



Learning materials review for social care staff surrounding sexuality and relationships

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About the Supported Loving Network

The [National Supported Loving Network](#) is an active group of professionals, people who use social care services and their families, social care staff, advocacy groups, specialist dating agencies, academic researchers, and organisations who work together to promote positive practice surrounding supporting sexuality and relationships. Members do this in a variety of ways such as providing training and education, sharing information and campaigning for people who use social care to enjoy the same sexual and romantic freedoms as everyone else.

Foreword

This review arose because of the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) report 'Promoting sexual safety through empowerment' (2020) which underlined the basic human right for people to express their sexuality and to be empowered, supported and protected when using adult social care services.

Work done by [Supported Loving](#), supported by academic research, indicated that social care staff can feel fearful in approaching this topic due to a lack of appropriate support and applicable resources to address the often complex and sensitive situations they face.

CQC recommended that Skills for Care, as the organisation that sets the standards and qualifications for social care workers, update their guidance on '[Supporting personal relationships](#)' to reflect the current issues facing social care staff. This review was completed in collaboration with Supported Loving in 2020. It established that further work was required to provide social care staff with the tools they need to support people safely and effectively surrounding sexuality and intimate relationships.

The current contextual position is that whilst intimate relationships are widely acknowledged as relevant to personal wellbeing, so require attention and understanding from those working in social care services, there is no mandatory requirement for staff to receive training. The CQC guidance document 'Relationships and sexuality in adult social care services' (2019) provides recommendations about specialist training, but organisational responses remain discretionary.

For providers seeking standardised advice on the suggested content of such training, sources are limited. In the areas of learning disability and autism support, Skills for Care and Skills for Health have collaborated to produce capabilities frameworks¹ each including the domain of 'relationships, sexuality and sexual health' as suggested competencies for staff undertaking direct work. The identified learning outcomes could arguably offer a blueprint for the wider social care workforce.

Another recent development in the learning disability field has been the introduction of the Oliver McGowan Training (www.olivermcgowan.org) currently in its pilot phase. This will provide mandatory training in learning disability and autism for all health, social care and related staff. Drawing heavily on the above-mentioned core capabilities framework, there is hope that soon staff may have access to an

¹ Skills for Health (2020), '[Core capabilities framework for supporting autistic people](#)'
Skills for Health (2020), '[Core capabilities framework for supporting people with learning disabilities](#)'

introductory relationships module. Further optimism is offered in the form of the national Relationships and Sex Education curriculum which became compulsory in September 2021. Greater understanding and confidence amongst school leavers should ultimately lead to a workforce and people using services who feel more comfortable to discuss intimacy and to seek appropriate support.

This document is designed to provide social care staff in England with information on resources to best support people across all social care groups surrounding sexuality and intimate relationships. This includes staff working with older adults, people with a learning disability, autistic people, people with a brain injury, people with a disability (including those with life-limiting conditions) and people experiencing poor mental health. Some of these resources are solely for providing information to social care staff, while others can also be used with people who draw on social care services. The review was developed through a peer-review process and our thanks go to all members who were involved through the Supported Loving Network (including Meet N Match, Voice for All, National Autistic Society, Choice Support, Lightley Consulting and Y Training), Older People's Understandings of Sexuality (OPuS) and Sex with a Difference (SWAD)).

We are confident that this resource will be well used by social care staff working across a range of settings and supporting people with a variety of needs in England. The resource will also be of interest to other professionals such as community nurses and social workers, as well as those working within the field of sexual health. We hope it will go some way to creating a social care workforce who feel confident and competent to support people to have positive, rewarding, and safe intimate relationships and to express their sexuality in a way in which they choose.

Introduction

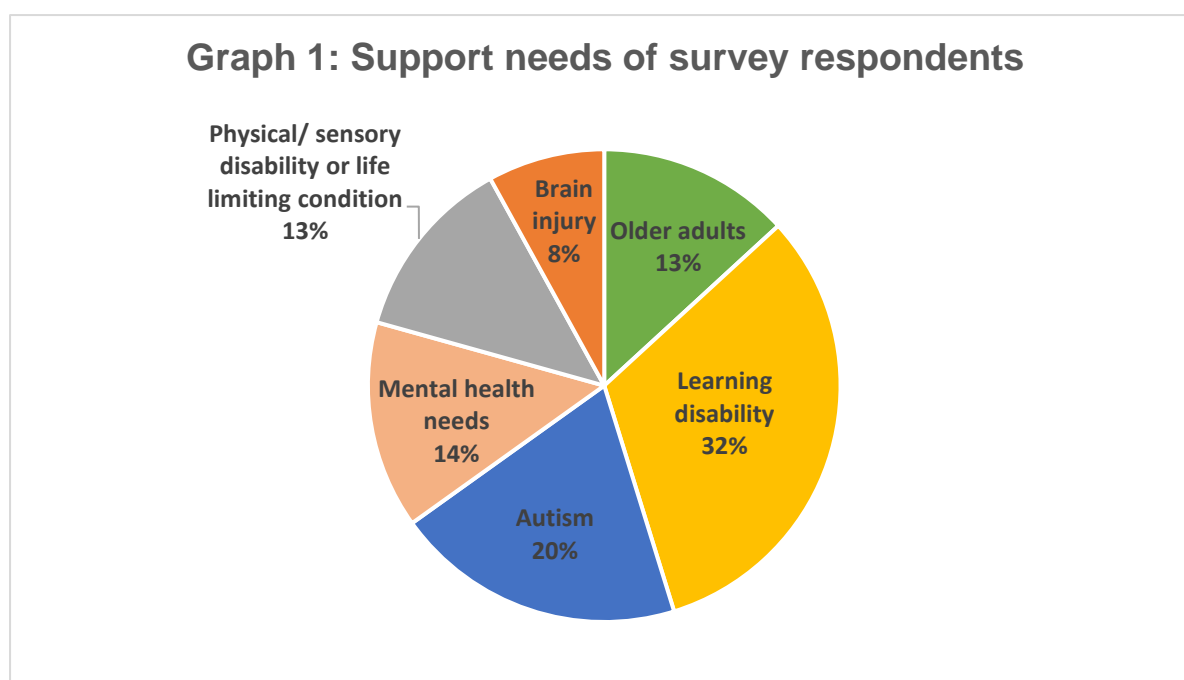
This review of learning materials is aimed primarily at social care staff in England and is intended to support their work across a range of different social care settings and user groups. It collates reviews of resources that are available to social care staff from a range of authors, disciplines, and formats. Many resources included within this review are available free of charge.

How we collected the materials

Online survey

The first stage of this review was to initially understand what, if any, learning materials were social care organisations using to train their staff and, if they were using materials, how useful they perceived them to be in supporting people surrounding sexuality and relationships. It also aimed to determine what resources/learning materials social care staff felt would be useful and relevant to their work.

A survey was developed to elicit this information. There were 195 responses, 118 collected online via professional networks and social media and 77 completed as part of focus groups. See Graph 1 for a full breakdown of respondents.

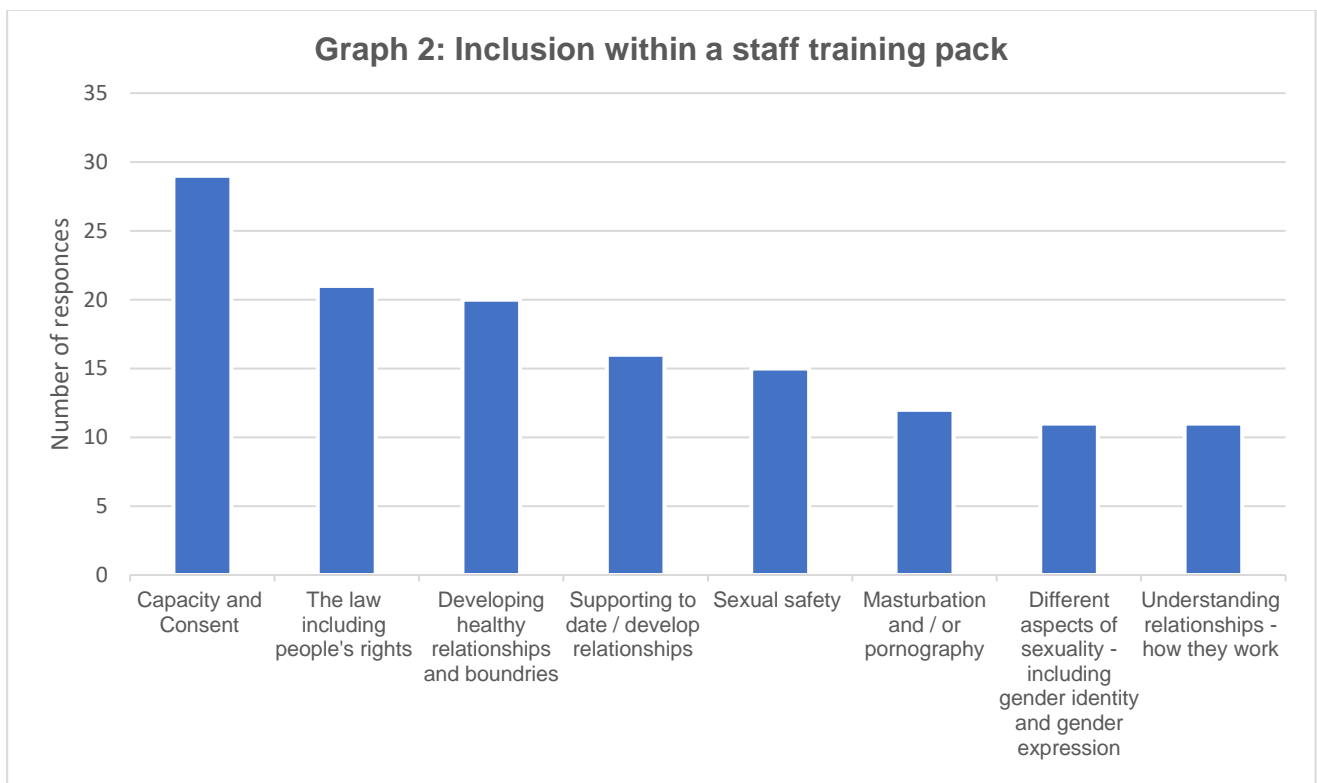


Respondents were asked on a scale of 1 to 5, how confident they felt having conversations with the people they supported around sexuality and relationships (1 being not at all confident and 5 being very confident). The average rating was 3.5, indicating that confidence levels had space to improve.

Respondents were asked how often there is a need for discussions surrounding any aspect of sexuality or intimate relationships in their job role. The majority (45%) stated this need occurred monthly, followed by weekly (26%), yearly (17%), daily (8%) and just 4% saying this need never occurred in their practice. Social care staff overwhelmingly (97%) backed the need for a comprehensive relationship and sexuality training pack to aid their and/or their staffs' development.

Just 37% of organisations provided sexuality and relationship training to staff, and of those, only 20% of organisations made this training mandatory. Organisations providing training typically utilised internal trainers (64%) as opposed to external consultants and conducted predominantly face-to-face training (77%), with a minority (23%) via eLearning. However, it was unclear how organisations' training had been developed, as when asked what resources organisations used only a handful of respondents provided links to pre-existing resources. Staff satisfaction with training varied among respondents. When asked how useful they found it (1 being not very useful and 5 being very useful), the average rating was 3.3.

Respondents were asked what should be included in a training pack. Graph 2 depicts the most typically reoccurring responses. However, staff from almost all social care groups (excluding older adults) frequently appeared to be indicating what training they felt people who need care and support should have, as well as their own learning needs.



Only a small portion of respondents (predominantly from learning disability services) shared pre-existing resources they were using which included: Supported Loving toolkit, Lift the Lid (aimed at those working with older adults), Wirral Mencap eLearning, Y be safe, Family Planning Association training, Sex was RUDE, now it's REAL and Open Future Learning (see review section for details).

Respondents were asked what their training covered and of the responses, only five related to staff training (as opposed to training courses for the people they support). Internally created training included various aspects such as understanding sexuality and relationships, the law and people's rights, Care Quality Commission (CQC) regulations, policy writing and elements of supporting peoples' safety, such as positive risk assessments.

Table 1: Course content of internally created sexuality and relationships training for staff

<p>Organisation 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Laws and regulation ▪ Understanding relationships and sexuality for people with learning difficulties ▪ Meeting CQC guidelines ▪ Supporting people to build safe relationships ▪ Privacy and personal time
<p>Organisation 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What we mean by identity, sexuality, and relationships ▪ The rights and needs of the people we work with regarding their identity, sexuality and relationships ▪ To feel more confident in supporting people to develop and sustain friendships and relationships ▪ How to put into practice ways to ensure that peoples' rights, choices and protection are considered concerning their identity ▪ The organisational policy and how to put it into practice ▪ About legislation and guidance relating to people supported by Sense ▪ Using person-centred tools to help people build and extend their relationship circles
<p>Organisation 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The right to express yourself ▪ Consent ▪ Organisational policies ▪ Positive risk assessments
<p>Organisation 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sex, Disability and the Care Act 2014 ▪ Disability, Sexual Expression and Safeguarding - how to support your staff ▪ Sex, Disability and the Law ▪ Sexual Health, Human Rights and Disability

Organisation 5

- Supporting conversations about sex, sexuality, and relationships
- Legal and professional guidance around supporting sex, intimacy, and relationships
- Consent and capacity,
- Sexual offences act and physical support with sex
- Internal policy and practice
- Normalising sexuality, sex, intimacy, and relationships
- Understanding unique needs of LGBTQIA+ individuals

Focus groups

Focus groups were advertised via professional networks and social media. 10 sessions ran encouraging participation from staff working with people with a variety of support needs including people with learning disabilities, autistic people, people experiencing poor mental health, people with brain injuries, older people, and people with a disability (including those with life-limiting conditions). There were approximately 120 attendees split relatively evenly across all client groups.

