



Self Advocacy: Where Next?

Report for Central England People First Management Committee prepared by Ian Davies and Jan Walmsley



We wrote the Report after meeting with 8 groups across England and Scotland. Ian liked the Cumbria model best.

This is what we recommend.

Principles

1. The purpose of a self advocacy group is to campaign to make life better for people with learning difficulties. It needs to use the money it gets to do this
2. people with learning difficulties need to be in charge but they do not have the skills to do the 'donkey work' so paid staff need to take that on
3. you need to manage staff well because they can make or break the organization
4. members need expert advice but not to let the experts control everything

5. members have jobs to do and when they are not working they only come into the office at particular times.

Running the organization

Principle: people with learning difficulties need to be in charge but they do not have the skills to do the 'donkey work' so paid staff need to take that on

*Now I just don't do the donkey work. I just do the management part, the important bit about making decisions.
(Cumbria)*

we are a team and the members are the face of the organisation but the staff have to do the work behind the scenes like write the training materials for the training team to deliver.

If members wrote the funding applications we would go out of business because it will take too long

Choices to make

1. Management Committee or Trustees all people with learning difficulties.

They are elected at the Annual General Meeting

They meet 4 - 6 times a year.

Paid staff prepare options for Management Committee to decide.

2. Most Management Committee or Trustees are people with learning difficulties.

Elected at an AGM.

2/3 people without learning difficulties who have specialist knowledge about staffing, funding, policies are invited to join the Trustees. They advise the Trustees. They help with difficult staffing and funding issues.

Meet 4- 6 times a year.

Paid staff prepare options for Management Committee / Trustees to decide.

3. Joint paid Chief Executives, one person with learning difficulties, one without. They report to Trustees as in Option 1 and 2

This one depends on having enough money to pay 2 people!

Managing Staff

Principle: you need to manage staff well because they can make or break the organization

I would like a better term than 'support worker' for the work we do. 'Support worker' is a bit demeaning. The work the staff do is vital and must be properly valued.

Choices to make

1. The Chair or Chief Executive supervise the senior staff member, the senior staff member manages the other staff.
2. A Staffing Committee, supported by external expert, is responsible for recruiting, managing and developing staff.
3. An outside organization is paid to manage staffing, and other 'back office' functions

Outside advice and support

Principle: members need expert advice but not to let the experts control everything

why are we asking someone who is not trained or does not understand or have the skills to do the work?

Choices to make

1. Experts on the Board with full voting rights
2. Experts advise the Trustees and attend the Board but do not vote
3. Outside agency provides services like recruitment, staff management, wages, finance
4. If money permits experts are employed to manage finance, payroll, etc.

Members

Principle: members have jobs to do and when they are not working they only come into the office at particular times.

making sure that there is a time for personal stuff but then also make sure that when you are working, you are working.

Choices to make

1. Members have jobs to do and only come into the office when they are doing those jobs

2. Members have jobs to do and there are times for Drop ins when everyone stops work to chat and anyone can come in for a cup of tea
3. When members need one to one support they can book a time for a session with an advocate

Purpose and funding

The purpose of a self advocacy group is to campaign to make life better for people with learning difficulties. It needs to use the money it gets to do this

We should not sit around debating policies when people out there are victims of hate crime, that's wrong

Choices to make

1. Offer people with learning difficulties who live in the local area the chance to speak up and learn what needs to be changed then help them campaign to change it
2. Set up a training arm to offer training which is paid for
3. Provide one to one advocacy

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