



# Having Our Say and Living Our Lives

The voices of  
people with learning  
disabilities in Scottish  
Borders



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June 2014

## About People First Borders and Live a Life

People First Borders is a collective advocacy group led by people with learning disabilities. People First Borders is 20 years old. It has been part of People First Scotland. In August 2014 People First Borders will become a new charity called Live a Life.

There are five People First groups across Borders – Peebles, Galashiels, Hawick, Duns and Kelso. Mary Daykin is the part time worker with People First Borders. Mary has been the worker for 3 years.

As well as having regular group meetings, People First Borders have a Management Committee that meets regularly. The Management Committee is made up of member representatives from all the groups, a staff member from Borders Voluntary Care Voice, and a couple of volunteers including a treasurer.

## About this report

The Management Committee of People First Borders wanted someone independent to help them ask members what they thought about the group. This is part of planning for the future.

They asked Outside the Box to help them. Lindsey visited all of the groups and spent time alone with each member and asked them some questions. This report describes what the members told Lindsey.

## What happens at People First Borders meetings?

Local groups meet monthly. Mary attends all of the groups each month. Mary's job is to make sure that everyone gets a chance to talk and listen to each other. Mary also organises tea, coffee and biscuits. Group members help to make the drinks and wash up at the end. Sometimes support workers come along to the group.

Each group has a chairperson who is a member of People First. It is the job of the chairperson to welcome members and guests. Each group has a secretary, who also a member. The secretary gives out copies of the minutes and reads out the minutes from the previous meeting. The minutes are written in Easy Read.

Each meeting has a similar format. Members and guest speakers are welcomed. The minutes of the previous meeting are read out. The group discusses matters arising from the previous meeting. If there is a guest speaker, he or she talks to the group and leads a discussion.

Recent topics include:

- **Responding to consultations.**
- **Access to buildings.**
- **The Scottish Referendum.**
- **The Citizens Panel in Scottish Borders.**
- **The new Borders railway.**

- Easy Read training.
- TV programmes about learning disabilities (such as “The Undateables”).

There is also a time for members to share their news. Members can talk about what they have been doing, or things that have happened in their lives. Recently, news has included:

- Hobbies such as swimming, comics.
- Bands and concerts that members have been to see.
- Outings like shopping, eating out or holidays.
- Trips out with mentors from Interest Link.
- Family matters like people being ill or dying (sad) and visits home to see family (happy).
- Things that have happened to members when they have been at work.
- Things that are happening in other organisations that are known to the members – such as the Garvald summer fete.

**“Last year David Cook came to talk about the Referendum, and we had the Local Area Co-ordinator talking about what she does. We had a speaker from the Police too.”**

# What the members had to say about People First Borders

## What is People First Borders?

- It's about speaking up.
- Making new friends.
- Finding out what is happening in the community and finding out about things to do.
- A good organisation for people with disabilities. It helps people to speak up for themselves. It helps people find out what's out there.
- A group that tells us about our rights and our responsibilities.
- A group where you can meet new people.
- It's about campaigning and complaints.
- A group that helps people decide what to do - like advice on access or other issues.
- An organisation to empower people with learning difficulties to speak out. It is a comfortable environment.
- It's talking about issues like keeping safe.
- An organisation that talks about the things you do, like going to the cinema.

**“It’s a group to meet up with. If things are wrong, or not going as they should be, the group helps me to write or complain about them. It is a group that is good to meet together – it is social, and also gives support.”**

**“It gives me the chance to talk about things that matter.”**

**“You do as much as you want. I’m the chairperson, so I’m really involved.”**

**“I had a problem as someone had made a complaint about my TV being on too loud at night. People First Borders helped me sort out the complaints process.”**

**“There are changes to care going on and many decisions are being made about people with Learning Disabilities. The group gives a voice to people when they’ve not been told the reason for decisions that are being made.”**

## What do you like about People First Borders?

- I like the people and the chat.
- I like the fact that I know the people in this group. We have good communication.
- We listen to people's issues; you can speak to Mary as a representative.
- Mary is realistic and a good facilitator – she is well liked.
- It is friendly and active, I like the way the group is run – the way we do things. We always put new members at their ease.
- It's nice, chatting with a drink and a biscuit. Listening to people. I like coming out in the car.
- Mary – she makes a great cup of coffee. She's a good organiser and helps us to get involved in different things.
- You can see the change in people – their inner confidence. It's a comfortable group.
- Nice, friendly, I've got friends now.
- It's a good place – friendly. We go out shopping now.
- It's a good place to talk about things that you need to discuss.
- We talk about different things – the Christmas lunch, a conference, talk about changes to the bus service and the new railway.
- Mary is good. She knows us all.

**“It’s all good. I like all the people.”**

**“Speaking up! We have a laugh. All different things, you can meet people and you can share your feelings.”**

**“We had an 80’s night, and we are having a 60’s night. I like going out more now. I’ve got good friends now. We go out to the bingo once a week and go out socially.”**

**“We talk about important things like bullying.”**

We also asked everyone what they did not like about People First Borders. People said that the group is liked by everyone and there is nothing to dislike.

