



East Lancashire Voices Newsletter

Welcome to a jam-packed edition of **Speak Up Be Heard**, the newsletter from East Lancashire Voices.



We've had a busy few months.

But we've managed to choose some highlights to share with you.



The Team

Supported by  **People First**

Editor-in-Chief - Christopher

Deputy Editor - Linda

Proofreader - Jonathan

Community Networker - Russell



"We will demolish the negative thoughts of any person who doesn't listen to us and we will build upon the thoughts of those who do right by us."

Christopher - Editor-in-Chief

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THE HISTORY OF EAST LANCASHIRE VOICES



East Lancashire Voices are a self-advocacy group. Sometimes, this is called a Speak-Up group.



We have been around for a very long time but we have had different names.

You might remember...



East Lancashire People First



East Lancashire Service User Network



Self Advocacy In Lancashire



REACT (Caritas Care)

This means we have a lot of experience at speaking up!

2

WHAT HAPPENS AT OUR MEETINGS?



Our meetings are a place to connect with friends, to feel supported, to learn new things, and to speak up about things that are important to us.

We have worked really hard on deciding how to run our meetings in the best way for everyone.



- **Most people arrive early to make a brew and have a chat.**



- **The chair person will start the meeting at 1.15pm.**



- **We use green and red cards to make sure everyone gets a turn to speak.**



- **We have an agenda written in Easy Read.**
- **We put things on the agenda that are important to us.**

3 SPEAKING UP ABOUT HEALTH

Some of our group visited Blackburn Hospital to speak to the Learning Disability Nursing Team and the Annual Health Check Team.



Chris asked if they could help support us by having a Health Day in East Lancashire like the one that was held at Chorley Hospital.

Linda also collected some ideas from a Health Day she went to at King George's Hall in Blackburn.



We want to raise awareness about health in our community so then people with a learning disability can live longer and healthier lives.

Funding and organising events like this can be difficult. But East Lancashire Hospitals Trust have listened to how important health is to us. Now, there are plans to have a Health Day in East Lancashire later this year.

4

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

Philip and Ian visited the Chai Centre in Burnley and met with Hasan Sidat, who is the manager there. He was very welcoming.



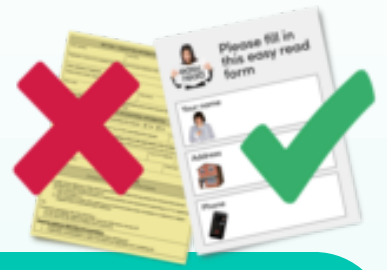
Philip and Ian are fantastic at connecting with people and telling them about the self-advocacy work that East Lancashire Voices do. They asked Hasan about ways they could encourage people from different communities to attend our meetings. East Lancashire Voices want to show people that our meetings are a safe place for anyone with a learning disability.



They also spoke with Angela from Carers Link about volunteer opportunities. She told them that being able to talk to people in a friendly way is an important skill. Ian and Philip both have this skill!

5

SPEAKING UP ABOUT REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS



Ian Barratt came to visit East Lancashire Voices. He is a Transport Officer for Lancashire County Council.



Some of our group had found applying for a NOW card to be confusing.



The forms contain a lot of information that can be stressful and hard for someone with a learning disability to understand.



Ian was really happy to receive feedback on how to make the forms in Easy Read.

He wanted to make it more accessible for people.

This showed he had compassion for people with disabilities and didn't want to ignore our needs.

Friendship and Community



“It’s important to be able to get to know different people. I’ve enjoyed meeting Jonathan and Philip.”

Ian



“Coming to this group has given me a clearer insight into what is going on in the community. It helps me to feel like I’m not alone.”

