



Deepening our connections

Impact Report 2022/23

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On the cover

Jonathan, a Learner in our Centre for Learning. For more information about Education, see **page 14**.

Co-chairs' message

Making a difference for our customers

Over the past year, our commitment to supporting people to make positive changes in their lives has continued to be our unwavering goal.



John Mills,
Co-Chair
Board of Trustees



Steven Corlett,
Co-Chair
Board of Trustees

This year, we have expanded our pursuit of this goal further than ever before, deepening our offer and our impact in the Northeast whilst maintaining focus in Lancashire and Cumbria.

As the amount of people we support grows, so too does our Board of Trustees.

This year we have welcomed additional experts who bring professional and lived experience, including finance, HR, hospitality and quality and performance to help us with valuable skills and fresh vision.

We have also welcomed an Independent Board Support Worker to support us to be user-led and ready to welcome more experts with lived experience in the months to come.

The last 12 months has seen a period of change brought on by local government reorganisation in Cumbria and we have taken this as an opportunity to develop to ensure the voices of local people are heard to influence change.

In this vein, we are looking forward to the year ahead and fulfilling our commitments through the development of a

new 5-year strategy.

This will involve a period of engagement with stakeholders and customers as we consider opportunities and define our focus for the next 5 years.

As a board, one of our highlights from the past year has been expanding People First's reach throughout the Northeast, working with other advocacy providers to ensure people are supported to live their lives the way they want to.

Seeing our teams extend our impact into a new region is a heartening development.

In closing, we are grateful for the continued hard work, dedication and accomplishments of the People First team including staff, members, volunteers and supporters. Your belief in the power of change, and your commitment to action and boundless generosity inspire us all.

Our Impact at a glance

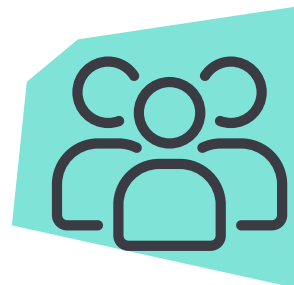
There when people need us most



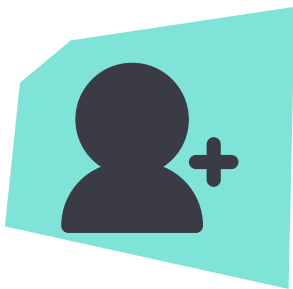
31,578 people engaged with our Healthwatch teams online and in person.



157% increase of volunteers from last year.



28% increase of Conference Centre delegates, helping us to provide a learning environment.



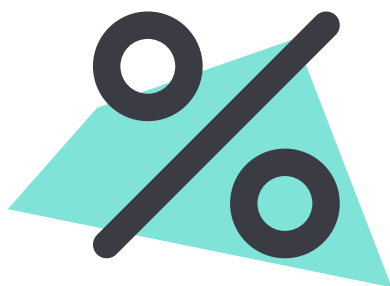
102 Self-advocacy group members across Cumbria and Lancashire.



99.6% said that they would recommend the People First Café to a friend.



3534 new advocacy referrals this year.



99% said they were satisfied with their advocacy service.

30,141

30,141 people accessed our services from across Cumbria, Lancashire and the Northeast



7278 hours learning delivered by our Centre for Learning.



1002 clients have been helped to self-direct their own care and support.



328 young people have been helped and supported by Young People First.



"Having your support has made me feel that someone is on my side and has helped me to put across how I'm feeling and what I want in my life.

You've given me the confidence to speak up if I need help and to voice my opinion."

Nicola, Advocacy Customer and Self-advocacy Group Member

We are People First

We listen, engage and empower

Independent Advocacy

We stand shoulder to shoulder with people as they work through their most challenging times.



Healthwatch

We ensure NHS and social care decision-makers hear the voices of local people to improve care.

Self Advocacy

We connect people living with a learning disability and/or autism to support each other through conversation and shared experience.



Everyone has the right to be respected and to have their say on the issues and decisions that shape their lives.

We help people to take control, be heard and counted when it's needed most.

Education

We support people to develop employability skills to fulfil their potential and access employment.



