



Our News, Our Stories

Butterfly Express

November 2023 – April 2024

Kia ora koutou / Hello to you all

I am writing to you on behalf of National Committee.

I am happy to say that the Butterfly Express newsletter is back.

It is going to be another great year for People First NZ. We have a lot happening this year with meetings, new Learn with Us courses, and the constitution review. Also, the 21st birthday of People First NZ is this year in October.

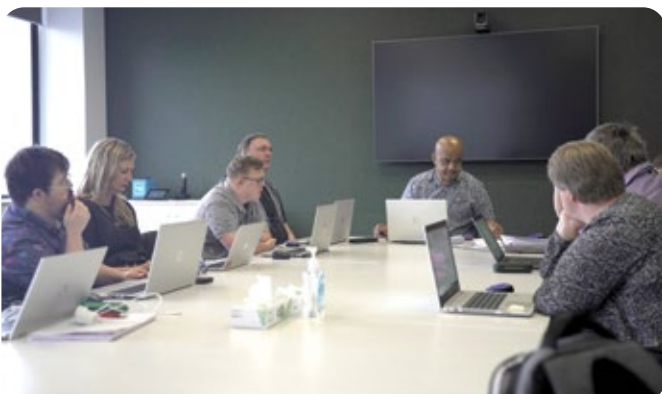
We had our Annual General Meeting and National Leadership Forum at the start of November 2023. It was a very good week reflecting on our success in the previous year.

We had our first National Committee meeting for 2024 in February. Each regional president gave reports on all the events and meetings in the last few months. There were also updates and reports given by staff about new resources, policies, money, the Make it Easy service, and Learn with Us courses.

We are excited for the year ahead of us and wish everyone all the best.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter.

Ronnie Sione – National Chairperson





North Island Update

Northern Region

South Auckland group has a new committee. David Ward is the newly elected president, Darren Hill is vice president, and Aroha Heremaia is treasurer.

North Shore member Loren Glen presented a workshop about Workplace Rights and Responsibilities at Unitec Te Pūkenga Mt Albert, as part of their supported learning course.



North Shore member Loren holding a Unitec Te Pūkenga booklet 'Supported Learning'.

Midland Region

Hamilton member Alex Johnsen went to the Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability (ASID) conference in Melbourne, Australia.

Tauranga member Kirsty Slater has been part of the Enabling Good Lives (EGL) co-design group for our new Learn with Us course.

Tauranga group and Te Puke group attended Western Bay of Plenty District Council Networking Seminar to promote People First NZ.

The region had a marae visit in March. Members participated in a pōwhiri / welcome and learned about manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga. Members said it was fascinating to learn about Māori culture.



Members outside Whakaue Marae Maketu.

Central Region

Members Fiona Williams and Hamish Tavener have been part of the Enabling Good Lives (EGL) co-design group for our new Learn with Us course.

We have held a Learn with Us Money Smarts course in Taranaki and a Keeping Safe Feeling Safe course in Mana and Kapiti.

Members Morgan Smith, Michael Banner, Jerome Cossgrove and James Carr worked with Springload to test the new Easy Read library on our People First Website.

Some Central members have been busy attending advisory groups such as the Older and Disabled People Focus group, Health and Disability Commission consumer advisory group, Capital Support Consumer Advisory group and many more.



Rangitikei Members celebrate Christmas at their meeting.



South Island update

Top of the South Region

The Nelson and Richmond members attended the 'My Life My Voice Enabling Good Lives 101' forum in March.

Richmond member Ben Healey has been working as part of the Cyber Safety co-design group for our new Learn with Us course.

Te Aroha Roberts has been part of the EGL co-design group for our new Learn with Us course.



Nelson member Te Aroha Roberts and Learn with Us Coordinator Patrick Doherty at the Enabling Good Lives co-design group in Wellington.

Midsouth Region

We held a Speaking Up course at the Ara Institute of Canterbury for students in the Workskills course. Some students became People First NZ members.

Midsouth Region President Peter Rees became a member of the Accessibility Advisory Group (AAG) at the Christchurch City Council.

Christchurch member Shane McInroe has been part of the EGL co-design group for our new Learn with Us course.



Speaking up Course at the Workskills Course at Ara Institute of Canterbury.

Southern Region

Dunedin member Julia Young presented at the ASID conference in Melbourne in November.

Southern Region President Philippa Henderson has become a People First representative on Southern Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora Disability Advisory Group.

David King has been part of the EGL co-design group for our new Learn with Us course.