**“The only thing is that timings can be tricky, now it’s a bit shorter. It’s made it harder to fit everything in.”**

**“I’m happy with the group.”**

## **How does People First Borders help you?**

**“I used to be the chair for this group. The group gave me a ‘step’ into chairing. I now chair groups for other organisations – The disability forum in Edinburgh and in Glasgow. People First Borders helped me grow my confidence.”**

**“It helps me speak up. It gives me a space to talk. We have special guests like policemen or councillors – they tell us useful things.”**

**“It’s a good group. I have more confidence. I can speak up about things.”**

**“It keeps me informed about what is going on – the group involves me in doing things – for example I have been helping with the Easy Read training. I have not done anything like it before (training) and I was able to talk in front of a group of 15 people and tell them about Easy Read, and not feel nervous.”**

**“It gives me and others the confidence to speak up.”**

**“The group explains things that you don’t understand.”**

**“The group helps me to listen. I hear things and learn. We talked in the group about abuse. It was helpful to understand more.”**

**“It helps me with speaking and being more assertive. I’m hoping to join a photography group soon.”**

**“The group makes me happy.”**

**“The group helped me have confidence to go home. I go every 4 weeks.”**

**“I can ask questions I can bring questions to the group. Mary answers the questions and sometimes the group answers them.”**

**“The group speaks up for me.”**

**“It helps me to be independent.”**

**“I think the social times give us a chance to communicate and also to meet up.”**

**“It has helped me to get to know my community and to get involved. It’s a very social group, and I have met people. I was shy, but not anymore. The group has helped me to be confident. My life is now extremely busy.”**

**“It helps me boost my confidence to be around people. I’m trying to set up a community radio station in Coldstream. Being in People First tells me “You can do it”. What you normally hear is “You can’t”, but here, you hear them saying “Yes, you can”.”**

## Looking ahead

We asked people about the things they would like Live a Life to do in the future.

Members were clear they wanted Live a Life to continue to provide the main activities which People First Borders does well.

- **Be a place to talk about the issues which affect people with learning disabilities.**
- **Be a place where people make and meet friends.**
- **Build contacts with people who can give advice or help people find solutions, including speakers coming to the groups.**
- **Enable people to gain confidence in their everyday lives.**
- **Be a place where people can speak out and get encouragement to have their say with other people.**

People also described the ways in which they can expand what they do, now they are an independent group.

- **Reach out to more people and have more members.**
- **Have more influence by talking about a wider range of issues.**
- **Have more social activities, to let people make friends and become more confident.**



**“It will be good to see how the group develops. There is a lot of change in disability groups and services – things are not standing still. There are loads of issues for us to deal with, and there is change happening. We talk about this a lot in the group.”**

**“Cover more issues like bullying, and how to get along with people. More speakers from the community – fire, police, ambulance to learn about services.”**

**“Talk about things that make you think.”**

**“I want this group to look at things in a new way and get more new members as the groups are important for people. I am the chair of one of the groups, and the groups are good as people get a chance to say what they need to say and get support.”**

**“Recruit new members. Freshen up what we do. New speakers”**

**“It is good that the group carries on talking about local issues, and bigger issues, like the elections coming up.”**

**“Keep on being a group that offers encouragement. Keep on being a familiar and stable meeting place – change is good, but the group is good the way it is.”**

**“I love the group and want it to continue.”**

**“Going to places we don’t often get to, such as trips to the pub.”**

**“Keep on giving us information. Get more sessions.”**

**“Have a Christmas dinner. Go on bus trips.”**

**“Go to other places out of town, to Edinburgh, to Hunters Hall for a Christmas lunch.”**

**“Social stuff like the cinema, discos, meals, football.”**

**“A disco in Galashiels, walking.”**

**“Keep on with the things we are doing now. Rights and responsibilities remain an important thing for us. Keep on with the social events – I’m not looking for changes, the bottom line is that we keep on with what we have.”**

**“It depends on how the group develops, but we need to address issues that affect people with disabilities. There are lots of people with disabilities who don’t have the confidence that I have. The group deserves funding because this is a group that makes people with a learning disability feel comfortable, and this group deals with major issues.”**

**“It would be good to invite the new head of the Learning Disabilities service from Scottish Borders Council to come and talk to us.”**

**“I’d like the council leads on Learning Disabilities to visit the group and tell us about their plans for the service. I’d like a Question and Answer time with the council. We have invited the council staff to come to our meetings to explain their services – they never come as they are too busy.”**

**“We have invited the people from the new railway line to speak to our group – they have not come yet.”**

**“New speakers from services that affect us like First Buses.”**

**“Keep on giving us time to speak in the group.”**

**“The group needs money to keep going.”**

**“We need to find someone to work with Mary to support her.”**

**“It would be good to have a “Live a life” conference every 2 or 3 years.”**

## Next steps

### Getting Live a Life established

The members of People First Borders have chosen the new name - Live a Life. One of the members chose this name and everybody agreed it. The members have been voting to choose a new logo.

Live a Life will not be part of People First Scotland anymore but will be an independent group. The group will still have a Management Committee, and has become a SCIO which stands for Scottish Charity Incorporated Organisation.

### Easy Read training

For a long time People First Borders have told the council, the health services and other organisations that they should use Easy Read. This is a way of putting information that is easy for everyone to understand.

In 2013-14 People First Borders got a grant to let them learn how to train people to use Easy Read. The grant came from DPULO, which is money from the UK Government to help Disabled People's User-Led Organisations.

The Easy Read training that has been run by People First Borders during spring and summer 2014 has been a big success. More of this training may be given to other organisations, as there has been demand for the current sessions, excellent feedback and interest in more. The grant to start the training is finished now so there would be a cost of the people attending.

The group has also helped other people turn documents into Easy Read documents. This service is also something that the group may take on as part of their work in the future.

## **Finding funding**

Live a Life needs to find new funding in order carry on.

Members want the group to have enough money to pay for the following things:

- **Mary to be the part time worker.**
- **Support workers to help us in our meetings.**
- **Things we need like room hire, refreshments, transport for people to get to the groups, travel costs for Mary and any support workers.**
- **Leaflets and publicity including banners, polo shirts (so people know us when we provide training and go to conferences) and stationery.**
- **Social events like our Christmas lunch.**

## Contacts for more information

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Outside the Box is a charity which helps other voluntary groups develop what they do. We hope to put more material about Live a Life on the Outside the Box website.