Independent living support

We help people stay in control of their care by accessing direct payments, personal health budgets and training.

Representation

We push for systems and services to improve based on the experiences of those who access them.



Independent Advocacy

There when people need us most

Advocates support people to speak up for themselves, have their rights and choices respected, and challenge inequalities.

We deliver a range of advocacy services to help people across Cumbria, Lancashire, and the Northeast. From feeling safe in their own homes to keeping their families together, our advocates stand shoulder to shoulder with people when they need us most.

This year has seen our advocacy offer grow as we prepare to deliver into the Northeast, develop new projects to support more people and increase in visibility to improve advocacy awareness.

This has included:

Raising awareness of advocacy

The more people who know about advocacy, the more people advocacy can help. Each year, with this in mind, our Advocacy team take part in a national 'Advocacy Awareness Week' to shine a light on advocacy and how it can help.

This year, we took a new approach to raise the visibility of our awareness activities. Partnering with a Cumbrian-based business, Lloyd Carlisle Mini, we launched our 'Advocacy Taxi' a branded vehicle designed to transport conversation across the areas we work within. The Advocacy Taxi, driven by advocates, made its way across Cumbria and Lancashire. In each

location, the taxi acted as a focal point for awareness raising; with pop up conversations, online content, question sessions and engagement taking place in and around the taxi. This included a session with young people in Cumbria at a local Youth Zone; engaging with an age group that is often overlooked when it comes to advocacy awareness.

Thank you to Lloyd Carlisle Mini for helping us to drive awareness differently this year.

Embracing collaboration to deliver outcomes.

In the spirit of collaboration, our Advocacy department has taken significant strides in establishing strong partnerships both internally and externally. This has included establishing

The impact



The Advocacy Hub, the single point of access for advocacy in Cumbria and Teesside, received **3534** referrals made up of:



1291 in Cumbria



2243 in Teesside

connections with advocacy providers across the Northeast.

Internally, we've embraced People First's unique make up of complementary services and departments to enrich our work.

By fostering regular communication and sharing insights with other departments, we've been able to pool resources, knowledge, and creative ideas to improve the outcomes for people.

Externally, we've collaborated with advocacy organisations across the sector by participating in networking and training opportunities.

Through workshops, webinars, and a dedicated online forum, we've engaged with providers to exchange best practice, tackle shared challenges, and identify opportunities for collective action. This collaborative network

has resulted in increased coordination, and a heightened impact for the people we support.



"Thank you for your kindness again. It meant so much. You came to the hospital so quick to see us both. Thank you for all you do. So much appreciated."

Advocacy Customer



Direct Payments Support Service

Helping people to stay in control

Direct Payments and Personal Health Budgets help people to have choice, control and flexibility over the care that they receive. Our team support 1002 people throughout Cumbria.

Our customers receive support to set up their direct payment

or personal health budget, to recruit and pay their staff, and to meet the sometimes complex obligations they have as an employer.

Developing our impact

The Direct Payments Support Service has continued to provide a tailored and impactful service that is continuing to grow and develop.

This year, this has included growing the team to meet the area's needs.

With a larger team, we have enacted improvements based on customer feedback, including quicker response times, more home visits, ensuring a named contact for each customer and engaging with customers more regularly for feedback.



"I am a mother of an adult son with autism and learning disabilities.

Supporting my son to be in his own home to enjoy a normal family life was the best option for him and his future. Through this time the support and help that I received from People First was invaluable. The Payroll, Managed Account Services and my Independent

Living Co-ordinator, has really made managing my son's service a lot less daunting and doable. I am 100% sure that I could not have done it without that essential support.

For people like me who need to set up a service that is appropriate for their child or family member, the services that People First offer are essential, and I am very thankful for all their past and continued help."

Customer, Direct Payments



The impact



1002 customers throughout Cumbria.



231 new customers this year.



CARTMELL SHEPHERD
SOLICITORS *Always at your side*

Marsh Commercial

PARAMOUNT LEGAL COSTS LIMITED

CLEP
CUMBRIA LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

THE CAREER ENTERPRISE HUB

Developing Partnerships

Shaping future opportunities

A new approach

We believe when energy is focused on real tangible needs it can transform services and change lives.