The focus groups gave participants space to expand on the issues they face in supporting people surrounding sexuality and relationships (see Graph 3). Some concerns were universal across different support needs such as:

- a need for a clearer understanding of the law – including the Mental Capacity Act, the Care Act and the Human Rights Act
- confidence to have conversations on this topic and challenging its taboo nature
- challenging negative staff attitudes and values
- a need for clear organisational policies and appropriate guidance
- changing organisational culture
- working with family disapproval
- impact of religion/culture.

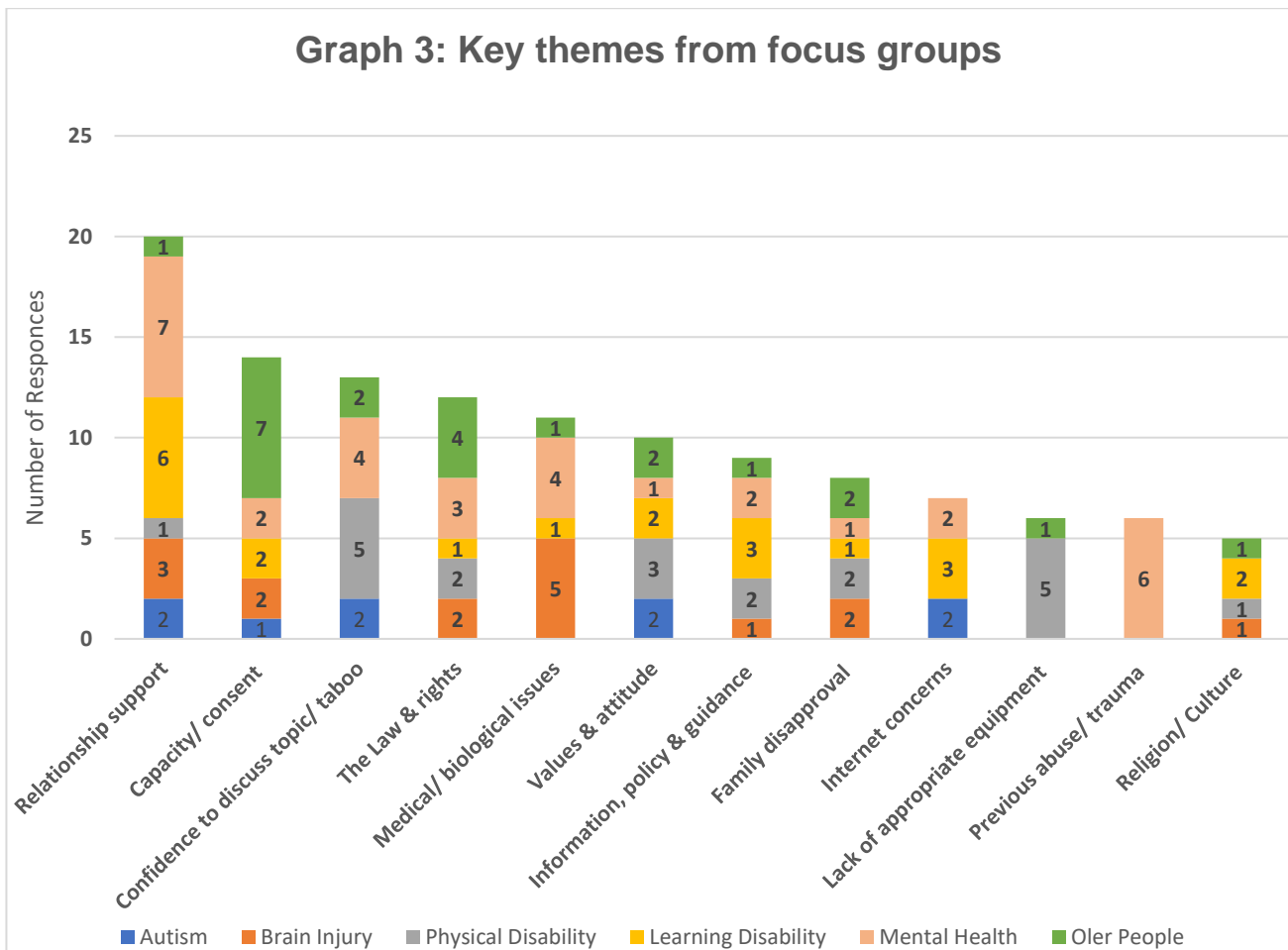
Some issues related to specific client groups. The most commonly raised issue was providing practical relationship support, such as developing relationships, meeting potential partners, understanding healthy relationships, and understanding boundaries. This related predominantly to services for people experiencing poor mental health, autistic people, and people with a learning disability. Concerns surrounding staying safe online, such as using internet dating and watching pornography, were also most prevalent among this group.

Understanding consent and mental capacity (both staff and people who use services) was a common concern, but most prominently in services for older adults especially where one person might be able to consent and the other cannot or has fluctuating capacity due to a diagnosis of dementia. Understanding biological/medical issues were common among staff supporting people experiencing poor

mental health concern or people with a brain injury. This centred on understanding how their injury or medication they took (or self-medicated) to manage their condition impacted their sexual performance and/or their emotions which can impact their ability to develop and maintain a relationship. Understanding the impact of past trauma/abuse on sexuality and relationships was almost exclusively raised among staff supporting people experiencing poor mental health. A lack of suitable equipment and adaptations to enjoy a fulfilling sex life was an issue almost exclusively to people with a disability.

What was clear in all focus groups was that staff are anxious about this topic, they are fearful of supporting people in this area in case something goes wrong, or they say/do something they were not allowed to do. Staff overwhelmingly felt that just having a resource was not enough, it would have to be part of an organisational change where this work was supported and there was clear guidance around staffs' role and a policy in place to reflect and support practice.

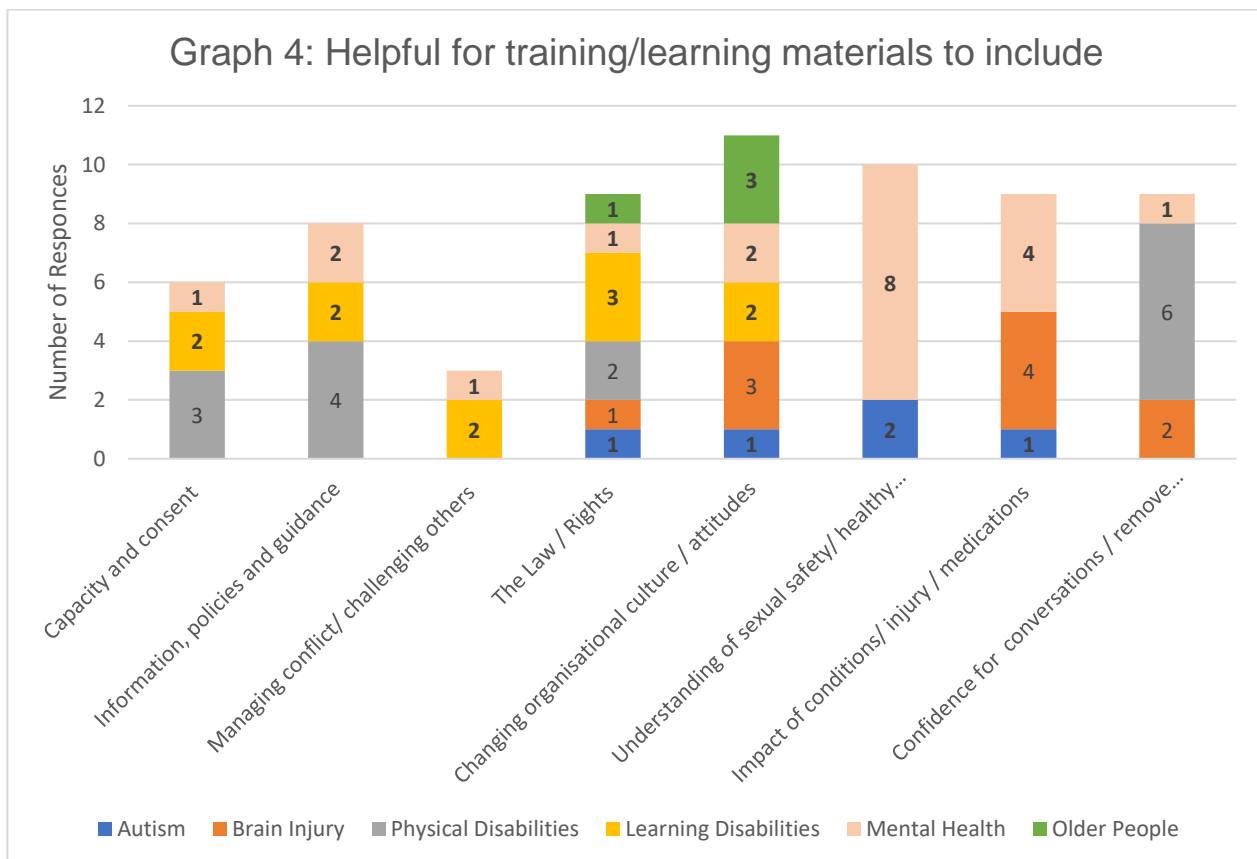
Graph 3: Key themes from focus groups



When asked what they felt a training course should cover (see Graph 4), their responses unsurprisingly correlated closely to the key issues they faced in their role. They also felt a training program should cover:

- how to manage conflict and challenge others such as professionals/families over the topic
- guidance and information on how to write care plans, policies with organisational guidance
- how to support cultural change such as how to support people proactively, challenging staff attitude and normalising sex and relationships
- understanding of sexual safety/healthy relationships, centring on how staff can be best supported to assist the people they support to keep themselves safe and avoid unhealthy relationships, including online grooming and dealing with past trauma.

In terms of how the training should be delivered, participants felt strongly that this should be face-to-face (this could include delivery on online platforms) as opposed to eLearning, including interactive content such as videos, case studies, be easy to use and understand and include peer-led trainers if possible (especially with staff working with people with a learning disability/people with a disability). There was also a preference for creating internal expertise through train the trainer courses and the use of organisational champions.



Key findings

- The average level of staff confidence in having conversations with the people they supported on a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being not at all confident and 5 being very confident) was 3.5.
- Most social care staff felt that the need for discussions surrounding any aspect of sexuality or intimate relationships in their job role occurred monthly.
- Social care staff overwhelmingly backed the need for a comprehensive relationship and sexuality training pack.
- Most staff do not receive training in this area, and most organisation who provide training in this area do not make it mandatory.
- The average staff satisfaction rating with training (with 1 being not very useful and 5 being very useful) was 3.3.
- Most training departments were making their own training rather than using a pre-made resource.

How we conducted the review

This review of sexuality and relationships resources is intended to support social care staff in their work, providing them with a list of tools and materials to assist them. It collates reviews of resources, assessed by professionals from various sectors and organisations in England. The network of peer-reviewers included social care trainers, social care providers, specialist dating agencies and providers of relationships and sex education (RSE) to people who use social care services, social workers, academics, and people with lived experience of using social care services.

Reviewers completed a survey about each resource including:

- resource format
- intended audience
- applicability to other audiences
- purpose
- availability/cost
- additional training/support
- topics included
- strengths
- drawbacks
- inclusion of up-to-date information
- ease of use
- issues/aspects potential users should be aware of.

The resources list was divided up among reviewers based on their area of expertise. This review does not claim to be a definitive list of every resource available; it includes what was able to be located following the survey, focus groups and within a literature search from the authors, with a particular focus on the UK. A small number of items were included from outside the UK which are used by reviewers and considered applicable and of merit to an English audience. It's acknowledged that there are merits in seeking an international perspective, to gain new ideas and approaches. This may also be helpful in regard to specialist topics that are less well researched or published here.

The review is aimed at English social care staff, as opposed to the UK, in recognition of the different legal and policy contexts. Reviews are based on reviewers' subjective experience of how useful they perceived the resource to be for their needs and experience. The resources included in this report are available to view on a database which will tell you about the resource, who it's aimed at, cost, what's included and where to access it. Some resources have recommendations, this does not indicate that non-recommended documents are not useful. The recommended resources are those which reviewers felt were particularly noteworthy, most likely to meet the criteria of being up to date and were documents that could be used in their entirety to aid staff's learning. Inclusion within this review does not indicate a resource is an endorsement from Skills for Care or Supported Loving.