Dunedin members held a People First NZ stall at the South Dunedin Street Festival in March.

Invercargill member Rosie Zyskowski attended the 'Your Way Kia Roha' hui in Wellington as a People First representative in March.



At the 'Your Way Kia Roha' hui in Wellington (from left) Dunedin member David King, Central Coordinator Elizabeth Bennett, Invercargill Rosie Zyskowski and Invercargill LA Aileen Findlater



Stories from our members

Tegan's road trip



Dunedin member Tegan at Moeraki beach

Over the Christmas/New Year break, Dunedin member Tegan Howard went on a road trip with her mum and dad to Moeraki beach in North Otago.

She got to walk along the beach to see the famous Moeraki boulders and seals. She also got to feed some alpacas while having lunch.

Tegan tells us the weather was great and it was a nice trip with her mum and dad.

Sharyn's artwork



Sharyn with her framed artwork

Tauranga member Sharyn was selected as a People First NZ representative with Creative New Zealand, to support the development of the Accessibility Policy.

After 18 months of progress, the group has developed the policy and action plan. Sharyn will continue working in the group until June 2025.

At the end of 2023, Sharyn gave one of her coloured pencil drawings of a tui to Creative New Zealand, as a gift for making an accessible and inclusive working environment for people in the group.

Well done Sharyn! You are a true People First NZ leader!

Krissy at the Special Olympics



Krissy with her winning ribbons

Dunedin member Krissy has recently returned from competing in the Special Olympics in Oamaru where she won 2 first place ribbons and 2 second place ribbons.

Krissy, who competes in back stroke, freestyle, and kick board swimming, has been swimming for 5 years and loves it.

Krissy says, “I train every Wednesday night. It’s fun because you get to travel with your team.”

Members present to students at University of Otago



From left to right, member Simon, Midsouth Region President Peter, Christchurch Local Group President Rosie, and course lead Henrietta Trip from University of Otago.

People First NZ Christchurch members presented to the students at University of Otago, Christchurch. Their university’s Department of Nursing students are studying for the post graduate paper called ‘Intellectual Disability: Theory into Practice’.

This is a great opportunity to inform the students about People First NZ and the lived experience of people with learning disability when engaging with the health system.



Annual General Meeting – 2023



Ronnie and Phillippa at the podium presenting at the AGM 2023



People watching and listening at the AGM 2023



National Chairperson Ronnie and Central Region President Jenna presenting Rosalyn Clarke, from ASB Bank, with their Make it Easy Award.



Matt Frost answering questions from National Committee at the AGM 2023

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held in November. Over 60 people came to the meeting. There were reports presented and awards given.

The Make it Easy Award was given to ASB Bank. This award is given to an organisation that has shown commitment to having their information in Easy Read to make it more accessible to read and understand.

The Leona Gitmans Te Aranga Self-Advocacy Award was given to Central member Jason Donovan. This award is given to someone who has been a leader in self-advocacy and has spoken strongly about rights of people with learning disability.

The Long Service Award was given to North Island Team Leader Yi Small. This award is given to staff who have worked for People First NZ for over 10 years.

Guest speaker Matt Frost, who is a disabled leader, was interviewed by the National Committee.

Leadership Forum 2023



Glen passing the microphone to Yi during a roleplay activity.



Member Tongia answering a question at the forum.



Jenna with her hand up at the forum.



People First members writing reflections about the Leadership forum.

We held a Leadership Forum in November.

The forum is a great way for members to speak up and to be a leader.

We had 32 members from across Aotearoa New Zealand attend the forum. It was facilitated by life members David Corner and Sir Robert Martin, assisted by Learn with Us Coordinator Patrick Doherty.

We learnt more about:

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi / The Treaty of Waitangi and how important it is for Aotearoa New Zealand
- Enabling Good Lives vision and principles by performing roleplay
- a cyber safety card game that was tested by members to get feedback.

The members that attended enjoyed meeting new people and learnt a lot from the forum.



Expos and presentations

Our members and staff go to events around the country.