Our new 3-year Fundraising Strategy has so far seen People First embrace the things which makes us unique, identifying innovative and sustainable opportunities to share the People First mission with as many people as possible.

From 2023-2026, fundraising at People First will:

- Improve awareness
- Diversify income
- Deliver high profile projects
- Horizon scan

Improving awareness

From local business Borderway Finance taking on the Keswick Three Peaks Challenge, to a team of 12 runners taking on the Great North Run, it's been a truly action-packed year for fundraising and awareness events.

Without our supporters the services we provide simply wouldn't be possible. Thank you. Keep your eyes peeled to see what we get up to next.

The People First Awards

One of the team's major projects for the year to come is the planning of our first ever People First Awards at The Halston Hotel in Carlisle.

The awards will celebrate learners from our Hospitality Academy and Centre for Learning, with guests invited from across Cumbria's private and public sector.

The event will be a flagship opportunity to shine a light on the power of education and the successes that young people with a learning disability and/or autism can achieve when given the chance and support.

We'd like to give a heartfelt thank you to all our corporate sponsors who have committed to help make this event possible, particularly our Headline Sponsor Borderway Finance.

Looking ahead

The year to come is set to be a big one for the Fundraising Team as we fully embrace our new strategy, deliver income, and develop relationships to support People First's continuing development.

Thank you to our Sponsors


Borderway Finance

friendly motor finance

Part of The Cumberland Group


focus
group

 **Thomas Graham**
EST. 1892


The Cumberland

al
Allen
IT Solutions


dodd&co
chartered accountants


Liberty
WORKWEAR

PEERS &
RPRISE
COMPANY

Hospitality and Education

Unique learning in a unique venue

Each year, students enrol on our education programmes to develop skills and experience.

Side-by-side, as part of our teams, young people with learning disabilities, and/or autism, work together to achieve their goals on programmes designed to support and push each individual to learn new things.

Our education offer is growing, and currently includes our award-winning Hospitality Academy and Best Life course.

This year, our Hospitality Academy, and the Conference Centre in which it's based, have undergone a marked shift to focus on progression and drive forward new, innovative business practices.

Focusing on progression

In 22/23, we have welcomed new learners to increase our cohort to 18. This is the largest group we have so far welcomed to our programmes and with this has come a renewed focus on employability and progression.

The team have developed their work experience and placement offer to include local hospitality

venues, charitable organisations and the private sector.

Looking ahead to next year, this work will continue to form the basis of the Hospitality Academy offer as we further ensure that young people with learning disabilities have access to the opportunities they aspire to.

Conference Centre

Over the past 12 months, teams responsible for our education offer and our conference centre have collaborated to overhaul the learner and customer experience.

In roles throughout the centre including maintenance, front of house and food production, learners are part of the delivery of the centre in a more integrated way.

There's more to be done in the future to make the most of opportunities for learning and we're looking forward to working together to do so.



14 qualifications attained



4076 delegates from Conference Centre booked



The impact



ained.



7278 hours of training.



m 613
bookings.



99.6% would recommend
our Cafe to a friend.

"Lovely, clean, and spacious.

Very kind and professional."

Conference Centre customer

"Great place to create a
learning environment."

Conference Centre customer

**"My son loves coming to People
First.** It's really helped him grow in
confidence and independence."

Parent/Carer

Young People First

Speaking up and being heard

From hands-on activities to social get togethers, our Young People First offer helps young people to have fun whilst forging friendships, skills and confidence.

The experiences you have as a young person directly shape your future; our Youth Team provide a dynamic collection of activities and programmes, which includes:

Building Resilience

Our Journeys project supports young people with learning difficulties and/or autism to speak up for themselves, become better self-advocates and increase their emotional resilience.

Through dedicated training, workshops and peer support, young people build a greater understanding of the support systems available in their area and develop their own self-advocacy skills.

This year we have seen this project grow to include more young people, more connections with local schools and partners and more scope to develop into the future.

16-25 Club: Pilot project

This year, we launched a transitional Youth Club where members choose their own activities.

