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As part of the New Models for Learning Disability Day Support Collaborative, we engaged with Inclusion Scotland and People First (Scotland) to ask people who use day support services to share their views.

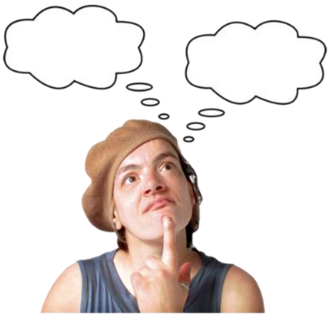
Working together we designed questions to ask. Tony, a member of the People-led Policy Panel, facilitated a focus group where people were able to consider the questions and share their experiences and expectations.

People First (Scotland)

Inclusion Scotland
Disabled People's Organisation
Our voices ▪ Our choices

Question One
How would you choose to spend your best possible day/week?

- Having a support worker to help me get to groups and activities:
- Day Centre
- Braille Group, cooking group, walking group, People First group
- Going to the theatre, nightclubs, out for coffee.
- Going for walks/to the park with my dog
- Playing football
- Doing exercise
- Visiting family
- Go swimming
- Bowling
- Listen to my music
- Do a work placement
- Going shopping
- 5 days a week it is too much to go to the day centre, I want to do other things too.
- Going out to play snooker with my support worker
- Volunteering
- Do drama, karaoke
- Go to church
- Meet up with my pals



- Go to the pub
- Go to the gym and sauna
- Go out for dinner

What would it mean to you to spend your time this way?

- Makes me feel happy. It is what I like to do; my choice. Having support/options if things change and I want to do something else. E.g. if a group is cancelled or staff are off sick.
- I want to be able to choose these things; what I do with my time.
- It’s what makes me happy; to do what I want to do, rather than being told what to do (freedom of choice).
- I want to spend my week how I want to spend it, not go by a timetable.

Question 2

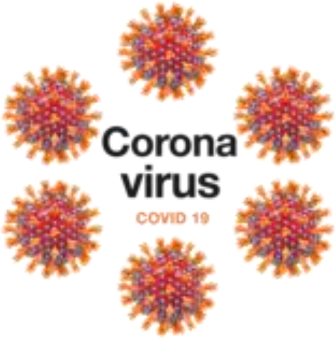
What did your day support look like before COVID – 19?

- I would have support Wed, Thursday, Friday and some weekends. I would sometimes have evening activities: karaoke, pub quiz, theatre group.
- I would be supported to go to my People First Group, Gym, Braille Group, Beauticians, Walking Group etc.
- I would go to a Day Centre once a week – I would do Drama and chair a discussion group
- Also be supported to go out for meals/coffee.
- I used to go to a club – we would do drama, play games, sit and chat – but I don’t miss it. I would like more time to do what I want to do, not go by a timetable.
- I used to go to day centre 4 days a week – then it closed for the pandemic and I was not happy.
- I was going to be supported to go on holiday but it did not go ahead because of the pandemic.

What does your day support look like now?

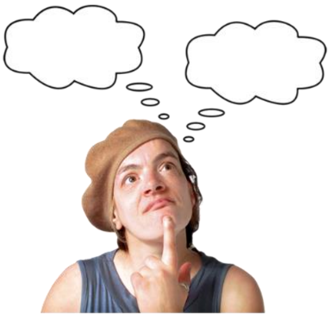
- I have only been getting phone support and I have been happy with it. However, I have still had to pay my contribution even though I was not getting the face-to-face support.
- I want my life back.
- I am shielding but I get phone calls from the support staff.
- Going out for a weekly walk with my support staff.

- I do not get any support now.
- I had one phone call from the centre when it first closed but nothing since.
- I got some support back in the summer when the measures eased. I went to the pub. Then the lockdown happened again and my support reduced again.
- I used to go for walks with my support staff but since the pandemic, I have not heard from them.



How has COVID 19 changed the way you spend your time?

- My support provider continued to support me, even if it was just over the phone. Of course, I could not do everything with them over the phone, but it mostly worked out.
- Some of us can be stuck in our homes, not doing anything and probably feeling lonely and bored.
- I think that support should keep going, instead of not getting the support that we need.
- I used to have 57 hours support. Now only have a weekly walk, no weekend or evening support.



- I have had to completely change the way I do things. I am not going to the gym or my day services. I am having less exercise. I am doing less exercise now that I am not going out so much. I have still been going to my medical appointments. I go with my parents in the car.
- Going for walks
- Playing on my computer/listening to music/watching the soaps on the telly
- I go to the shops with my mum and get food in.
- I can’t do any exercise.
- I have been on zoom calls 7 days a week.
- Before lockdown, I sued to work. Now I miss my work and my friends.
- Sitting in the house doing nothing.
- Most members have been receiving no support at all since the pandemic.

What has this meant to you?

- I sometimes have bad days. I have felt bored and had nothing to do. I have been having a sleep in lots of days as there is not such a rush to get up. I am missing my friends a lot. I am able to keep in touch with one of my friends by phone and text. I am missing some of my staff. One staff member has left and I never got to say goodbye.
- I wish the lockdown will finish so I can meet with all my friends and hug my family.

Question 3

Many activities right now are happening online. Are you getting enough support to help you connect with groups and activities online? (Can you tell me more about that?)

- During lockdown, I have learnt how to use Zoom, which I didn't know how to do before.
- People First gave me an iPad because I am a Director and I have meetings I need to be at.
- I do not want to use zoom because I am visually impaired and I feel uncomfortable. In the past, my support staff have helped me access Social Media – FB and podcasts. I am happy just using my phone. I have a smart phone and use speech recognition. I get podcasts from RNIB. I can listen to the news as well.
- People First workers support me to go to the People First groups e.g. women's group. I have no other support to help me with online stuff.
- Just with People First on zoom. That is all. We do chats about how to keep safe online.
- Some members said they use social media like Facebook or tik tok.
- I do quite a few groups on zoom. I go to People First groups and I go to Bingo.
- I have zoom meetings with my friend.
- I face time with my family.
- A People First worker helped me set up my tablet.
- Workers from my centre helped me get the zoom app over the phone. That was at the very start of the pandemic and now I do not hear from them.
- Most members did not have any support workers in place during the pandemic and connected online only through the support of People First workers and with the devices provided by People First. There has been no funding for this through social care.

Question 4

What would make day support services better?

- People should be able to go out with a support worker on their own and not travel together in groups, like some day services have done in the past. That would give us more independence and more choice, especially if we want to go into a café where smaller groups can find tables that are good with social distancing.
- We don’t find day centres a good option at all but if they have to open, they should not be opening for big groups. It could be a few people at a time and to make sure the space is good for hygiene and social distancing. Ideally we should be supported to be out in the community.
- Outdoor activities should be encouraged – like going out for walks and sitting outside at a café, gardening etc.
- I like the things I do when things are back to normal. I like having my own budget. I have Direct Payments. This gives me control over my support. I have tried lots of different things for day services. I like having my 1-1 support. Some of the day services run in blocks of activities and then you start again. It is quite repetitive.
- Having a support worker who likes to do the activities that we want to do, to support us.

Question 5

Is there anything else you want to say?

- I don’t think that the Council should be closing places that disabled people go to. Community centres/spaces should be kept open. People shouldn’t have to fight for the care and services that they need. People should have enough money to do the things they want to do. There needs to be more things for disabled people to do in the evenings and weekends. There needs to be support in place to do this. I hope our comments will be taken into account and that this is not just a box ticking exercise.