

SEXUAL ACTIVITY, SEXUALITY, EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Name: New Direction Support



NEW DIRECTION SUPPORT

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Policy Statement

Sexual health has historically been ignored for people with learning disabilities and only discussed when there is a problem. People with a disability have the same sexual needs, feelings and desires as any other person. Disability does not prevent sexual maturity, or remove sexual feelings, desires or curiosity.

However, the confidential and sensitive nature of this information means that only those with a specific need to know should be able to access any information regarding an individual with learning disabilities' sexuality or sexual activities. This information will be recorded separately and held in a file that is accessible only by those who need to know.

Definitions

- **Sexuality** encompasses gender identity, body image, sexual desires and experiences including preferences. People have needs relating to sexuality regardless of age, mental capacity or personal history. It relates to sex, masturbation, sexuality, physical intimacy, romance and physical attraction.
- **Gender Identity or sexual orientation** describes a person's physical, romantic or emotional attraction to another person, e.g. straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual. It is their personal sense of identity as a man or woman, or someone who does not identify themselves as either. Sexual orientation is about who you are attracted to, gender identity is about your own sense of identity, and self.
- **LGBT +** describes the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. The first three letters. (LGB) refers to sexual orientation, the T refers to gender identity. The + stands for other marginalised and minority sexuality or gender minorities. such as, omnigender, possessing all genders, and nonmonosexual, attracted to more than one gender.

- **Sexual Disinhibition** is where damage to specific parts of a brain can result in someone not being aware that their behaviour is unacceptable. This can lead to an individual becoming less sexually inhibited in their speech or behaviour and can increase or decrease sexual desire.

We as Providers have a duty to promote inclusive practices throughout our services including LGBT+. Assessments of Need includes discussion of sexuality needs, explored in a sensitive and non- discriminatory way. With those service users who lack capacity, it is important to remember that Best Interest Decisions, as defined within Section 27 of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 states “Nothing in the Act permits a decision on.....(b) consenting to have sexual relations”

It is important that we, as providers, maintain and update knowledge of the current, in use, language and guidance in order to deliver the relevant and most up to date practice in the highly sensitive area of service delivery.

Staff are supported to undertake relevant training, in addition to Induction, where appropriate and to regularly update their skills.

The Policy

Intimate relationships can bring pleasure, boost self-esteem and increase confidence, but they also involve risks such as being hurt, pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections. It can be difficult to strike a balance between protecting people with learning disabilities from risks and allowing them to explore and develop wider personal and social relationships.

This organisation believes that people with learning disabilities have the right to develop and maintain intimate personal and sexual relationships; to engage in sexual activity, which is within the law and does not cause significant offence to others; and to enjoy pleasurable experiences and take appropriate decisions for themselves in this area of their lives.

People with learning disabilities are much less likely to form intimate long terms sexual relationships with only 3% living as a couple compared to 70% of the general population.

We recognise, however, that the presence of care staff in the individual homes of people with learning disabilities and, where needed, their delivery of intimate care tasks may threaten the privacy on which this right depends. We believe that our care practice should support the operation of rights associated with sexuality and sexual activity, and that, where appropriate, we should help to provide the information and guidance to help individuals with learning disabilities to remain safe and healthy.

Our Care Practice

- The opportunity is provided for people with learning disabilities to discuss matters relating to their sexual relationships and activities within the care planning process if they wish to, always with due regard to the need to treat these issues with confidentiality and sensitivity.
- Provide a safe space where people feel comfortable, secure and able to be themselves where they can acquire knowledge and develop an understanding about their own sexuality.

- The sexual orientation and preferences of individuals with learning disabilities are treated with respect.
- Staff will be trained to support people to make informed and safe choices about sexual activity and relationships.
- Staff will support people with learning disabilities to meet people in safe ways including venues for LGBT groups.
- A person with learning disabilities requiring advice on sexual matters or personal relationships can raise the matter with any member of the care staff or management with whom they feel comfortable. We assist anyone with learning disabilities we work with to access any advice or guidance they may need to ensure that any sexual activity in which they engage is safe and pleasurable.
- Information will be provided in a format suitable to their needs and will help them to make informed choices.
- Anyone with a learning disability who requires assistance in fulfilling their sexual aspirations has the opportunity to discuss their needs with staff; where possible, arrangements will be made for appropriate help to be provided as part of our care and support service.
- Particular care and sensitivity are exercised if it is necessary to pass information between staff or to make a written record relating to any matter concerning the intimate relationships or sexual activity of an individual with learning disabilities. All information about personal and sexual relationships and activities is treated confidentially and sensitively and is passed only to those with a specific need to know.
- Relatives, friends and representatives of individuals with learning disabilities are fully informed about the contents of this policy and are provided with appropriate support and guidance if they seek it.
- Our staff recognise that individuals have rights to have visitors at any time and to entertain their visitors in private, if deemed appropriate in their care plan.
- People with learning disabilities are able to decide whom they see and do not see; if necessary and requested to do so, our staff will provide support in these decisions.
- Individuals with learning disabilities are assured that while a staff member is in their home there will be no interruption of privacy for any intimate or personal contacts or sexual activity
- All possible efforts are made to protect individuals with learning disabilities from any form of sexual abuse.
- A request by a person with learning disabilities for assistance in restricting or forbidding entrance to their home by an unwelcome visitor is recorded and as far as possible complied with
- Wherever possible, when intimate care is given, individuals' wishes as regards the gender of the worker are respected.
- Sexual relationships between staff and individuals with learning disabilities are expressly prohibited.
- If a person with learning disabilities engages in any sexual activity or display that is offensive to a staff member, or make a sexual approach towards them, the matter is reported to staff member's supervisor; they will take prompt and appropriate steps to discuss the matter with the person concerned and to help them contain their behaviour within reasonable limits.
- If staff ever felt uncomfortable or concerned as a result of any sexual behaviour exhibited by or conversation with a service user, they should

contact their manager for advice and support, and where relevant appropriate action would be taken.