Young people and their parents/carers tell us that they feel support systems 'drop off' as they turn 18; we launched our 16-25 club to help fill the gap.

This club involves planning activities, discussing issues affecting them and being engaged in their community.

Looking ahead, we aim to expand the provision further to help more people access these clubs.

A first step into People First's community:

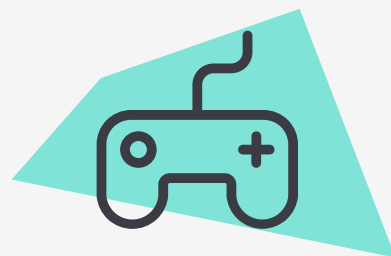
Young people often start their journey with People First via our youth activities.

This year has seen young people progress from our youth offer into our education programmes where they have become award winners, volunteers and self-advocates.

We aim for People First to provide support for people throughout their lives; Young People First is an entry point for future self-advocates and we are looking ahead at ways to develop this area of our work to increase its potential.



The impact



136 youth activities delivered across Cumbria.



328 young people have been helped and supported by Young People First.



"Thank you to the People First team

and those from Active Cumbria for putting these sessions on. It also means my son gets to see some of his friends in different environments, as well as learning something new."

Parent of Young People First attendee

John's story

John (not participant's real name) was 16 when he joined his first youth activity.

Initially he appeared unsure and nervous, but he stuck with it and continued to come along to future activities.

John continued to attend Young People First activities and found enjoyment in attending our Walking Club. He enjoyed the independence of having his own map, being out in the community and walking independently from his caregiver.

Through social activities organised by People First, John made new friends and responded positively to increased social interactions.

John's new friends provided him with peer support and encouraged him to get involved with other activities, including cooking and arts and crafts.

John also began to feel more confident, opening up and connecting with his peers. This newfound confidence aided John when he began attending our 16-25 club where he felt

comfortable talking to new people and trying new activities.

John now attends activities independently; contributing freely to discussion and embracing opportunities to try new things.

John describes Young People First activities as 'super awesome' and welcomes new group members with a smile on his face.

Healthwatch Cumbria

Transforming to meet the needs of our area

Healthwatch Cumbria engage each year with thousands of people to ensure that experiences of local people shape services within Cumbria.

This year, our Healthwatch Cumbria team has embraced changes in local government reorganisation to transform into two new local Healthwatch, Healthwatch Cumberland and Healthwatch Westmorland and Furness.

Alongside this development, we have focused on ensuring that the views of our communities continue to be heard loud and clear.

This has included major projects such as:

healthwatch
Cumberland



Scan the QR code to visit the Healthwatch Cumberland's website.

healthwatch
Westmorland
and Furness



Scan the QR code to visit the Healthwatch Westmorland and Furness' website.

Disability Voices

Between January 2023 and March 2023, our team engaged with 758 people who are living with disabilities across Cumbria.

We asked people to tell us what their life is like, including the challenges they face and what they feel needs to change.

Through this work we developed relationships and connections with multiple organisations and communities and commissioned a powerful report that captured the views we heard; this report will be presented in October and

will be available to influence future improvements.

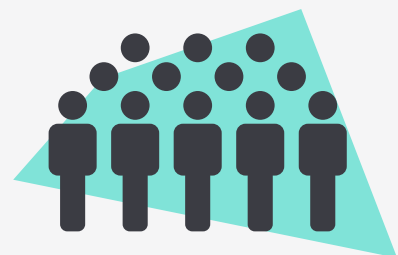
We worked together to ensure engagement from health and care organisations.

We are working with system leaders to position our communities as the driving force that shapes local services, we will champion those views to make that happen. This will continue to be a focus next year as we shape and present our recommendations and future projects.

The impact



936 people signposted to support.



17,240 people engaged with us online and in person to share their views.



14,996 people visited our website to view our work, read our reports, find advice and guidance and to share views.



51 recommendations made in Healthwatch reports this year.



Andrea and Lisa with member of the public
Sessional Worker and Senior Engagement Officer



"I just wanted you to know that you really helped me.