Jonathan

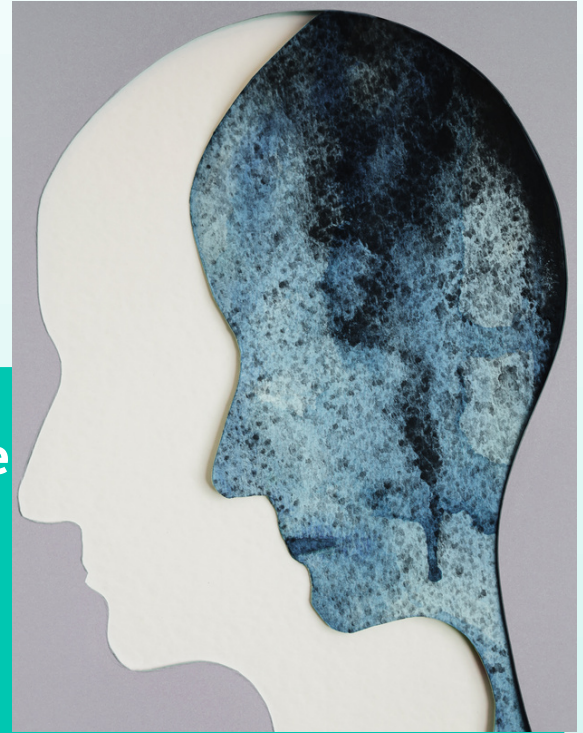


“Meeting new people and friends is important.”

Linda

7 WHY ARE EAST LANCASHIRE VOICES IMPORTANT TO US?

Mental health support



“Mental health is important. It can be a struggle for people with learning disabilities. We get ignored, isolated, lonely, and called names.

People think we can't contribute to society. I think people misjudge us and expect us to look happy all the time. Sometimes, it feels like we need to wear a mask over our feelings. It's great that we have organisations like People First to support and accept us for who we are.”

Russell

Russell is very passionate about speaking up for mental health. He organised a call with Lancashire Mind to ask if they would support our groups with mental health awareness and training. We have got some dates coming up soon for a wellbeing workshop. We also have some suicide awareness training. Brilliant work Russell!

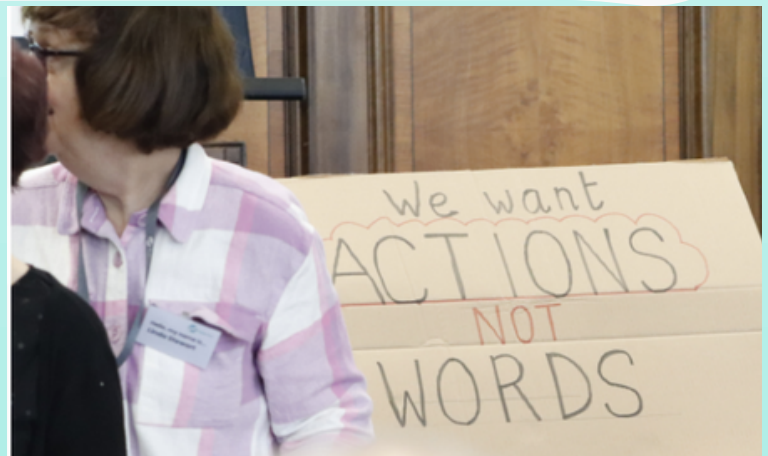


Getting our voices heard.

The Lancashire Learning Disability Conference took place at the end of 2023. It was hosted by People First and supported by Lancashire County Council.



This was an opportunity for members of East Lancashire Voices to speak about their experience of having a learning disability and living with it. Chris spoke about wanting to be listened to and treated with respect and understanding. Linda and Stephen talked about how people with learning disabilities should be supported in having meaningful relationships.





Philip



What do you enjoy about East Lancashire Voices?

“I've enjoyed meeting Maria and James and the rest of the gang.”

What are you good at?

- * Meeting people.
- * Encouraging new people to come to our group.
- * Dressing smart.
- * Bargain spotting in charity shops and car boots.

What have you improved at?

- * Travelling on the bus by myself to Burnley and Whalley for the first time.
- * Feeling more confident when chairing meetings.
- * Keeping my flat clean and tidy.

“I'm proud of the work I did with Cambridge University. I talked to them about visiting my GP. I got a voucher for taking part!”



We want to learn about mental health, mental wellbeing and how to help someone who is feeling suicidal.

We want to find out about what Parliament is and to understand how to vote.



We want to set up a health sub group.

We want to try to do some fundraising to support our group.



We're not profit first, we're People First.

Jonathan

I believe if you haven't got health, you haven't got anything.

Elizabeth

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS ...

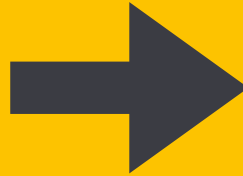
Join us at Accrington Library

on the 1st and 4th Thursday of each

month



1:00



3:00



April

4

Lancashire Mind are coming to do a wellbeing workshop with us.



April

25

We are going to talk to Healthwatch Lancashire about our experiences with healthcare.



May

2

Rachael Dodgson from UK Parliament is coming to do a workshop with us.

**MORE
INFORMATION**



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