

Spring 2026



Newsletter

LEWIS SCHOOL

In early February, Caerphilly People First visited The Lewis School to take part in the First Give programme, and what an inspiring experience it was. Ffion and Amy kicked things off with a presentation about our work and how a £1,000 grant could make a real difference to our organisation. The Year 7 students were fantastic - engaged, curious, and full of great questions!



A week later, Ffion and Christy returned for the exciting First Give Final, where students gave presentations on their chosen charities and shared their amazing fundraising efforts. A special shoutout to Year 7S, who chose Caerphilly People First, raised £75 through a scavenger hunt, and even wrote us a lovely poem - we'll be proudly displaying it in our office! It was incredible to see so much passion and teamwork from the students. A big well done to everyone involved—you're making a real difference!

MUSIC

What an incredible few months it's been at our Reconnect Through Music sessions! Each session has been packed with fantastic performances, with 20 to 28 songs sung every time. The hall has been full, the atmosphere has been buzzing, and it's been amazing to see everyone come together and enjoy the music!

Our talented members have treated us to a brilliant mix of songs from across the decades. There's been plenty of dancing, singing along, and smiling from start to finish! It's also been wonderful to welcome new members including Benjamin, Callum, Robbie, Joe, Cheryl, and Claire. It's great to see new faces joining in and becoming part of the group so quickly!

The feedback from members says it all – people love the friendly, happy atmosphere and the chance to spend time with friends, meet new people, and enjoy great music together.



COOKERY

It's been a wonderful few months at our Reconnect Through Cookery sessions! Each week has been full of great food, laughter, and brilliant teamwork, with members getting stuck into preparing a variety of delicious meals including cottage pie, lasagne, chicken curry, fajitas, and cheese and potato pie.



Our members have done an amazing job in the kitchen, building confidence and skills while working together. Everyone has played their part—and the results have been tasty every time! It's not just about the food, though! Our sessions have been full of fun, with quizzes and bingo bringing lots of laughs and friendly competition. There's always a great atmosphere, with plenty of chatting, smiling, and even the occasional dance!

A big thank you to all our volunteers who help make these sessions run so smoothly - you all make a huge difference! These sessions continue to bring people together, build friendships, and create a positive, welcoming space for everyone involved.

NATIONAL COUNCIL

Between January and March 2026, Caerphilly People First representatives took part in All Wales People First National Council meetings, both online and in person. In January, Ffion joined an online meeting where members reviewed previous minutes, discussed ongoing actions, and heard updates from Chief Executive Joe Powell about the 2026 workplan.

Representatives shared important issues from their local groups, and there were great discussions around a possible Member Code of Conduct, future meetings, and key projects like Adfest, the Disabled People's Rights Plan, and Direct Payments. We also heard from the CARE Research Centre, who spoke about the experiences of older people with learning disabilities.





In March, Amy and Christy attended a two-day meeting in Caernarfon. There were lots of positive conversations about what's working well and what could be improved. Amy did a fantastic job representing Caerphilly People First by speaking up about GP services moving online and how this can be challenging for people with learning disabilities—well done, Amy!

We also took part in a session with the Senedd Engagement Team about the importance of voting ahead of the May elections, and heard updates on the Homes Not Hospitals campaign, which is all about supporting people to live in their communities. There were also great discussions where everyone shared social media ideas and lived experiences.

VOLUNTEER AWARDS

We were delighted to attend the Annual Caerphilly Parent Network Volunteer Awards recently, and what an inspiring event it was! The evening celebrated the fantastic work of volunteers across the borough, with awards including Inspirational Volunteer, Personal Journey, Most Enthusiastic, and Humble Hero—well done to all the winners!

The final award of the day was the Sian Northey Award, which holds a very special meaning. This award is named in honour of Sian Northey, a wonderful and much-loved volunteer who contributed so much to the Parent Network and to Caerphilly People First before she sadly passed away a few years ago. Each year, the award is presented by Sian's son, Gethin Chamberlain, a valued member of Caerphilly People First, making the moment especially moving and meaningful. The ceremony was a wonderful celebration of community spirit and volunteering!

UNI. OF SOUTH WALES

Amy, Nat and Gethin recently visited the University of South Wales, Glyntaff, to take part in a hands-on training session with Year 3 Learning Disability and Midwifery students. Nat and Gethin took on the role of new parents, while Amy played a pregnant patient, helping students learn through real-life scenarios. The session focused on how to better support people with learning disabilities before, during and after pregnancy.

Key topics included clear communication, using Easy Read information, and the importance of health profiles. The students were fantastic, working together and learning from each other throughout.



Also at the University campus in Glyntaff, members recently joined other People First groups and TRAC members for a fantastic workshop about eye care. The session was led by Edward Oloidi, who is carrying out important research into eye care for people with a learning disability. We had really meaningful discussions about: what works well, what doesn't work, and how services can be improved. Eye tests are important for everyone, but they must be accessible, understanding, and inclusive so people with a learning disability feel comfortable and supported when attending appointments.

HEALTH HACKATHON

Caerphilly People First members and volunteers recently attended the Annual Health Check Hackathon organised by Cwm Taff People First. We joined other People First groups, organisations and services, and it was great to see everyone working together and sharing ideas.

A hackathon is all about being creative, and that's exactly what happened! Groups worked together to create poems, songs, videos and drama. Our group wrote a poem about Annual Health Checks, and Gethin did an amazing job helping to read it out. Other groups performed songs and we saw a powerful drama showing the difference between a good and a bad health check appointment.



We also watched the video we helped create with Learning Disability Nurses, which was fantastic to see being shared. An Annual Health Check is a free GP check-up for people with learning disabilities. It's a chance to talk about your health, get support, and be listened to—something we highlighted in our poem. Days like this are so important, especially as some people shared they've never had or even heard of a health check.

KEEP CASH, KEEP CHOICE

In March we joined other People First groups and Mencap outside the Senedd for an important and powerful protest. The message was clear: No cash = no rights. For many people with learning disabilities, cash means independence, choice, and control. Not everyone can use cards or machines, so removing cash risks leaving people behind.

We made our voices heard loud and proud, singing a fantastic song by Cwm Taff members, chanting:

“Keep cash, keep choice, listen to every voice!”



After the protest, we enjoyed a walk around the bay and grabbed some ice cream, but payment was card only, which really showed why this campaign matters! Let's keep raising awareness, keep pushing for change, and keep cash, keep choice, and listen to every voice!