You might not remember but you came to a group I was at; I told you that I was recently diagnosed with autism as an adult and was spiraling.

You told me about Triple A, a local support organisation, and it has really helped me. I have been working with them for the past 5 months and it has changed my life."

A participant in Disability Voices

Jodie, Lesley, Emmy Louise and Steve Engagement Officers at Healthwatch Lancashire



The impact



14,338 people engaged with us online and in person to share their views.



We engaged with **77** seldom heard groups from carers groups to refugee groups.



41,421 people visited our website to view our work, read our reports, find advice and guidance and to share views.

Healthwatch Lancashire

Making health and social care better, together

Our Healthwatch Lancashire team make sure that NHS and social care leaders and decision makers hear the voice of local people to improve care.

Among a year of work that's included diverse engagement activities, tailored research, reliable signposting and dynamic new ideas, the team has focused on improving the experiences of people living in health and social care settings via a targeted programme of visits and engagement.

Influencing change through Enter and View

One of Healthwatch's statutory powers is the right to carry out Enter and View visits.

These visits see Healthwatch staff engage with those receiving care, their families and staff, to find out their experiences and to recommend improvements.

This year we conducted 33 Enter and View visits in a range of services to champion the patient voice and contribute to influencing change.

Information we receive from engagement, phone calls, emails and our online feedback centre inform our recommendations.

Our Enter and View visits are grounded in partnership working and sharing good practice.

What difference will this make?

Following Enter and View visits, 25 of our team's recommendations have so far been actioned to improve care, with more planned to be implemented. These include:

- Hosting an ideas sharing session which is led by the occupational therapy team, to shape and develop an occupational therapy programme within a mental health rehabilitation centre.

- 'Communication hub', with two laptops have been set up in a care home, meaning that relatives can call their loved ones.
- Implementation of an electronic recording system for staff to reduce paperwork, meaning staff have increased time to focus on care.



Scan the QR code to visit the Healthwatch Lancashire website.

“Thank you for your visit. We have taken your recommendations on board and begun to implement your suggestions. Going forward, we will continue to ensure that we offer the best possible support to our residents, families and staff.”

Care Home Manager in Central Lancashire



Self Advocacy

Raising visibility

For over 30 years, People First has been rooted in the delivery of high-quality self advocacy.

Our founders first met as a self-advocacy group, and the values of the movement – speaking up and representation – form the basis of all our work.

This year we have continued to develop our self-advocacy network by growing membership in Cumbria, building stronger links with partners in Lancashire, and supporting each group to get its word out on the topics that matter to them.

Raising visibility and conversation

Self-advocacy is about speaking up for yourself on the things that are important to you. This year self-advocates have sought opportunities to get their views heard to influence change.

This has included:

- Campaigning
- Engaging with local leaders

Campaigning

Cumbrian self-advocates see the proposed closure of railway ticket offices as detrimental to the accessibility of the railway.

Making it harder to buy tickets in person excludes people from travel as purchasing online or through machines is not accessible to many.

Self-advocates plan to join the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers to protest the proposed ticket office closure.

Self-advocates will make their objections clear, taking their views online as well as in person.

Engaging with local leaders

People with learning disabilities and or autism have views and too often those views are unheard.

This year, self-advocates have supported each other to raise the volume of their views by engaging with local leaders on the issues that impact their lives.

From writing open letters calling for improvements to inviting local leaders to attend group discussions, self-advocates are letting leaders know what it's like to live in their communities and what needs to be done to make things better.

The Way Forward Conference

In January, together with Experts with Lived Experience, we hosted our first 'Way Forward' Conference.

The conference brought together the voices of people, carers and professionals to explore the challenges faced by those with learning disabilities.

The event asked whether enough had been done to improve living standards in Cumbria.

The event concluded with the publication of a 'Way Forward Report' that has been shared with senior decision makers to shape future improvements and conversation.

Self-advocacy groups in members' own words...

"Creative, helpful, gets me out of the house."

Georgina, Self-advocate

"Speaking up, group meetings, sharing issues."

Scott, Self-advocate

"Happy, teamwork and kindness."