Resources review

Resources for all client groups

Capacity to consent to sexual relations

Creator: British Psychological Society

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- Explains the fundamentals of the Mental Capacity Act concerning the capacity to consent to sexual relations.
- Explains the relevant case law that relates to it and key issues and judgements, guidance on how to conduct a capacity assessment on specific areas, such as pornography.
- It includes numerous case studies with the judgement as examples.

Drawbacks

- The language is complex and includes a large amount of legal jargon.
- It appears overly risk-averse in some areas, for example the use of specialist dating agencies.
- Has not been reviewed in some time - case law included on the capacity to consent to sexual relations is out of date and case law exists now regarding social media use.

Genderbread Person

Creator: Sam Killermann

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform / to use with people

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- An interesting way to support people to understand the different aspects of gender identity.
- With knowledge and understanding by the person using it, it would be a good resource.
- Could be applied to a range of different social care groups.
- Could be used with any group, either 1-1 or in group sessions.

- There are some articles on the website and lesson plans for how to use the resource.

Drawbacks

- A person using it needs to have some knowledge about gender identity.
- Cartoony appearance may not work with all groups, so limiting appeal.
- Can at first appear complicated and somewhat abstract. It would be best used in conjunction with other materials.

Gender Unicorn

Creator: Trans Student Educational Resources

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform / to use with people

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- A simple resource to help people understand where they fit on a scale of gender identity, expression and whom they are attracted to physically and emotionally. Could be used with any group, either 1-1 or in group sessions.
- An interactive version and a colour-in version available, does not come with a guide, though it is easy to understand what to do as there is an 'example' copy available.
- Would be a good talking point to discuss gender identity and expression. It would be a good tool for non-trans people to understand transgender on a basic level.
- The website has some definitions of terms used in the LGBTQ+ community but as these are not used on the worksheet, it could be referred to alongside if discussions around 'other' gender identity and expression need to take place.
- Good to use as part of a training session on gender identity and gender expression.
- Good activity for people with learning disabilities to lead on, e.g. if they are helping to deliver courses on LGBT+ issues.

Drawbacks

- The use of a unicorn may not be appropriate for autistic people.
- Not easily downloadable (need to save image or open image in a new tab to print) and does not seem to be an option to print a copy.
- Classes non-male/non-female as "other genders", no explanation of what other genders exist.

Additional comments

No information is provided to help staff use this resource, though it is fairly self-explanatory.

My marriage, my choice toolkit (recommended)

Creator: The University of Nottingham, Respond, Ann Craft Trust

Type/purpose: Toolkit including film and guidance document / to train staff / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- Although created for people with learning disabilities, the resource can be applied to anyone with a condition that impacts cognitive functioning, whether this is permanent (brain injury) or fluctuating (such as individuals experiencing poor mental health).
- The toolkit is written for professionals conducting an MCA assessment and the case studies and videos can be used to train staff on the topic of forced marriage.
- This is a very thorough resource for assessing forced marriage. It provides a clear understanding of the topic including the background, factors that place someone at risk, potential warning signs that forced marriage might take place and what action to take, forced vs arranged marriage, consequences of a forced marriage, an understanding of the law, and working with a person's family and the potential issues as a result.
- Offers step by step guidance on all aspects of the assessment. It includes case studies to help make the topic real and includes helpful questions that could be asked as part of a capacity assessment for marriage and sexual relations.
- Includes a collection of case studies, showing a range of different examples with questions for discussion which could be used with staff to explore the issue.
- Has a collection of videos summarising key areas: recognising forced marriage (with role plays), a summary of the law, professional perspectives, motivations, consequences and key messages.

Drawbacks

- The guide is 51 pages which may be daunting to some readers.
- The guide acknowledges that case law can change, and readers are advised to seek current legal advice. Case law has changed since its publication. Capacity to consent to sexual relations now includes the requirement to understand that "the other person must have the capacity to consent to the sexual activity and must consent before and throughout the sexual activity".
- The wording of the criteria regarding capacity to consent for sexual relations is not the same as the legal wording from the case law. This could result in different interpretations.

Additional comments

As this document acknowledges, case law changes frequently and it is best to seek legal advice when faced with this situation to ensure your knowledge and assessment criteria is up to date.

Power and abuse wheel

Creator: End abuse for people with learning disabilities

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform / to use with people

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- There are both written and pictorial versions free to download.
- Discusses physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.
- Gave some descriptions of what constitutes abuse in the written format.
- Can be used with a range of different groups not just for people with a learning disability.

Drawbacks

- The pictures are a little unclear.
- Aimed at women only - no mention that other genders can also be subjected to abuse.
- Although abuse descriptions are quite good, it would have been helpful to include some guidance around what to do in these situations.

Sexual pleasure training toolkit

Creator: Global Advisory Board for Sexual Health and Wellbeing

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- Pleasure focused guidance - talking about sexual enjoyment and desire is usually taboo, especially in social care.
- Valuable exercises to get staff talking about sexual pleasure as this can be embarrassing.
- Helpful exercises, particularly on providers developing a language for talking about sex and sexual pleasure that feels comfortable and appropriate and terminology do's/don'ts.

- Informative sections on sexual rights, sexual freedom, how providers' values determine their interaction with clients and risk v's pleasure.

Drawbacks

- Is written for all (does mention older adults and people with a disability and can be used by/to train social care staff) but additional challenges of working with specific social care groups that are not covered.
- Aimed towards individuals delivering RSE work but still applicable to social care.
- No case studies include people with a disability or people over 65 years old.

Additional comments

- Deliberately doesn't mention legal issues as it is a worldwide resource.

Sexualtree

Creator: Sam Killerman and Dr Karen Rayne

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform / to use with people

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- Includes a guide to using the resource, suggests it is flexible and can be used for different groups of people (including parents/ professionals) and any age group.
- Can help to discuss wider issues around LGBT+ such as cultural influences.
- Classroom-based activities will enable discussion around sexuality and help people to understand that each person's experience will be different and can spark conversations.
- Ideas for using it are provided in the guidance document and could use the elements as talking points in training.
- Will help to explore where values around sexuality come from, sparking discussions on how these could be challenged.

Drawbacks

- Potentially confusing for autistic people, example sheet uses animals (bird, squirrel and mole).
- Seems to be a complex tool and may not be suitable to use for people with learning disabilities without thoroughly planning out sessions and explaining each area of the tree/elements in detail.
- Discusses a minimal tree, a worksheet, and a poster - only has the poster in the downloaded materials, so it is unclear what the minimal tree or the worksheet includes.

Additional comments

Is a tool from the USA but could be used in the UK - the language used would be the same, though 'skin hunger' is used as one of the elements and it is unclear what this is. Would best be used in a classroom setting to get an understanding of other people's views rather than a 1-1 setting.

Easy to understand to plot where they are, however, it would be best used alongside other resources that discuss gender identity and expression in more detail.

STAR toolkit

Creator: Childnet and Leicester City Council's Building Schools for the Future programme

Type/purpose: Training pack / to use with people

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- The pack gives comprehensive support on how to use the toolkit.
- Lots of activities and plans to work with people and gives different options for different styles of learning, e.g., those who prefer discussion, those who prefer written tasks or practical tasks.
- Each letter refers to a different area (safe, trust, action, respect), has a pack to aid teaching/learning and also has a film for discussion points and an activity too.

Drawbacks

Focus is on online safety as opposed to sex and relationships, but useful for discussing sexting, sharing images, and connecting with people online.

Additional comments

This is a good resource with a focus on online safety (not sex and relationships) but has some areas that would be good to support people who need help around sharing images, asking for images, sexting and connecting with people online.

Supporting relationships and friendships - A workbook for social care workers

Creator: Suzan Collins

Type/purpose: Book / to train staff with

Availability: Buy online

Strengths

- This is, uniquely, aimed at a generic health and social care audience. Its aim is 'to equip social care staff with the knowledge and skills to understand what friendships and relationships mean to services users' health and well-being.'
- Case studies used throughout reference a range of people who may access social care services, and numerous question and answer exercises to stimulate consideration of good practice.
- It is designed as a workbook for self-study by direct support workers, but the materials could also be used in group training settings.
- Focusses on the importance of friendships, as well as intimate relationships
- Would be most suitably used by a manager or trainer looking for general ideas and practical activities to assist in awareness-raising or personal development.

Drawbacks

- It was published in 2010. Legal references are out of date. Information is mapped to extinct CQC and Skills for Care standards. Would no longer be suitable for the original purpose, as staff would be confused by the obsolete references.
- Information provided is general and sometimes imprecise.

Working with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (Social Care TV)

Creator: Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

Type/purpose: Film / to train staff with / to generally inform

Availability: Free online

Strengths

- Covers a wide range of settings i.e., learning disabilities, mental health, people with a disability and older peoples' care.
- Powerful personal stories and informative.
- It will help get the conversations started.
- Discusses how culture may need to change.
- Explores being truly 'person centred' surrounding support.

Drawbacks

- The videos are 11 years old, however a lot of information is still relevant.
- Some of the processes, such as not being able to use direct payments for care, have changed and people can now use direct payments for care.
- Need to be used with other training resources.
- Due to age no mention of the Care Act 2014.

Additional comments

The videos are 11 years old so may primarily be used for the impact of their stories. Elements relating to some aspects of their support may have changed due to the time since filming.

Resources for staff working with autistic people

Autism, sexuality and relationships

Creator: Kingswood

Type/purpose: Film / to generally inform / to train staff with

Availability: Free online

Strengths

- Delivered from an experienced viewpoint, a set of five films that can be broken down into chunks.
- Talks about having the opportunity to make mistakes to learn and how sometimes support staff are overprotective.
- Advice and answers given to questions asked and has links to other resources.
- Describes ways to support autistic people learn about sex including how things need to be broken down to enable someone to understand. Describes the use of pictorial resources as being effective.
- Describes how teaching autistic people about sexuality is different from teaching neurotypical people. Specifically talks about communication difficulties and theory of mind difficulties. Also discusses how the transfer of skills learnt may not be applied in an intimate or social setting.

Drawbacks

- Mainly focused on adults with Asperger's rather than the wider spectrum of autism.
- Caution where includes the personal views of presenter e.g., views around gender identity clinics and how comfortable the UK is with different expressions of sexuality.

Additional comments

Case law around capacity to have sex has changed since these films were produced so what is said, although is correct, does not include that someone has to understand that the other person must have the capacity to consent to the sexual activity and must in fact consent before and throughout sexual activity.

Asperger's syndrome and sexuality: From adolescence through adulthood

Creator: Isabelle Henault

Type/purpose: Book / to generally inform

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- The book includes detailed information about a 12-week education programme and instructions on how to use the programme.
- References other relevant publications relating to autistic people although they are out of date.
- Provides practical suggestions for different topics and helps the understanding of why things happen.
- Workshop examples at the back of the book cover all different topics and are accompanied by information for the group leader.

Drawbacks

- The book was written in 2005 so includes limited information on important topics such as social media, online dating and pornography.
- The section on sexuality and gender identity (and workshops) are outdated and no longer reflect current terminology e.g., “homosexual couple”.
- The tone of the book felt quite negative surrounding autistic people, with sex being explored most frequently concerning deviance/inappropriate behaviours as opposed to within the context of a relationship.
- The information included surrounding the capacity to consent to sexual relations is incorrect e.g., does not have to occur in a loving context. It is also written in a Canadian context.
- The book suggests a routine gynaecological exam for girls (while still at school) – this would not be done in the UK unless medically necessary, smear tests do not begin until 25 years old.

Additional comments

This is one of the few books/education programmes for autistic people, but it is now quite out of date, so a note of caution when using as a result.

Life on the spectrum: Love and autism

Creator: Health Talk

Type/purpose: Film / to generally inform / to train staff with / to use with people

Availability: Free online

Strengths

- A collection of videos produced as part of a wider piece of research looking at the lives of autistic people, including one section on relationships.
- It shows positive examples of autistic people in relationships and overcoming challenges with their partner.
- It highlights the challenges faced by autistic people in this area.

Drawbacks

The videos are quite short.

Neurodiversity, autism and recovery from sexual violence

Creator: Susy Ridout

Type/purpose: Training pack / to use with people

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- It provides a clear framework to explore the full range of issues arising from sexual violence, including identity, goal setting, safety, mental and physical wellbeing, managing emotions, friendships, relationships and disclosure, memory, concentration and sensory experiences.
- Can be bought separately as seven themed booklets.
- Contains a lot of activities in each section that are explained and easy to understand.
- Includes points for reflection after each section which is helpful.
- It is written from a lived-experience perspective which is valuable.
- Includes resource sheets that can be photocopied for sessions.

Drawbacks

Some knowledge of working respectfully with survivors of sexual violence would be needed as a prerequisite to using the resource.