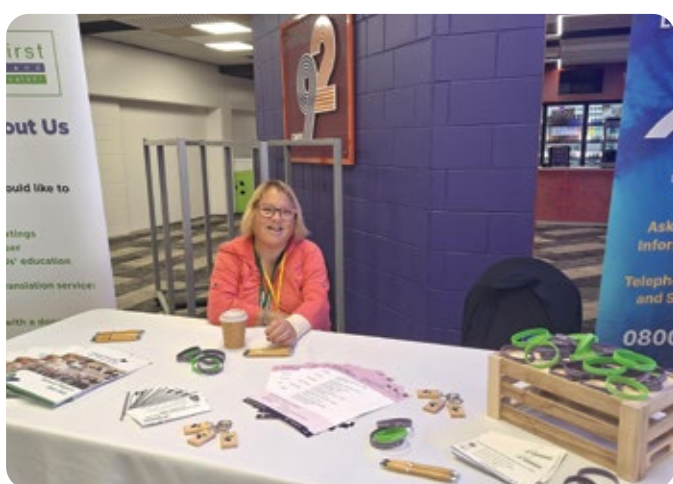
Here are a few highlights.



Northern Region Coordinator Sarah Sharp, Project Manager Sandy Ryan, and National Chairperson Ronnie at the launch of the From Data to Dignity report by IHC.



Whakatane members at the disability access advisory group for the Whakatane Accessible and Inclusive group (WAI).



North Shore member Loren at the Show your Ability expo in Auckland, showing people who we are and what we do.



Te Awamutu member Holly with local assistant/kaiāwhina Julie at the Show your Ability expo in the Midland Region. Holly invited people to our monthly meetings.



Members Rachel and Fiona promoting People First NZ at the Show your Ability expo in Palmerston North.



Invercargill member Jeff, Southern Region Coordinator Lee-ann Wightman, Invercargill member Katie and Learn with Us Coordinator Patrick Doherty at the My Life My Voice Forum in Invercargill.



Dunedin members at the People First NZ stall at the South Dunedin Street Festival.



Tauranga member Cindy at the Accessible City Interest Group meeting. This is a meeting focusing on the accessibility of Tauranga city.

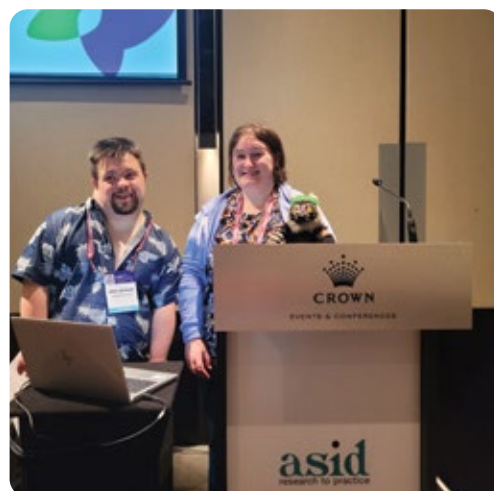


Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability (ASID) conference 2023

Hamilton member Alex Johnsen, Dunedin member Julia Young, Project Manager Sandy Ryan, and Learn with Us Coordinator Patrick Doherty went to the Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability (ASID) Conference in Melbourne to promote the Learn with Us web-app.

It was Julia's first time out of NZ and presenting to a large audience. Alex got to speak with Dr Gustaaf Bos, one of the speakers.

This is what Julia said about her experience: "It was an incredible opportunity to go to the conference and hear what research other countries having been doing around the lives of people with learning disabilities. I have learnt that if an awesome opportunity pops up, don't be afraid to go for it, as it may lead to an opportunity that could be very inspiring to everyone."



Local Assistants training 2024



In February, the Local Group Assistants and Regional Coordinators met in Wellington for three days of training. This is the first time People First NZ has brought together all the Local Assistants and Regional Coordinators.

It was a wonderful event where people could meet, share experiences from their regions, and learn to develop their skills further. A highlight was when the National Committee, Advisors, and senior staff came to meet everyone.





Make it Easy – Easy Read

The Make it Easy service at People First NZ has had a busy start to 2024, with the team working on lots of interesting Easy Read translations for a wide range of government, disability, and community organisations.

Easy Read Library

You can find translations on our new Easy Read Library on the People First NZ website at <https://www.peoplefirst.org.nz/easy-read-library>. We are still finalising the library and look forward to officially launching soon. We also share latest Easy Read information on our People First NZ Facebook page and on the Make it Easy X and Bluesky social media pages.

Make it Easy training

In February, the Make it Easy team came together in Wellington for 2 days of training. This training takes place once a year and is a great way for the team to share their knowledge and expertise. At the training we discussed disability rights, Easy Read standards, team goals, tips and tricks for translations, and the importance of looking after your wellbeing when working from home.



Coming up

We are putting together an Easy Read training and accreditation programme aimed at government and community organisations. The first of these training sessions will start in June. There will be more details coming on our website.