Nathan, Self-advocate

Volunteering

A growing team

Volunteers are a core part of the People First team. Bringing skills, knowledge and selfless commitment, our volunteers enrich our work and make it possible for us to do what we do.

This year, we have further invested in our volunteer offer in the recruitment of two Volunteer Co-ordinators to increase our volunteer team and to cover more of the areas we operate within.

A valued part of People First

Looking ahead, we will continue to grow our pool of volunteers and celebrate their valuable and unique contributions. We will also invest in volunteering with the introduction of a new volunteer database.

This will help us to more fully embrace the value that volunteering brings.



A role for everyone

From Café volunteers to Healthwatch; from Advocacy to Education our team of volunteers bring a diverse range of skills and experience. Volunteers help our:



Advocates: To provide timely and compassionate support.



Conference Centre: To provide an outstanding service



Healthwatch team: to extend our reach and hear the important views of thousands of people across Cumbria and Lancashire.



Education team: To enrich the learning of young people.



Café: To continue to be a place of warmth and welcome.





Meet our volunteers

Paul: People First Café

"People First has given me a chance to grow as a person and continue onto a new chapter in my life.

I came into treatment with The Well who are a community for people with drug and alcohol issues.

I was well on in the process and

wanted to do some volunteering to contribute back to society.

My Nana had passed away from cancer and when my key worker suggested volunteering at the People First Café attached to the Cancer Centre in Carlisle, it felt like it was a great idea.

I was able to gain confidence in myself by working with others and serving customers.

This experience really helped me see I have something to offer potential employers and gave me the confidence to apply for a job with The Well.

I am now employed as a keyworker at The Well and, working in a job I love and knowing that I am part of team who makes a difference in the lives of people affected by addiction."

John: Healthwatch Lancashire

"As a volunteer, if the role wasn't varied and fun I wouldn't be motivated to continue. It has been both of these in spades.

How else would I have got to spend a Sunday in a vast Accrington mosque, where I walked through an inflatable bowel (true!) and met the Mayor of Hyndburn?

All this has been underpinned throughout by the positive and welcoming attitude of the Healthwatch team."

Money

End of year

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.

At the time of writing, the statutory accounts for People First Independent Advocacy have been produced. The accounts for People First Services have yet to be finalised.

People First Independent Advocacy:

Income 2022/23

£2,335,789

Expenditure

£2,013,226

Surplus

£322,563

Reserves

£1,485,154

People First Services:

The statutory accounts for People First Services have yet to be finalised but will be available via the Charity Commission's Website in due course.

CEO message

Building the foundations for a stronger future

The heart of any organisation lies in its people. This is especially true for People First.

I firmly believe that our team is one of the most dedicated and talented; this year they have supported each other to grow and develop as we respond to an ever-increasing customer base.

I'm proud that our values, ethos and principles remain a foundation stone for our work and continue to be felt across our whole organisation, guiding us as we take each step forward.

We have our largest ever team, more skilled and experienced staff and more talented and committed volunteers, together they are having an increased impact on those we support.

Within our team, I am particularly grateful for the customers who, as experts with lived experience, play a vital role in guiding us to make impactful and person-centered decisions.

Those we support know what they want and need far more than anyone else ever could. We believe it's our duty to listen; to really hear; and to act. In the coming year we will launch a new 5-year organisational strategy which is being

co-produced with staff, volunteers, customers and commissioners. This will guide our work for the next five years.

The strategy will be supported by a robust communications plan, a buildings strategy, a digital and IT plan and longer-term financial planning to best equip us to continue to help even more people.

As we grow in our delivery it is our duty and responsibility to ensure that the organisation grows too. It is important we maintain robust systems, risk management and contingency planning to ensure we meet the needs of the people we serve.

Our Board of Trustees are providing real insight, challenge and energy to the governance of our organisation, I'm very grateful for their commitment.

The coming year will undoubtedly raise some challenges for us to overcome, but by working together, with integrity, honesty and an open heart we can do all we can to ensure this great organisation, and its wonderful people, continue to transform lives.



David,
Chief Executive Officer

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
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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



wearepeoplefirst.co.uk