Sex was rude, now it's real

Creator: Isabel Bullon Benito

Type/purpose: Training pack / to use with people

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- The main areas covered are body parts and anatomy, personal space, sexual attraction and behaviours and relationships/emotions, with themes of privacy, trust and consent running throughout.
- Each chapter has an explanation of how to use the resources, a story or cartoon to be read with/by the person who has autism, and some have an additional game or activity.
- The illustrations, especially those attached to activities, are engaging and aid understanding of the topic areas.
- The interactive, illustrated question and answer cards would be a good resource to use to facilitate a discussion about sex and relationships.

Drawbacks

- The terms 'girls' and 'boys' are frequently used, which may preclude relevance for adults.

- Some of the analogies used may confuse, particularly for the target audience, for instance comparing the menstrual cycle to the seasons and the concept of a recipe for love.
- There is a bias towards heterosexual sexual activity, with unequal reference to 'other types'.
- There is no information about sexually transmitted infections (STI's) despite the mention of the health risks related to sexual activity, followed by advice on condom use.
- The author describes this volume as a guide on how to teach about sexuality and relationships for people with autism. It's unclear if the target audience encompasses people with a learning disability, though the graphics may suggest so.

Additional comments

The book is weak on legal context, with no reference to the Mental Capacity Act, for instance.

Supporting transgender autistic youth and adults: A guide for professionals and families

Creator: Finn V. Gratton

Type/purpose: Book / to generally inform

Availability: Buy hardcopy / download

Strengths

- Providing advice on how professionals working with autistic trans youth and adults can tailor their practice to best serve people and how parents can support their trans autistic children, this book increases awareness of the large overlap between trans identities and autism.
- Resource list available at the end of each section and a useful glossary of terms.
- Discusses the whole trans journey specifically from an autistic person's view.
- It includes a helpful subject and author index.
- Shows the difficulties autistic people have in navigating the transgender world and how different it is compared to neurotypical navigation of the same world.

Drawbacks

The book is from the USA so it uses American terminology which may be unfamiliar to some UK readers. It also refers to the US legal system which is different to the UK system.

The autistic trans guide to life

Creator: Yenn Purkis and Wenn B. Lawson

Type/purpose: Book / to generally inform

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- Written from a perspective of empowerment and from a trans and autistic perspective.
- Gives useful practical tips and advice throughout the book.
- Provides a detailed explanation of gender diversity.
- Includes insights into transitioning from a personal perspective and the process.
- Interesting perspectives on the two people featured and the challenges and processes they have gone through in their lives to become the people they are now.

Drawbacks

It is more of an information resource than a training resource.

Additional comments

A really powerful look at how to navigate the process of transitioning. The book reflects positivity.

Welcome to sex ed. for self-advocates

Creator: Organization for Autism Research

Type/purpose: eLearning / to use with people

Availability: Free to use online

Strengths

- Designed and delivered by autistic people and has a good introduction to all subjects.
- It has links to further resources available, how to use guide instructions and is easy to navigate.
- Subjects covered are split into nine sections so people can complete at their own pace.
- There are scenarios and questions at the end of each subject to test what has been learned
- Key points are summarised at the end of the section and has visuals/pictures to reinforce learning.
- Question and answer videos are used to help people to understand.

Drawbacks

Produced in the USA so be aware that although the content is relevant some links are to American resources.

Additional comments

This resource is informative and comprehensive.

Resources for staff working with people with brain Injuries

Sex and sexuality after brain injury and Relationships after brain injury

Creator: Headway

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- This is the only UK resource available which explains the impact of a brain injury in this area.
- The resources explain how a brain injury impacts relationships including intimate ones and the kind of changes that occur in long term and developing new relationships.
- Sex and sexuality cover how the injury impacts sexual functioning and sexual relationships.
- It covers the impact an injury has on a person's mental health and the impact of medication on their sexual activity and relationships.
- The resource is aimed at people with a brain injury and their families/partners but could be adapted to train social care staff to help them support the people they work with and to understand the challenges they face.

Drawbacks

The resource is aimed at people with a brain injury and not supporters so while it provides information on the issues they face it does not provide any guidance to providers on how to respond and support.

Additional comments

The section on capacity and sex does not clearly define that a best interest decision cannot be made in respect of an individual engaging in sexual activity.

Sexuality after traumatic brain injury

Creator: TBI staff training

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- This is the only document that offers some guidance that applies to social care staff - how to respond to sexually inappropriate behaviour and how to ask people who use services about this topic to identify how their injury has impacted their sexual relationship.
- The main use of this document would be to provide some background information on the kind of issues a brain injury can cause regarding sex-decreased sex drive, problems maintaining an erection/reaching orgasm, painful sex, etc, as well as issues affecting relationships such as changes in personality.
- It is aimed at sexual health/medical staff, but social care staff could share the information in it with the people they support or their partners.

Drawbacks

- This resource is for sexual health staff/medical staff as opposed to social care staff as it offers sexual/medical advice that would not be offered by social care staff.
- It is Australian so most organisations the resource signpost to will not apply to the UK.

Resources for staff working with people with a disability – including those with a life-limiting condition

Intimate not intimidated: It's time to talk about sex and disability

Creator: The Open University with members of The Sexuality Alliance

Type/purpose: Film / to generally inform

Availability: Free to watch online

Strengths

- Seeing people with disabilities openly discussing real-life situations is very powerful.
- This video is particularly good at getting to the heart of the matter - that no matter the length of life a person has, or how significant their physical challenges, they deserve to be able to live life to the full (and this includes a sex option).
- Good for helping social care staff to think about how they would feel if someone assumed they were not interested in sex and were actively blocked from expressing themselves sexually.

Drawbacks

- No subtitle option on the video, although there is a transcript available.
- Would have benefited from some tips on ways to use it in a training session in the workplace, with learning points made clear.

Additional comments

Advance notice regarding content about shortened lives/terminal conditions.

Let's talk about sex, intimacy and relationships

Creator: The Open University with members of The Sexuality Alliance

Type/purpose: eLearning / to train staff

Availability: Free to complete online

Strengths

- Could be used as a discussion tool working directly with people/parents/staff to explore the values a person might have who is supporting people.
- Gives real-life examples from people with lived experience in videos which is insightful.
- The people in the videos talk about the importance of the topics (privacy, sex life, relationships, sex education).

- It provides links to more resources for people with a life-limited condition, family and carers for further help/guidance.
- Provides some tasks to complete in own time (within a week); these could be used as part of a training session or to spark discussions.

Drawbacks

- There is a missed opportunity to discuss the law and human rights. The videos demonstrate how people's human rights could be affected but there is no follow up on what they are.
- Although it looks to be touching on values and attitudes it doesn't challenge the user on their values/attitudes.
- Asks questions at the end of each topic but doesn't go into the detail of the right/wrong/best practice.

Additional comments

This is a good resource which could be utilised as part of a wider training session to help people to understand the views, feelings, and thoughts of people with life-limited conditions (and other disabilities as the issues are likely to be similar) but not an isolated training resource for staff.

Nine top tips on talking about sex... for young people with a life-limiting or life-threatening condition

Creator: The Open University with members of The Sexuality Alliance

Type/purpose: Guidance document / film / to use with people / to generally inform

Availability: Free to view watch online / download

Strengths

- Videos could be used as discussion points as part of a wider programme.
- Shares personal experiences and thoughts by people with a disability.

Drawbacks

- Not a training resource, more a resource to help people to understand real-life issues - both for people and staff.

PleasureAble - sexual device manual for persons with disabilities

Creator: Disabilities Health Research Network (DHRN), Canada

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- A manual exploring how to help people with a disability or those requiring sexual rehabilitation with some of the practical aspects of having sex – for example, positioning, tools, adaptations etc.
- Good 'myth or reality' text boxes throughout - they would work well in a flashcard/playing card format as a training resource for staff.
- Devices for specific disabilities or impairments laid out e.g., "set up for caregiver if no hand function".
- Practical advice with outline sketches e.g., using a chair or a wheelchair (for sex).
- Does not assume people know about aspects of sex such as the right lube to use with condoms - this is important due to the lack of sex education provided for some people with a disability.
- Photos of actual products available on the market.
- Helpful emphasis on checking for skin integrity.

Drawbacks

- Very much aimed at people with a physical disability that do not have a learning disability or cognitive impairment. It would be helpful to have some of the content available in Easy Read format.
- Seems to only portray heterosexual couples in the artwork.

Additional comments

"Clients are encouraged to ask for assistance in set-up and clean up as with any other activity of daily living" - this is a point often missed in training materials.

Sexual and reproductive health and cerebral palsy across the life-course

Creator: The University of Birmingham and Burdett Trust for Nursing

Type/purpose: Film / to train staff with

Availability: Free to watch online

Strengths

- The content is related to women with cerebral palsy, but it is equally relevant for women with other physical disabilities and communication difficulties.
- It is powerful to see and hear real examples from disabled women themselves. Some of the content is upsetting, but it also shares some experiences that went well and that good care and support is possible.
- There are some practical tips coming out of this film that would make a positive change to the healthcare experiences of future patients.
- Peer support is a vital component in continuing to improve services.

Additional comments

- One of the situations described includes a stillborn baby, which any trainer/presenter should prepare additional support for any delegates affected, during and after the session.
- This is an excellent resource, and it should be included in medical training, not just for nurses/midwives. It would be helpful if the Royal College of General Practitioners included it in their continuing professional development training systems.

Sexual citizenship and disability understanding sexual support in policy, practice and theory (recommended)

Creator: Julia Bahner

Type/purpose: Book / to generally inform

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- The book is based on two separate research projects. The first is the authors PhD study about how sexual facilitation was understood and managed in Swedish personal assistance services. The second was an international comparative project about sexual support in England, the Netherlands, and New South Wales (NSW), Australia.
- Can be used in community services settings, as part of discussion groups with people with a disability and with care teams during training and development days. It provides a wealth of information for disability activists as well.
- Some thought-provoking segments: "In fact, in mainstream culture, disabled people are often portrayed in a desexualising way (Stevens 2010), where disability and sexuality are seen as 'other'." (Wiseman 2014, p. 163)
- This book seeks to expand our understanding of sexuality and disability, but more specifically, it seeks to raise important issues around the sexual support needs of people with mobility impairments. It has great information about sexual facilitation.
- It also shows the different conceptualisations of sexual needs versus the need for food and hygiene. A larger focus on the sexual expression rights of disabled women than many other resources.
- Excellent real-life examples of how people with a disability and care staff manage these situations.
- Has an exceptional section on managers' perspectives (page 104).
- Up to date and explains any terminology that is not used in everyday language very well.

Drawbacks

At first glance, it appears academically focussed, but for the non-academics amongst us, focus on the content of the main body of the book, and skim over the pages of academic references initially. Then go back to the book for its comprehensive references and citations, which are a resource in themselves, and worth googling through as time permits.

Additional comments

Overall, a fantastic resource for anybody interested in the subject area of sexual expression and disability.

Sexual respect toolkit (recommended)

Creator: The Outsiders Trust

Type/purpose: Training pack / to train staff with

Availability: Free download / free to watch online

Strengths

- It combines practical resources in print form and companion videos, featuring a good mix of people with a variety of disabilities and conditions, medics, therapists, and peer supporters.
- The resources are values-based and sex-positive.
- There are frank and honest discussions from a range of people exploring how their disabilities impact sexual.
- It's clear about the role of health and social care staff in supporting people surrounding sexuality.
- It's clear that health and social care staff need to be explicit about the need for open and honest conversations and in particular how to start the conversation e.g., a good example of an opening line: "Many patients in your situation have reported a sexual impact from their illness - is that something you've experienced...".

Drawbacks

- Refers to people as patients which may not resonate with social care staff and is focused more on medical staff.
- It would be great to add subtitles and a BSL version.
- There is a technical glitch – “For comprehensive resources to support your work click here” – but the link does not work. However, when you click the “Resources” word in blue that is within the bottom paragraph in “Clients blocks”, that does work and takes you to some comprehensive resources. This repeats across several of the sections.

- Does not specifically highlight the LGBTQ+ community, although one interviewee mentioned she was bisexual. The overall tone of the resources is so supremely accepting of difference.

Additional comments

Bring an open mind to these training materials, as they are challenging themes for some (but in a good way).

Split Banana inclusive relationship and sex education guide for professionals, carers and teachers

Creator: Split Banana and Enhance the UK

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- Signposts to their Sex and the Law guide, amongst other resources such as blogs and other sex and disability organisations.
- Good case study scenarios mentioned.
- Comprehensive links to further reading and other organisations.

Drawbacks

No easy-read version is available.

Supporting disabled people with their sex lives (recommended)

Creator: Tuppy Owen and Claire de Than

Type/purpose: Book / to generally inform

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- A comprehensive treasure trove of information for health and social care staff supporting people with a disability. It explores the needs of people with a disability, the issues faced both by people themselves, their staff and the legal/human rights issues. It also includes a chapter on sexual diversity- including a broad range of preferences, behaviours, and lifestyles.
- The book has a sex-positive, person-centred, and rights-based approach.
- Top tips, case study examples and links to other organisations and further reading included.
- Thorough legal section with in-depth examples of case law and a pragmatic approach.