What is Make it Easy?

The Make it Easy service translates information into Easy Read to make it accessible for people with learning disability and others.



Learn with Us

At People First NZ we run courses for people with learning disability. Our courses are about rights, speaking up and self-advocacy. We are also developing courses about everyday life skills. The courses are designed by and for people with learning disability and are available face-to-face and online.

Enabling Good Lives co-design workshop

Over the past six months, six People First members and the Learn with Us Coordinator have been working to make an Enabling Good Lives (EGL) course. The course was trialled for the first time at the Leadership Forum in November. From the feedback received, some changes are being made.



People First members at the EGL co-design workshop facilitated by Patrick.



Christchurch member Shane holding up an Enabling Good Lives principles booklet.



Learn with Us

Ako i Tō Mātou Taha

Coming up

The Enabling Good Lives course is almost ready.

We have an 'online safety' resource that has been co-designed with members. This resource has taken the form of an interactive game and is soon to be ready for distribution to the regions.



We have a web app

It's a free online learning space for life skills!

Get a certificate and learn some things that will help you in everyday life.

www.Learnwithus.org.nz



New staff

Sarah Sharp – Northern Region Coordinator



I am very passionate about supporting learning disabled people to speak up. When I am not at work you can find me out in the bush tramping, at the beach, or knitting up a storm! I can never sit still for long. I am always on the go, and love to learn new skills and see new places.

Amelia Hedges – National Administrator



As the National Administrator, the key tasks I oversee are the incoming and outgoing mail, answering the ask email, creating draft documents for senior staff, and, most importantly, organising events. I love the work environment and seeing events come together nicely and everyone enjoying themselves.

Jordan Jacques – Communications Manager



It is great to be a part of this awesome team of people to advocate and promote all the achievements and success from this organisation. I have been using my experience in social media, information technology, design, and filmmaking to branch out to new networks across Aotearoa New Zealand to show the great work that we do. I hope everyone enjoyed the Butterfly Express!

Rupshika Chand – Local Assistant / Kaiāwhina for Franklin



I'm proud to advocate for people with learning disability and create positive community impact. Pursuing a health science degree in health management reflects my passion for making a difference. I have a keen interest in exploring new restaurants, travelling, and embracing diverse cultures and experiences.

Julie Colbeth – Local Assistant/Kaiāwhina for Te Awamutu and Hamilton



I am originally from the New York metro area in the USA. I live in Hamilton with my husband and 4 kids. I love being creative, hiking, reading and travel. I am so excited to partner with People First and help everyone's voice be heard!

Chris Peterson – Local Assistant/Kaiāwhina for Wairarapa



I am from Masterton and have lived there all my life. I'm now retired but have been a deer culler, secondary teacher, and long-serving Masterton District Councillor where I promoted social justice and environmental issues. I am also proud to be the founder of an outdoor recreation trust working with community groups.



Coming up

Constitution

This year we are looking at our constitution. The constitution covers the rules of People First NZ. It says what our organisation is about, what decisions National Committee can make, how members vote, and more. A group of members will be getting together this April with Midsouth Region Coordinator Marg Matheson and National Manager Cindy Johns to talk about what changes are needed. A new constitution will be drafted. All members will get to see the draft constitution later this year. The constitution will be voted on at the AGM in December.

21st birthday of People First NZ

People First NZ turns 21 years old on 16 October this year. A group of members will be getting together with Sandy Ryan, Project Manager, to talk about how we are going to celebrate our 21st birthday. We are hoping to hold an event at the Beehive in Wellington. We will let members know about plans over the next months.

People First NZ is a Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) that is run by and for people with learning disability. We are set up to be the voice of our members.

We also have a Disability Information and Advisory Service. Anyone can contact us about services or other information about people with learning disability through the contact below.



People First NZ Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi

Free phone: 0800 20 60 70

Email: ask@peoplefirst.org.nz

Website: peoplefirst.org.nz

Facebook: People First NZ

Instagram: [@peoplefirstnz](https://www.instagram.com/peoplefirstnz)



Make it Easy Kia Māmā Mai

Email:

makeiteasy@peoplefirst.org.nz

Website: makeiteasy.org.nz

X: [@makeiteasynz](https://twitter.com/makeiteasynz)

Easy Read Library:

peoplefirst.org.nz/easy-read-library



Learn with Us Ako i Tō Mātou Taha

Web-app: learnwithus.org.nz





People First NZ

Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi