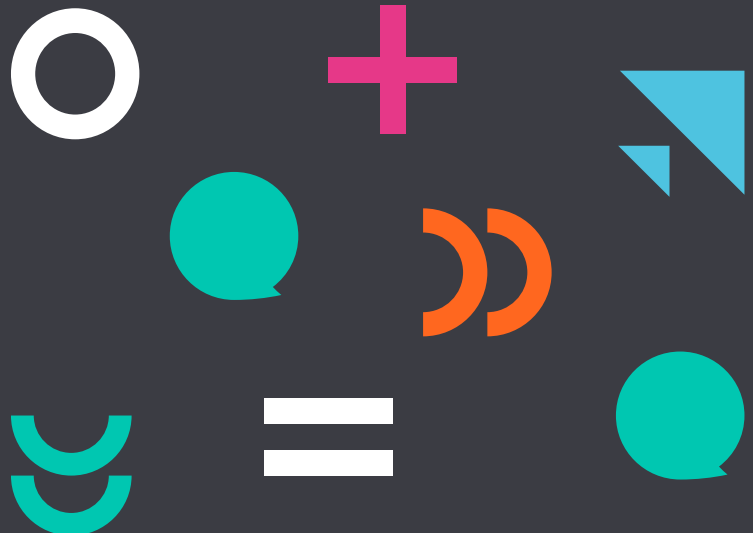
We are a charity.

People First Independent Advocacy
is a Registered Charity and Company
Limited by Guarantee
Registered Charity No.1184112
Company No.5438407

The People First Centre for Learning
and Conference Centre are part
of People First Services.
A Registered Charity No.1184467



We Listen, Engage and Empower.



wearepeoplefirst.co.uk