Drawbacks

As written in 2015, it does not include any reference to the Care Quality Commission's guidance on supporting sexuality which was published in 2019.

Additional comments

Written in 2015, there may be legal elements such as case law surrounding mental capacity which are now outdated.

Working with LGBTQI+ disabled people: top tips for personal assistants and support workers

Creator: Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- It has clear content, with the pdf download including good visuals/photos.
- The Word document version of the download would be useful for anyone using a screen-reader.
- Links to good content from organisations.

Resources for staff working with people with a learning disability

All about us (CD ROM)

Creator: Family Planning Association

Type/purpose: Training pack / to use with people

Availability: Buy hardcopy / watch on a computer

Strengths

- It is presented from the perspective of self-advocates, which makes it immediately engaging.
- The broad topics covered are: All about us (growing up/emotions), being a woman/ man, relationships, and sexual health. There is scope to choose from a menu of topics, dependent on the individuals priority need, rather than having to work sequentially through the resource.
- Age-appropriate cartoon characters are used to support knowledge transmission, within each section. The illustrations are sensitively handled, whilst at the same time being explicit and easy to understand.
- There is an interactive quiz after each short session, which helps to reinforce learning and initiate group discussion.
- There is frequent repetition of important themes throughout the programme.
- It comes with a British sign language interpreter option.

Drawbacks

- The gender binary presentation would benefit from being updated.
- The fact that it is only in CD-ROM format does limit usage, as many new computers do not accept discs.

Additional comments

All About Us can be used by individuals as an online self-study programme or integrated within one-to-one or group sessions. It is designed to facilitate personal development and knowledge across a range of sex, sexuality, and relationships issues. Used in part, or as a whole, it makes an excellent contribution to a relationships and sex education session.

All about us (manual)

Creator: Family Planning Association

Type/purpose: Training pack / to use with people

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- The manual contains lots of lesson plans covering a wide range of topics regarding personal relationships and growing up.
- Contains visuals to aid learning such as pictures of genitals and naked bodies.
- Some sections have additional information sheets (e.g., a sheet with information on how to explain what masturbation is).
- There are additional teaching notes on some topics.
- The lesson plans are easy to understand and are broken down into steps, so anyone with basic knowledge could use this tool.

Drawbacks

- In the good touch/bad touch session plan, it talks about only touching certain people on special occasions. It refers to hugging as something that should only be done on special occasions with carers, uncles/aunts, friends from school, social worker, which is outdated, and other examples would be better (e.g., people often hug family members on non-special occasions, but would not hug a social worker on special occasions at all?).
- It touches on consent during one lesson plan but has no additional information or teaching notes about what consent is or the law. Considering there is a whole section on relationships it is concerning there is not more around consent.

Books beyond words (recommended)

Creator: Books Beyond Words

Type/purpose: Book / to use with people

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- Books Beyond Words have produced several adult-oriented wordless books, including topics about sex and relationships. The titles of most interest and relevance are:
'Loving each other safely', 'Belonging', 'Keeping healthy down below', 'Making friends', 'Falling in Love', 'Hug me, touch me', 'Looking after my balls', 'Looking after my breasts'.
- They can be used with individuals or groups, in person or online.
- They are a superb resource to engage people in open discussions about their experiences, alongside sharing new ideas based on the fictitious characters in the books.
- All information is medically accurate and has been developed in consultation with self-advocates.
- Each title includes details of how to read it, with suggested prompt questions, additional information, and details of relevant services.

Drawbacks

Some of the resource information is out of date. The user needs to check this, with the published date, before sharing it with participants.

Additional comments

It is important to read the instructions before using the resources or attending a training session. The idea is to engage participants in the reading process, rather than telling them what the pictures mean.

Boyfriends and girlfriends: A guide to dating for people with disabilities

Creator: Terri Couwenhoven

Type/purpose: Book / to generally inform / to use with people

Availability: Buy download

Strengths

- Could be adapted for all adults, as it has general tips about dating and relationships.
- The text breaks down the intricacies of dating and developing an intimate relationship into manageable, understandable components.
- It includes some useful activities that could aid understanding, including those that focus on healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Challenging subjects are covered, such as having crushes and breaking up. There is a question-and-answer section on dating dilemmas at the end, which could be used to stimulate a lively discussion.

Drawbacks

- The publication is biased towards heterosexual relationships, which is reflected in the text and the illustrations.
- It is an American text, so some references and vocabulary may be unfamiliar to UK readers.

Additional comments

It was published in 2015. The information is current, but not inclusive. There are references to US legal policies.

It is written for individuals with a learning disability and family supporters and professionals. There are some useful tips on dating and many helpful exercises and activities that could be used as part of an individual or group training programme. However, the illustrations are of mixed quality, so the information would need to be adapted for practical use. It would be a helpful reference for staff working with those who have little or no understanding of how to embark on a relationship.

Change: Easy read sex and relationships booklets

Creator: Change

Type/purpose: Book / to use with people

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- Could be used in support of anyone who is challenged by reading and wishes to learn more about sex and relationships.
- This is a set of booklets that use easy words and pictures to encourage understanding around sexuality, and awareness of safe sex and personal safety. The titles are: 'Safe sex and contraception', 'Sex and masturbation', 'Sexual abuse', 'Friendships and relationships' and 'Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans'.
- Can be used to support teaching and general discussion about sex and relationships. Images are explicit and unambiguous, enabling open, accurate explanations about the subjects.
- The same images can be purchased from Change People to create parallel or supplementary accessible information and are useful to read with an individual or as part of a group discussion or training session.

Drawbacks

- Some of the black and white images appear stark and outdated. They would benefit from the brighter, colourful graphic effects used in Change's more modern documents.
- The lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans booklet is incomplete by today's standards but can be read alongside Change's more recent comprehensive document, LGBTQ+: An easy read guide.

Additional comments

There are references to helplines and information sources, some of which are now out of date.

The inclusion of guidance or suggestions on how to use the booklet would be helpful for inexperienced or anxious staff. These are excellent reference books to pull off the shelf when asked a question or if you're unsure about how to explain a particular aspect of sex and relationships.

Going further - An SRE course

Creator: Impact in Action

Type/purpose: Training pack / to use with people

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- Provides explanations of assessment criteria and the best way to deliver the course and links to other sources of support. Provides explanations on how to deliver/use the resources.
- This is a free sex and relationships training course covering developing relationships, sexual relationships and contraception among other topics.
- Training broken into 12 weeks/sessions but has the flexibility to deliver over a longer period and designed for group work but could be adapted for one-to-one.
- Provides 'what if' scenarios for if the learners find the task difficult to understand.

Drawbacks

- Discusses consent but does not talk about the law/consequences and gives no guidance to the facilitator on this.
- Has a section on LGBT discrimination but no session on sexuality.
- Discusses whether porn is legal and only discusses the legal porn - no reference to what is illegal.

Additional comments

Staff would need to feel confident in discussing the areas and in talking to people about sex and relationships. It would not be as useful for someone without additional training on the topic.

Jiwsj - Pick and mix of sex and relationships education activities

Creator: Family Planning Association

Type/purpose: Training course / to use with people

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- States in the introduction that no resource can replace good training implying this should not be used on its own without prior training or knowledge. The resource provides information on confidentiality, guidelines for giving advice, disclosures in the introduction pages and provides advice on how to structure SRE sessions and set learning agendas.
- It's a pick and mix of activities that can be used to build relationship training sessions to meet the needs of the people staff are working with. It provides a grid with each activity to advise if the activity is suitable for different needs (e.g. non-verbal) with information on how to use it, as well as the aims/purpose of each activity and an explanation of how to deliver the session.
- It provides a list of resources the facilitator may need and provides adaptations for some activities for example where the individual may not be able to read/write. There are activities for a wide range of topics, includes a list of further resources and would be ideal for anyone wishing to begin delivering SRE and is unsure where to start.

Drawbacks

- Facilitators may need to adapt some of the activities to be EasyRead, as no images accompany the words on activities where cards/cut-outs may be needed.

Additional comments

Careful planning needs to be done before each activity. It's not something to be just picked up and used without planning and ensuring activities meet the needs of the group.

Keep me safe

Creator: International Planned Parenthood Federation

Type/purpose: Training pack / to train staff / to use with people

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- The case studies are specific to learning disabilities, but exercises could be amended to relate to most client groups.
- The pack covers topics such as sex and sexuality of young people with learning disabilities, legislation and rights framework, values and attitudes (people themselves, staff and the organisation), knowledge of sex, sexuality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) concepts, skills to provide SRHR information and advice in plain language (including how to have conversations about sex with people, including a basic counselling element if they share painful information) and bringing about structural change within organisations.
- The resource is a wealth of different exercises that can be done with staff and people with learning disabilities. There are many to choose from covering many aspects of sexuality and to get staff comfortable discussing and approaching this topic.

Drawbacks

- Answers are not provided for the law case studies and it is down to individual trainers to find what is relevant in their country as this is made for European countries with different laws and various case studies.
- The quizzes do not give answers/example answers, leaving this to the skill of the facilitator and their knowledge.

Additional comments

The user can not just take this resource and use it - they must be confident to conduct their own research to answer the cases studies based on the law in their country. Some sessions ask participants to think about (and potentially share aspects) of their own sexual experience which could be upsetting for participants if not managed well.

This is a great resource for its sections on values and attitudes and getting staff to think about how they would discuss this topic with people and respond to questions. It is very good for looking at values and attitudes.

Let's talk about relationships and sex (recommended)

Creator: Downs Syndrome Association

Type/purpose: Training pack / to use with people

Availability: Buy download – also provides a linked train the trainer course

Strengths

- Includes a book and downloadable resources, available after purchase.
- Has everything needed to provide an 8-session programme, including PowerPoint slides, lesson plans, handouts and evaluation forms.
- Excellent accessible, easy read format and a range of interactive learning activities.
- Has up to date information on online safety.

Drawbacks

- The materials and the content, in the main, feature younger people and their needs. This may limit its relevance for older adults.
- Whilst relationships are dealt with, there is very little about how to form and maintain relationships. It does not look in any detail at long term relationships: marriage, civil partnership, or parenting.

Additional comments

The material pays little attention to the relevant legal context, except the Human Rights Act, which means that it will not be impacted by any changes in the law. Users may need to use alternative texts to familiarise themselves with this essential information. It includes explicit line illustrations and graphics.

An ideal resource for staff who wish to provide a short sex and relationships programme with young adults who have Downs Syndrome and/or a learning disability. It is well organised and accessible, covering the broad areas of rights, consent, privacy, sexual acts, gender, sexuality, relationships and online safety. If staff have no prior experience of training, they would benefit from undertaking the 'train the trainer' session, to fully understand the programme structure and use all the features effectively.

Let's talk about sex

Creator: Sarah Ashworth and Hannah Carton

Type/purpose: Training pack / to use with people

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- The resource covers a program of sexuality and relationships - it has handouts, worksheets and guidance on how to conduct sessions including a list of measures that could be used to evaluate the impact the session has had.
- It covers a wide range of areas from puberty, consent, technical aspects of sex, gender and sexuality and also healthy vs unhealthy relationships.
- Has ice breakers and guidance on how to involve supporters in each session which is helpful.

Drawbacks

- Some sections are brief with no handouts or exercises just discussion points e.g., for masturbation.
- The language is quite complex, the authors state it is for people with mild/borderline learning disability and would not be suitable for those with a moderate or severe disability. However, some people with a mild learning disability may need some words explaining.

Additional comments

The section on what people need to know to consent to sex is not correct. Knowing where you have sex is not a requirement. However, there is no reference to needing to know "that you have the right to say no and can communicate this", "that the risks of STI's can be reduced by taking precautions such as condoms" and "the other persons consent before and throughout the sexual activity" which are part of the test regarding capacity to consent to sexual relations.

It says staff do not need to be trained to use this resource, but training could be helpful, especially in being able to offer alternative methods/exercises to help people understand the topic.

LGBTQ+ easy read guide (recommended)

Creator: Change

Type/purpose: Booklet / to use with people

Availability: Free download / buy hardcopy

Strengths

- Could be used with support staff as a way to help them understand the person they are supporting. The current format would be ok for this.
- Information is very clear and could be used to give a general understanding of LGBTQ+ people for a wider variety of people - including other social care groups or staff.
- Great guide that does very well explaining easily what LGBTQ+ means. It covers the basic meaning of the LGBTQ+ i.e., being a gay man or woman means being attracted to the same sex or gender as you, but then goes further in explaining how gay men or women may engage in intimate relationships.
- It also does a good job at beginning the conversation around gender identity and helpfully references Change's own transgender easy read guide for people needing more in-depth information.

Drawbacks

- The resource might benefit from more clearly defined sections and sub-headings e.g., gender section would benefit from sub-headings i.e., Transgender and Non-binary.
- It doesn't talk about consent.

Love is... David and Adeline (recommended)

Creator: Inclusive Solutions (Getta Life)

Type/purpose: Film / to train staff with

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- The DVD shows the relationship between David and Adeline who both have a learning disability and do not use speech to communicate.
- The content is unusual as it shows a long-term couple with complex needs and does an excellent job in highlighting the value this relationship brings to both partners. It shows a different type of relationship.
- It talks about the challenges the relationship created in terms of both the staff and family members values and attitudes as the couple could not verbally state their wishes. It shows the importance of paying attention to non-verbal cues.
- The video has excellent examples of person-centred support and person-centred planning with the couple. It discusses the capacity to consent to marriage and explores alternatives.

Drawbacks

- The DVD does not come with any worksheets/discussion prompts - users need to formulate these themselves.

Additional comments

This is a powerful video and is excellent for encouraging staff to think about how relationships can be important to people with complex needs and that not all need to be sexual for them to be valid.

My pregnancy, my choice

Creator: Change

Type/purpose: Training pack / to use with people

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- The resource covers every aspect of pregnancy from knowing if you are pregnant, the developing baby, looking after oneself, problems that may arise, labour and birth, and the first weeks with the new baby.
- The book contains a word bank and a useful contacts list.
- An accessible 40-week progress chart is included and awareness on aspects such as healthy eating, smoking and alcohol are addressed.
- Very clear and very detailed.
- The resource has a rights-based approach to pregnancy.
- It is gender-inclusive, for a resource about pregnancy it does not mention being female, and it refers to 'your partner' throughout.

Drawbacks

It is large, might feel quite off-putting for someone and it would take months to go through everything in it.

No Go Britain: Right to love

Creator: Channel 4 News

Type/purpose: Film / to train staff / to generally inform

Availability: Free to watch online

Strengths

- A short film made by Channel 4 news highlights the importance of love, relationships and sex education to people with a learning disability. It shows several different relationships between people with different needs.
- Touches on the issue of capacity for sexual relations and marriage so can be a useful starting point for discussion.

- The video could be used to explore staffs' values on the subject. The video has some good examples of person-centred approaches to supporting relationships.

Drawbacks

- It is only a short film and is a standalone item rather than being part of a workshop so there are no discussion prompts
- There is little diversity in the couples - in terms of them all being heterosexual and cisgender.

Personal development, relationships and staying safe

Creator: Marie Walsh and Geraldine Cregg

Type/purpose: Training pack / to train staff with

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- It's designed specifically for adults with high support and complex needs, referred to as those with 'severe to profound range of intellectual disabilities'.
- A CD is included which includes a trainee workbook, handouts, and PowerPoint slides.
- The training pack is well structured, into four clear modules, each with accompanying PowerPoint slides and handouts.
- The four modules cover: self-awareness, relationships, being safe and minimising risk and sexual expression.
- It has interactive activities and illuminating case studies in each module. The authors recognise the need for systematic instruction, providing some helpful tips on how to break down relationships and sex education into manageable components.
- A timed programme is provided to cover a full working day.

Drawbacks

- There was little evidence of activities or approaches being adapted to meet a range of communication needs.
- As the title suggests there is a focus on safety, with a tendency toward risk aversion. There is no reference to internet safety.

Additional comments

The authors are based in Ireland, with an approach that perhaps reflects their cultural and legal background. They refer to relevant laws from across the countries of the UK, but having been published in 2015, some of this is now out of date.

It would serve more appropriately as a one-day introduction to the topic in relation to learning disability generally.

Practice issues in Sexuality and Learning Disability

Creator: Ann Craft edited

Type/purpose: To generally inform

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- Although written in 1994, this book remains an important document in the field of sexuality and learning disability, having much relevance for current care and support workers. Each chapter is well structured, with distinct headings, making reading and understanding relatively easy.
- The visionary editor, Ann Craft, brought together writers from the UK, Canada and America who represent a range of backgrounds, including social work, psychology, advocacy, psychotherapy, and medicine.
- The contributors tackle the practical issues and dilemmas which still confront all those working in learning disability services. Throughout, there are case studies and intervention formats that illustrate the theoretical ideas.
- The initial scene-setting chapter on staff roles, which aims to enable 'staff to be more purposeful and empowering in their work with individuals with a learning disability' clearly identifies, using a rights-based perspective, the different approaches that will be required.
- Several issues that are still given peripheral attention are covered in the chapters, including 'Sex education in the multiracial society' and 'Interventions with a pregnant woman with severe learning disabilities'.
- There is also an emphasis on understanding sexual abuse prevention and post-trauma therapeutic approaches.

Drawbacks

- Inevitably, most of the service and written references are extinct.
- Any mention of legal frameworks should be ignored, as almost all have been superseded.
- The voice of people with a learning disability is only heard second hand. This would, fortunately, be unlikely to happen today, as self-advocates play a much stronger role in representing their own experiences.

Additional comments

This is a source of academic and practical knowledge. It is also an important historical document - a reminder of parallel struggles across the past three decades, with wise words about intimate relationships in the lives of people with a learning disability, which remain current to this day. The reader is confronted with a view of the progress that has been made, particularly in terms of people with a learning disability representing their own opinions and experiences, and yet how much there is still to achieve.

Sex and masturbation, safer sex and contraception online videos

Creator: Change

Type/purpose: Film / to use with people

Availability: Free to watch online

Strengths

- The videos could be used by staff to help explain masturbation, sex, contraception, and sexual health to people with learning disabilities using a film with simple language and animation.
- The films could be a good starting point on this topic.
- They are voiced by people with a learning disability.

Drawbacks

- Shows outdated methods of contraception like the cap instead of more modern methods.
- Values might be considered outdated such as waiting to be married to have sex / only talking about sex in the context of a relationship.
- Limited discussion surrounding orgasms and pleasure.
- Binary language and no reference to different sexualities or gender identities.

Sex and the 3 R's: Rights, risks and responsibilities

Creator: Michelle McCarthy and David Thompson

Type/purpose: Training pack / to train staff / to use with people

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- This is a sex education resource that provides a framework for staff to undertake sex education work that acknowledges the realities of sexual relationships for many people with learning disabilities.
- It includes a range of issues relating to sexuality including suggestions for assessment, service responses to, and work around the issue.
- The pack directly tackles difficult subjects, including sexual abuse of children, consent in relationships and safer sex.
- It could be helpful to use with women who have experienced sexual abuse.

Drawbacks

- It's quite dated in terms of language surrounding gender e.g., referring to "both genders" - no discussion of non-binary and the whole spectrum of gender expression.

- It's written from a "feminist perspective" and uses this value base to make decisions about what is appropriate surrounding supporting someone's sexual expression (such as not supporting someone to access legal pornography if they need assistance). This is not in line with the Human Rights Act as it potentially treats people with a disability different to those without.

Additional comments

- Contains incorrect legal information surrounding masturbation (states it is legal to masturbate in a toilet outside of a residence) which is against section 71 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. It is also not appropriate or legal under the sexual offences act 2003 to guide someone's hand to teach them to masturbate.
- There is a section which appears to advocate the use of "sanctions" (such as restricting activities for several months) as a way to learn the consequences of behaviour. This would not be in line with the Mental Capacity Act as the least resistive option for someone who lacks capacity.

Sex, personal relationships and the law for adults with learning disabilities

Creator: David Thompson

Type/purpose: Book / to generally inform

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- The book covers legislation in relation to sex and personal relationships, the Mental Capacity Act and the Sexual Offences Act.
- It includes information on consent to sex and mental capacity, decisions surrounding contraception, sterilisation and pregnancy. It also explores marriage, civil partnership and forced marriage.
- It contains helpful case studies and examples (including the answers) for each section.
- It includes examples of same-sex relationships and refers to gay, lesbian and bisexual people throughout.

Drawbacks

- The book does discuss people's rights but does not cover the Human Rights Act in detail, which is an important piece of legislation in this area.
- While the book covers some aspects of relationships and sex there are noticeable omissions such as pornography and online activity including social media and internet dating which are highly relevant now and in 2018 when this book was published.

- The section on sexual experiences of people with a learning disability is predominantly based on a piece of research which is over 20 years old that paints an overtly negative view of sex and relationships for this group.
- The guidance on providing advice surrounding sex workers does not give sufficient information as to how to assist within the law if a person requests this support.

Additional comments

Case law changes frequently. The criteria to assessing mental capacity has changed to now include an understanding that the other person has to consent throughout the sexual activity and that condoms can prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections.

Sexuality and intellectual disability: A guide for professionals

Creator: Andrew Maxwell Triska

Type/purpose: Book / to train staff with / to generally inform

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- Although this is an American text, it has much to offer the UK reader. The aim is cited as 'giving direct support workers the skills to be involved in sexuality work'.
- Topics are brought to life through practical case studies, with questions for self-reflection.
- Each chapter has one or more 'toolboxes' that provide practical hints on appropriate interventions.
- Tackles subjects that generally receive less attention, such as parenting and sexual offending.
- There is an excellent section on sexual orientation and gender identity, with a glossary of terms and examples of support approaches.
- It would be useful to use some of the case studies and intervention ideas in a training setting, as they offer opportunities for debate and discussion.

Drawbacks

- There are references to US legal and social care structures, with which a UK audience will be unfamiliar.

Additional comments

This book, which is directed at staff working at every level in support services, is a fairly easy read. It is not too technical and benefits from practical examples and suggestion on how to deal with common issues or dilemmas.

Sexuality and learning disabilities: A handbook (recommended)

Creator: Claire Bates edited.

Type/purpose: Book / to train staff with / to generally inform

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- Some of the information could be readily transferred to other client groups, including people with acquired brain injury, physical disability and people experiencing poor mental health.
- This is a handbook intended to provide a ready reference to the subject of sex and relationships for 'professionals'. It features a compilation of contributions from international experts in the field. Although some are academics, each chapter provides practical tips on how to respond to key issues.
- Understanding is enhanced by the use of a shared chapter format including information, key learning points, case studies, reflection points and references.
- Although common questions and concerns are addressed, there is also attention to rarer topics, such as support for people with profound and multiple disabilities and pregnancy and parenting.

Drawbacks

- It does not have an index, which creates challenges in accessing the information.
- Legal information.

Additional comments

Inevitably, although published in 2018, some of the legal information is now out of date. The reader would be advised to double-check any references to sex and the law.

This is an essential text for staff working in learning disability services. It is easy to read and offers sound advice, with practical guidance on how to respond to common dilemmas. As each chapter is self-contained it is possible to dip into relevant topics, without reading the whole text.

Sexuality and relationships in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities-standing in my shoes

Creator: Rohss Chapman, Sue Ledger and Louise Townson with Daniel Docherty edited.

Type/purpose: Book/ to generally inform

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- This book aims to promote an understanding of the intimate lives of people with learning disabilities, using life stories from people themselves, coupled with comment and analysis by academics and practitioners.
- One half of the book takes a global perspective, covering a range of cultures and countries: Iceland, Ireland, Belgium, Japan, Malta and Australia.
- The second half focuses on the UK, with contrasts and comparisons being drawn out in a final section on emerging themes. This latter section has interesting conclusions, that would be useful for service managers and leaders to consider.
- In several chapters, timelines are presented, bringing together policy and legal changes at a glance. These would be useful to share during a training or information session.
- Examples of good practice are provided, giving a sense of hope and inspiration for the future.

Drawbacks

The timeline, comparing the UK and international perspective. is excellent, but some of the pictures are blurred and indistinct. An internet link to this resource would have been a welcome addition.

Additional comments

It has an international perspective, so some terminology may be unfamiliar to British readers. There is a table on 'key messages from law and policy' offering a helpful view from the past, but with a cut-off point of 2010, it requires updating.

Standing in the shoes of people who have historically experienced systematic breaches of their sexual rights makes for uncomfortable reading. It underlines the importance of listening to the sexual and relationship stories of the people we work with and provides pointers on how to do this.

Sexuality and sexual health for individuals with a learning disability

Creator: Pavilion (edited Mike Bengé)

Type/purpose: Booklet / to generally inform

Availability: Buy online

Strengths

- For a small booklet, the resource covers a wide range of topics relating to sexuality and relationships. It is in a handy format that can be easily read by social care staff.
- The thinking activities are a good idea and have some thoughtful questions that would get conversations started and could be used in team meetings.

Drawbacks

- Contains incorrect legal information surrounding masturbation (states it is legal to masturbate in a toilet outside of a residence) which is against section 71 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.
- There is no reference to the Human Rights Act under relevant legislation which is important when discussing sexuality.
- The resource has quite gendered views on sexuality, for example in the view of “wanting sex” talks only about men - ignoring any woman's desire to have sex.
- Quite dated (published 2014) in terms of language surrounding gender e.g., referring to “both genders” - no discussion of non-binary and the whole spectrum of gender expression.
- The legal information on the Mental Capacity Act is out of date in terms of what people need to know to have sex.

Additional comments

Some of the legal information is now out of date. The reader would be advised to double-check any references to sex and the law.

S.T.A.R.S - A social skills training guide for teaching assertiveness, relationship skills and sexual awareness

Creator: Susan M Heighway and Susan Kidd Webster

Type/purpose: Book / to train staff with / to use with people

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- The materials could be used by staff working with anyone requiring support with self-esteem and assertiveness. Some of the case examples would need to be changed to reflect the audience's experiences.
- This book is based on a model of teaching human sexuality, that focuses on four content areas: understanding relationships, social interaction, sexual awareness and assertiveness.
- A sex-positive, abuse prevention approach is taken to the topics.
- Under each area, there are suggestions for activities and discussions to assist learning. The sections on self-esteem and assertiveness are welcome additions.
- Assessment tools are included, which link to a training action plan and suggested developmental activities.
- Clear descriptions are given of how to respond to particular learning needs, including role play, case studies and discussion scripts.

Drawbacks

- This is an American publication. As a result, some of the language, resources and references may be unfamiliar to the UK reader.

- A slight tendency to be value-laden, for example associating intercourse with love.
- The black and white line drawings, in the main, are not particularly inspiring.

Additional comments

Any reference to the law would be irrelevant for the UK reader.

This publication would be particularly useful for staff who were seeking materials to use with an individual or group regarding sexual safety and/or abuse prevention.

Supporting women with learning disabilities through the menopause

Creator: Michelle McCarthy and Lorraine Millard

Type/purpose: Training pack / to train staff with / to use with people

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- Clear design with a straightforward methodology for use with groups or individuals with learning disabilities.
- Multi formatted with easy read descriptions, video (on DVD and you can download), leaflets and pictures.
- A rare resource in an often-neglected area for women with learning disabilities, it could also be used with people from different social care groups such as those with a brain injury.

Drawbacks

The pack does not use inclusive language in respect to transgendered individuals.

Additional comments

There is a DVD containing the video and not everyone has DVDs on their computer anymore, so you also need to download the film (you receive a one-off code with the pack to be able to do this).

The pack is straightforward, informative and easy to read.

Transgender: An easy read guide

Creator: Change, CMG and Choice Support

Type/purpose: Booklet / to use with people / to generally confirm

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- A good description of what transgender means.
- Has a practical steps section that is useful and has links to further information included in the document.
- Well set out using relevant pictures and simple language.
- Includes the lived experiences from focus groups to show what transgendered people with a learning disability experience in reality.
- It includes references for support groups.
- There is a glossary of terms used in the document to help with understanding.

You being you

Creator: Mencap

Type/purpose: Film / Training pack / to use with people

Availability: Free to watch online / Free download

Strengths

- The resource could be used with staff and other social care groups as many people struggle to understand the new language and terminology to familiarise themselves with surrounding gender identity and sexual orientation/expression.
- The video includes a range of people displaying a range of gender identities, ethnicities and cultural diversity.
- The discussion guide to accompany the video has lots of engaging activities to work through to help people to understand.
- Helpful links to external resources to explain all the terms used in the video.
- The video is simple, colourful and has a positive message.

Drawbacks

- The video must be used in conjunction with the PowerPoint exercises and the additional resources, as there are terms that are not fully explained in the video.

Additional comments

The PowerPoint links to the Gender Unicorn but there are other resources like the Sexualtree and Genderbread person which others might identify better with.

Resources for staff working with people with a learning disability and/or autism

Exploring sexual and social understanding: An illustrated pack designed for working with people with learning disabilities

Creator: BILD

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to use with people

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- Marketed as a tool for people with a learning disability but could be used with anyone with a cognitive impairment.
- Clear line drawings in colour (included on the disc) showing explicit sexual acts that can be difficult to find for educational purposes.
- The pack contains a CD-ROM containing 214 pictures which can be arranged into sequences to form stories.
- Questionnaires that link with the drawings are easy to use.
- There are instructions included in the pack about how to use it.

Drawbacks

- Although a good start, it is not a formal capacity assessment and should not be treated as such.
- Many computers now lack a disc drive to use a CD-ROM to access the images.

Additional comments

Some of the images are very graphic and should be used with care. Practitioners should always refer to recent legislation for updates in terms of the law and sex, Mental Capacity Act etc. Support staff should be trained to use this resource, it is not a resource to just pick up and start using. Care should always be taken when using a resource with explicit pictures.

This is a brilliant resource for the assessment of knowledge as well as using the line drawings for educational purposes.

Love is a wonderful feeling – The Love Project

Creator: Tizard Centre

Type/purpose: Film / to train staff / to use with people

Availability: Free to view online

Strengths

- This is a video made as part of a research project which shares the views of people with learning disabilities, staff, families and dating agencies regarding relationships and support to have one.
- It includes the researcher sharing the main barriers people face in this area backed up by people with learning disabilities sharing their stories.
- It includes role-plays based on the most common issues and this includes a range of issues including the stories of LGBTQ+ couples.
- The video would be helpful to use in training with staff to see how they would deal with the issues raised in the role-play or as part of a relationships and sex education (RSE) session.

Open future learning (recommended)

Creator: Open Future Learning

Type/purpose: e-learning / to train staff

Availability: Paid training

Strengths

- An online platform that provides various active learning modules for learning disability social care staff. Including a number that are relevant to the development of understanding about sex and relationships: Thinking about friendships, relationships, dating and intimacy, diversity, sexuality and gender and personal boundaries.
- The audio learning modules designed for staff take about 150 minutes to complete. There are also 'side by side' modules for staff and self-advocates to complete together, which take around 30 minutes.
- Modules feature some international industry greats, such as Dave Hingsburger. They feature interactive notes, reflective learning and a summative assessment and aStar certificate.
- The resources are particularly strong on person-centred values and attitudes.

Drawbacks

- Many of the presenters are from Canada or the US. Some of their references may be unfamiliar to UK audiences.
- The information and tone can be challenging. Additional group discussion, alongside the individual online learning, would be useful to support assimilation.

Additional comments

Participants will need to check UK policy/legislation to supplement the information in each module.

Be prepared to be challenged and provided with some innovative, practical approaches to meeting individuals relationships needs.

Masturbation, autism and learning disabilities: A guide for parents and professionals (recommended)

Creator: Mel Gadd

Type/purpose: Book / to train staff / to generally inform

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- Clearly outlines a person's rights in this area, including the right to privacy and views it as a positive and healthy activity, as long as conducted in a private place.
- Uses non-binary language such as how to masturbate if you have a penis (rather than saying man) and has a chapter on the particular issues facing trans people in this area.
- Includes a summary of the law in this area which will be helpful to support staff.
- There is also an understanding of how masturbation is viewed among different faiths which can be useful contextual information.
- It offers practical advice such as information that can be given to people if delivering masturbation education, how to deliver this type of training, how to conduct a needs assessment and practical education activities to use.
- There is a helpful section of common issues/examples of good practice responses, how to write a sexual behaviour care plan and how to write a masturbation policy.
- Covers wider but related issues such as the use of sex workers, pornography, and sex toys/fetish items.

Additional comments

A much-needed area for social care staff on issues surrounding masturbation among people with a learning disability and/or autistic people.

Real talk videos

Creator: Real Talk

Type/purpose: Film / to train staff / to use with people

Availability: Free to watch online

Strengths

- A Canadian online resource sharing videos on a range of topics to help facilitate conversations with the people you support.
- Topics include consent, dating, love and intimacy, pleasure, rights, risk, safer sex, sexual identity and surviving and thriving.

- Gives good advice on how to approach this topic and how to keep staff/person safe while doing this.

Drawbacks

- It is from Canada so some of the hotlines/websites they mention are not for UK users.
- If showing the videos to people with learning disabilities, some of the language/abstract concepts might be too complicated for some people (especially when staff are talking).
- There is limited explanation on how to have these conversations especially if someone has different verbal ability or more complex needs.

Additional comments

Make sure you watch and listen to the introduction for staff – do's and don'ts of having similar conversations.

Sex and relationships education for young people and adults with intellectual disabilities and autism

Creator: Kelly Asgba, Jan Burns and Sophie Doswell

Type/purpose: Book / to train staff with

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- This manual is aimed at people who are providing support and wish to engage in providing relationship and sex training.
- It offers help with training processes, providing templates for pre-course assessment, a learning contract, evaluation and review and each chapter contains linked worksheets that can be copied or downloaded.
- The focus is on how to teach, rather than providing information or materials that the reader could use. There is signposting to a resource section, including details of teaching packs.
- The checklist of main topics to potentially be taught is useful as a reminder or to share with learners before planning a session.
- The use of scenarios and case examples, particularly in the section on 'adaptations and teaching methods', serves to bring the ideas to life.

Drawbacks

- Although there are some illustrations, the worksheets, which are intended to be used with people who have a learning disability and autism, have limited visual content.
- Whilst there are a few non-binary sexuality references, the majority of the examples and explanations relate the heterosexuality.

Additional comments

The information about the capacity to consent to sexual activity is out of date.

This has helpful information for a novice trainer. Some of the worksheets could be incorporated into a training programme but would need to be supplemented by a range of other individualised learning materials or access to a recommended training pack.

Sexual Knowledge and Behaviour Assessment Tool

Creator: Jane Fraser and Hilary Dixon

Type/purpose: Book / to use with people

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- This is a resource that is designed to assess levels of sexual knowledge before and after a programme of sex and relationships education.
- It covers: understanding your body, relationships, puberty, keeping safe, sexual behaviour, sexual health, pregnancy and parenting.
- Could be used in any situation where assessment of sexual knowledge is appropriate, particularly pre and post teaching opportunities.
- There is an accompanying CD-ROM which includes a copy of the book in pdf format, which enables the user to easily print relevant pages.
- There is a specific questionnaire to be used to ascertain the parent and carer perspective on the individual's knowledge, which may serve as a useful vehicle for discussion and enhanced understanding.
- The images represent culturally diverse communities, illustrations are clear and explicit, as well as demonstrating sexual pleasure.
- The format produces a summary of identified needs, which could be used to inform the development of an individual or group-based training programme.

Drawbacks

- The content and images are predominantly heteronormative, the content is outdated, lacking reference to gender or sexual diversity.
- This is not a capacity assessment tool, although some of the questionnaire sections could be utilised in designing a tailored learning programme before or after an assessment of capacity to consent to sexual activity. For instance, those related to sexually transmitted infections and condom use.
- The number of illustrations, relative to the text, are quite limited.

Additional comments

As well as identifying training needs, this resource could be used by support staff to provide baseline information on an individual's level of general understanding about relationships and sexuality. Used sensitively, the questions, might be a focus for

opening up discussion. However, its limitations should be recognised, with this being used alongside more up to date assessment documents.

Sexuality and severe autism (recommended)

Creator: Kate Reynolds

Type/purpose: Book / to generally inform / to train staff with

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- Written by a mother to an autistic person, who has experience of supporting autistic people and their families in this area.
- The book is aimed at parents supporting children but can be used and adapted to be used by staff to work with/understand sexuality among adults with severe autism.
- Contains lots of information on different topics and includes good insight around the challenges faced by autistic people and also possible strategies to overcome these.
- It provides a clear framework for teaching sexuality, including the fundamentals that must be understood before progressing to more advanced topics such as contraception, STI's etc.
- Displayed a positive attitude towards relationships and sexuality throughout and how important it is to ensure young people have this education.
- Contained advice around training for support staff and parents.
- Appendices give good information to support the resource and it is easy to read and understand.

Additional comments

An excellent comprehensive resource for people with severe autism who are often neglected in this topic.

Sexuality education for people with developmental disabilities (recommended)

Creator: Elevatus Training- Katherine McLaughlin

Type/purpose: Training pack / to train staff / to use with people

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- The Elevatus resources have been developed by Katherine McLaughlin, one of the foremost sex and relationships trainers in the field of intellectual disability in the USA.
- The comprehensive curriculum is evidence-based and trauma-informed. It includes 22 lesson plans, with clear instruction, activities and deliverable scripts. Some of the activities are accompanied by visuals.
- A related easy read communication system is available to purchase. Curriculums are also available for a staff training and a parent one day course
- It is designed in collaboration with self-advocates and is equally co-deliverable.
- The level of cultural diversity represented exceeds that usually represented in UK resources
- The train the trainer course is facilitated in an engaging and interactive manner, giving confidence not only in using the resources, but understanding how to respond to sexual needs more widely. This provides the added benefit of interacting with an international audience and finding out about their different practices.
- Elevatus also provides regular 90-minute workshops, which can be downloaded later, including topics that may not be commonly featured in the UK, such as 'preventing people from becoming offenders', 'balancing safety with sexual rights' and 'gender-inclusive teaching'.
- The website has some excellent free resources and news items. All the resources are clearly written and easy to understand

Drawbacks

- Some of the terminology, policy and legal references will be unfamiliar to the UK audience. It will be necessary to carefully check and adapt the materials prior to using them in practice.
- The curriculum document is extensive (450 pages), and each lesson is very detailed. Some people might find this quite daunting and unnecessarily complex.

Additional comments

Although this resource is written from an American perspective, it has much to offer a local reader who wishes to develop their skills in relationships and sexuality training for adults with a learning disability and/or autism or in providing direct support. The accompanying online train the trainer course and supplementary workshops offer a chance to learn from an international expert in sexuality education, co-production and sexual self-advocacy.