- If an individual persists in engaging in inappropriate sexual activity or display in the presence of a staff member, the service may be terminated.

Please see the following helpful guidance provided by CQC on relationships and sexuality in adult social care services.

Care Quality Commission Relationships and sexuality in adult social care services <https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20190221-Relationships-and-sexuality-in-social-care-PUBLICATION.pdf> which covers the following key guidance for staff:

- What is sexuality?
- What is sexual orientation and gender identity?
- What does the term LGBT+ mean?
- When should providers assess a person's sexuality needs?
- How can providers help people develop their understanding of sexuality and relationships?
- Can a best interest assessment be made in relation to a person's consent to sex?
- How can providers support people living with a physical disability?
- How can providers support people with accessing dating services?
- What is sexual disinhibition?
- How should providers support people who exhibit sexual disinhibition?
- How should providers respond to incidents?
- What if someone lacks capacity to consent to sexual relations?
- How is someone's capacity to consent to sexual relations assessed?
- Do care staff need specialist training?
- How are sexuality and relationships considered within the key lines of enquiry?
- Are there any specific questions relating to sexuality and relationships?
- How will this subject be reported in inspection reports?
- Appendix 1: Key lines of enquiry.
- Appendix 2: Additional resources and references.

Protection from Abuse Versus Enabling Relationships

It is evident from research that there is a significant issue for family members, advocates and staff in negotiating the balance between protecting individuals with learning disabilities from abuse or exploitation and enabling relationships with a resulting tendency towards overprotection causing a barrier to the development of relationships.

Therefore, it is vitally important that the wider support network is supportive of relationships but takes a balanced view of risk to ensure that the individual can develop a positive relationship but is also protected from abuse or exploitation. Please also see adult safeguarding and whistleblowing policies.

Self Help Groups and Relationship Support Services

Where appropriate we will sign post individuals to local self-help groups or relationship support services and support their attendance. These organisations can form part of a holistic-approach to helping the person to seek out and form longer term relationships.

Sex and Relationships Education

Sex and relationships education need to be consistent in the various settings someone might be in, and consistent between different people who might carry out a support role – family and carers, care workers, supported education or employment workers, and counsellors.

Without good education and support people with a learning disability can be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation. There is a general impression that to provide people with learning disabilities with information about sex only encourages inappropriate sexual behaviour. This is not true! Sex and relationships education are a key way in which people learn about sexuality, emotions, relationships and sexual health. The evidence indicates that it is often the lack of appropriate sex and relationships education, or of information on sexual health being inadequately provided, that may lead to some people being overly sexualised in their behaviour or experiencing poor sexual health.

Sex and relationships education for people with a learning disability will provide support and guidance on a range of topics, including:

- Understanding what is wanted from intimate relationships.
- Learning to say no to unwanted contact – good touch/bad touch.
- Public and private places.
- Understanding how the body participates in sexual activity including masturbation and wet dreams.
- Giving consent and communicating preferences.
- Understanding emotions in the context of sex and intimate relationships.
- Practicing safe sex and using appropriate contraception.

It will also acknowledge and support the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people with a learning disability.

Resources exist for service users with varying needs, e.g. easy read and are an excellent resource in supporting people to answer their questions.

Sexual Health

People with learning disabilities are less likely to understand the risks associated with sexual activity and therefore the importance of maintaining sexual health will form part of the person-centred support planning process and the sex and relationships education. This will include information and support on:

- Sexual Health and hygiene
- Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's)
- Safe Sex and Contraception
- Emotional well being

Further Advice

Further advice on matters relating to sexuality, education and health is available from general practitioners and from the following organisations:

SHiP

Level 5
University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust
Derriford Hospital
Derriford Road
Plymouth
PL6 8DH
(01752) 431124

The Eddystone Trust

0800 328 3508
info@eddystone.org.uk

The Zone (for under 25's only)

14-16 Union Street
Derry's Cross
Plymouth
PL1 2SR
01752 206626
info@thezoneplymouth.co.uk

Related Policies

Adult Safeguarding

Autonomy and Independence

Care and Support Planning

Code of Conduct for Workers

Confidentiality

Dignity and Respect

Equal Opportunities

Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

Independent Living

Person Centred Care and Support Planning

Position of Trust

Relatives, Friends and Carers

Social Inclusion

Whistleblowing

Related Guidance

Skills for Care Relationships and Sexuality Resource List

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/>

Sexual Health D&G

<https://sexualhealthdg.co.uk/learning-disability.php>

FPA Specialist sexual health services

<https://www.fpa.org.uk>

Life Support Productions

<https://www.lifesupportproductions.co.uk/>

Mencap

<https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/relationships-and-sex>

Care Quality Commission Relationships and sexuality in adult social care services

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20190221-Relationships-and-sexuality-in-social-care-PUBLICATION.pdf>

Section 27 Mental Capacity Act 2005

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/9/section/27>

Stonewall

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

Training Statement

All staff, during induction are made aware of the organisations policies and procedures, all of which are used for training updates. All policies and procedures are reviewed and amended where necessary and staff are made aware of any changes. Observations are undertaken to check skills and competencies. Various methods of training are used including one to one, on-line, workbook, group meetings, individual supervisions and external courses are sourced as required.

This policy will be reviewed by the Registered Manager.

Signed:

Date: 3rd August 2026

Review Date: 9th March 2029