Solo sex

Creator: Sante France

Type/purpose: Training pack / to use with people

Availability: Buy download

Strengths

- Could be used with anyone with a cognitive impairment that impacts their ability to masturbate.
- The resource is unique in that it contains educational film footage of both a man and a woman masturbating to climax.
- The resource is respectful of people's rights to masturbate in private.
- It is a step-by-step program building up to the videos and it tells you how to approach this over a course of sessions.
- Has an animation of both a man and woman masturbating – so this can be shown instead of the video if more appropriate.
- This is something that is much needed in this field, and it can be hard to find an education resource showing masturbation.

Drawbacks

- The resource has been translated to English from French and not all the resource is translated - for example, the beginning of the film where they explain about the person wanting to masturbate and going to a private place is in French.
- It does not cover any of the wider aspects surrounding masturbation (e.g., the law) or pornography use.
- It mentions anal masturbation and the use of sex toys but does not show this in the film.
- Due to the different legal system in France, it has no reference to the Mental Capacity Act, if the person potentially viewing the explicit film can consent and if not, that the decision to show this film would need to be explored as part of the best interest meeting involving all relevant parties to reduce harm.

Additional comments

The video shows explicit material that users need to carefully consider as part of a wider multi-disciplinary team decision before showing after all other options have been exhausted.

SoSAFE-Visual and conceptual tools for promoting social safety

Creator: Veneta Amies and Philip Brown, Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT, Australia

Type/purpose: Training pack / to use with people

Availability: Paid online

Strengths

- This is an evidence-based resource, that has been specifically designed to meet the learning and communication needs of people with moderate to severe learning disabilities and autistic people.
- To use and deliver the programme it is necessary to attend a one-day training programme, where you receive comprehensive instructions and access to all the

materials, including a hardcopy manual and USB stick/disc containing the related visuals. This is available through PECS.

- The system uses visual symbols and teaching tools to support learning about different kinds of relationships, from people you don't know to intimate relationships.
- There is an emphasis on appropriate levels of touch, boundaries and sexual safety. There are also graphics related to understanding consent and how to report sexual abuse.
- The manual provides clear instructions on how to use the materials, including frequently asked questions, sheets and scripts, with scenarios.
- The visuals can also be used to develop relationships based on social stories.
- The approach is most effective when adopted by a whole system or staff team.

Drawbacks

- The images do not appear to depict diverse relationships, with an emphasis on heterosexuality.
- The social rules imparted could be criticised for being subjective, moving through a measured and steady process from stranger to an intimate relationship, however, it is acknowledged that this is suggested to achieve optimal levels of safety.

Additional comments

SoSAFE provides a practical and visual toolkit, that is a useable resource for staff working with young people and adults with learning disability and/or autism. It addresses some of the common concerns around safety, appropriate behaviours, consent and personal boundaries.

Staff carer toolkit - for people with learning disabilities and/or autism spectrum condition

Creator: Highland Learning Disabilities Relationships Group

Type/purpose: Training pack / to use with people

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- The resource highlights the different learning styles and needs needed for autistic people compared to people with a learning disability.
- This is a free resource covering many aspects of a sex and relationships course for people with a learning disability and/or autism.
- It has a lot of exercises for each topic and different ways to explain things from masturbation, dating, sexual relationships, consent, sexual safety, sexual health, marriage, parenting and many more.

Drawbacks

- Has several references to policies that are Scotland specific so not applicable to all of the UK.
- As it is quite old not all of the links now work.
- Some sessions cover a lot at once (e.g., menopause, menstruation, and masturbation all in one session) which might be too fast for some people and would be best broken down into small chunks.
- Session on pornography is outdated - most pornography is now viewed online.
- No discussion of gender/diverse gender identities.

Additional comments

A good free resource - suggest using elements of it and supplementing it with some modern resources/exercises.

TRASE handbook-Training in sexual education for people with disabilities

Creator: ERASMUS-European Union

Type/purpose: e-learning package / to train staff / to use with people

Availability: Free access online

Strengths

- Free online training course for parents and professionals, to enable them to provide sexual education for people with disabilities, considering cultural, national, and institutional conditions, as well as the specific needs of their clients.
- Hermeneutic Circle (HC) Tool is a very good interactive way of training with detailed examples and a downloadable sheet tool for use with people you work with
- The 'physical development' of the circle seems to deal with sex the most, with some linked information in 'social development' and 'emotional development'.
- The 'What is sex? The traffic light model' is very useful and clear.
- The 'Collection of methods' is a brilliant resource.
- The DICE game is a brilliant tool for starting informal chats about relationships and intimate subjects. (Note: a bit Americanised - "drugstores" instead of "pharmacy")
- TRASE picture bank is a free download.
- 'Staying safe while developing relationships online' is a brilliant resource that includes how to deal with unwanted sexting.

Drawbacks

- The 'Decision game', a safer sex scenario, only describes heterosexual intercourse but alternative sexualities exist elsewhere on the site.
- There are some technical glitches, and you cannot repeat a section.

- Non-binary examples seemed absent.

Additional comments

TRACE Curriculum is a very good resource for staff and parents.

When young people with intellectual disabilities and autism hit puberty

Creator: Freddy Jackson and Sarah Brown

Type/purpose: Book / to generally inform

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- It is written primarily for parents of young people, but it's informative and informal style makes it highly relevant for staff working with young people and adults.
- A question-and-answer format is used, with down to earth and practical solutions offered to common sexuality and relationships dilemmas.
- It also covers less often tackled areas such as fetishes and sex workers.
- It is useful in presenting a parent's perspective and the natural anxieties that might be experienced particularly during puberty.
- Each answer follows a similar structure, including definitions: 'what is the issue?' and 'what can we do?' which makes it clear and easy to understand.
- A model RSE programme for young people is featured, which may be helpful for staff interested in developing structured, individualised or group sessions.

Drawbacks

The answers frequently refer to published and practical resources, some of which are now out of date. In these instances, it would be advisable to seek more modern versions.

Additional comments

This is a highly readable book, with practical tips on how to respond to everyday dilemmas. The areas covered are bodies, behaviour, feelings, relationships, sex and the law and relationships and sex education (RSE).

Resources for staff working with people experiencing poor mental health

Explore, dream, discover: Working with holistic models of sexual health and sexuality, self-esteem, and mental health

Creator: Jo Adams (Centre for HIV and Sexual Health)

Type/purpose: Training pack / to generally inform / to use with people you support

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- A holistic resource looking at political, social and personal aspects of sexuality that could be used with all social care groups and is presented in a sex-positive way.
- It encourages staff to look at sexuality in a host of different ways and how it intersects with other aspects of ourselves, such as our spirituality.
- It includes examples of how staff (it's written widely so could be for a range of staff) can work positively to promote healthy sexual attitudes and relationships and encourages staff to think about what they could do to help in areas to remove stigma, discrimination, and barriers.
- There is a separate mental health flower - just for people experiencing poor mental health - that includes sections on relationships (including intimate ones) offering advice on how to work with people to strengthen them and a separate section on sexuality.

Drawbacks

- Quite a complex resource and as it is written for a range of staff, some of the suggestions may be out of the remit of social care staff.
- It is an old resource (17 years old) so feels very dated in parts and some organisations it references no longer exist.
- It was created pre-social media and online dating so the section on the internet is out of date.
- In the mental health flower, the sections on sexuality are very brief.
- No exploration of gender identity - non-binary etc.

Unspoken (recommended)

Creator: Mind Croydon

Type/purpose: Film / to generally inform

Availability: Free to watch online

Strengths

- One of the few mental health resources available specifically aimed at addressing the issues faced by people who experience poor mental health surrounding sex and relationships.
- It would be good to introduce the topic to social care staff and could be played in inductions/team meetings.
- It shares the direct experience of people who experience mental ill-health explaining some of the challenges they face that providers need to be aware of, including the impact of their illness on sexuality, the impact of medication, importance of relationships etc.
- The video also offers insightful interviews with professionals explaining what support people benefit from.

Drawbacks

The video feels a little dated.

Resources for staff working with older adults

A guide for staff on promoting sexuality, relationships and consent in housing with care services

Creator: City and Hackney Safeguarding Adults Board

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- Contains some positive, diverse images of later life intimacy and useful case studies that illustrate important and complex issues and a quiz to consolidate key points of learning.
- Encourages reflection on the attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs we hold about the sexuality of vulnerable older people and how these may unfairly and unnecessarily constrain their self-expression (which can include sexuality and intimacy), as represented in human rights law. The issue concerns how, as far as possible, carers can support people to meet sex and intimacy needs and avoid imposing carer or relatives wishes, morality or prejudices upon them.
- Encourages the view of sex and intimacy as diverse practices among diverse people (not everyone is male, able-bodied and heterosexual) and important to the wellbeing of people who draw on care and support.
- Usefully clarifies mental capacity in law and how this can be determined fairly and in consultation with the individual, their significant others and relevant professionals.

Drawbacks

- It tends to assume everyone is part of a couple and pays less attention to solo sexual activity, which may not be uncommon among older people.
- The resource makes no reference to bisexual or trans service users nor mention of individuals from faith or minority ethnic communities.
- The length of the document, its emphasis on legislation and rather official tone in the latter half, particularly those parts of it that focus on safeguarding (rather than enabling wishes and feelings), is a potential weakness as may be unrealistic for care staff to read and digest.

Additional comments

Case law changes frequently, the criteria to assessing mental capacity has changed to now include an understanding that the other person has to consent throughout the sexual activity and that condoms can prevent the spread of STI's.

Aged care awareness - Resident's rights and intimacy

Creator: Aged Care Awareness

Type/purpose: e-learning / to train staff

Availability: Free to use online

Strengths

- The resource was structured around four filmed accounts, which offered various perspectives to the same issue - the blossoming intimate relationship of two residents (one of whom had dementia). We understood the resident, staff and family perspectives. Interspersed are questions about the learner's response - each answer leads to a short film which challenges the viewer if the response is not in line with a pro-sexual/intimacy attitude.
- A nicely produced resource which tackles a sensitive topic. It was well thought out and engaging. Would recommend it as an early resource for care staff who have little experience in this area of care or for those who need to reflect on the rights of older residents in meeting their intimacy needs.

Drawbacks

It is a little simplistic, there's not much exploration of the complexities which staff might have to address.

Additional comments

Is an Australian resource so learners would need to refer to UK laws, guidance, and policy.

Dementia, sex and wellbeing: A person-centred guide for people with dementia, their partners, caregivers and professionals

Creator: Danuta Lipinska

Type/purpose: Book / to generally inform

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- A thought-provoking book that is also written for significant others who often have concerns about the subject of sex and dementia.
- Recognises difficulties around the subject and avoids reinforcing the idea that sexuality in relation to dementia is a problem beyond resolution. Addresses gaps in awareness and in ways designed to help with difficult feelings on a sensitive subject.
- Easy to read, accessible and links sex and intimacy to broader wellbeing as part of dementia and holistic assessment that is geared to personalised provision.

- Although 168 pages may seem daunting, readers could stick to a core of five chapters and each chapter ends with a useful list of points for reflection.
- Recognises the need for inclusion and diversity of needs in line with gender, sexuality/sexual difference and cultural background. It includes reflections and case studies related to the author's practice, providing a flavour of the challenges that underline the need for careful negotiation and suggest resolutions/ways to prevent them. Together with information on legal/policy contexts, these could be fed into staff development.
- Well-structured and includes: 1) how dementia can affect diverse sexualities and overall wellbeing; 2) basics about the brain and dementia and its effects on self-expression and sexuality; 3) needs relating to sexuality and intimacy and associated challenges; 4) the need for and value of person-centred approaches and 5) training tools to reinforce understanding.

Drawbacks

Occasionally omits to explain a specialist term and, oddly, at one point, use of the word 'copulate' as a basic human need overlooks sex not attached to procreation. However, the book is sex positive.

Forgotten love: Sex, intimacy and dementia in care homes (recommended)

Creator: Channel 4 News

Type/purpose: Film / to generally inform

Availability: Free to watch online

Strengths

- Easy to access and understand. Could be easily integrated into individual staff development as well as staff development events/discussions/meetings.
- A sensitive and honest reckoning with the challenges and complexities of enabling sexuality and intimacy in relation to care home residents affected by dementia, their significant others and care staff/homes.
- Recognises how intimacy and sexuality are often designed out of care homes, by the structure of the environment (lack of double beds etc.) and as a taboo subject.
- Starts from the premise that sexuality and intimacy are human needs and rights and that decisions should be driven by the resident.
- Gives practical advice based on actual incidents in a care home about negative consequences of denying needs and how staff questioned their practice and made simple adjustments that enabled the continuation of sexual pleasure/intimate experience.

Drawbacks

Could have shown the experience of people from an ethnic minority background and non-heterosexual experience.

Lift the Lid (recommended)

Creator: Alzheimer's Society

Type/purpose: Training pack / to train staff with

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- Potential use with carers of people living with dementia in the community. Would advise a facilitated workshop by a dementia specialist.
- Accessible and flexible, allowing facilitated discussions with staff to develop policy informally.
- The workshop can be facilitated in one 2–3-hour session or broken down into three shorter activity sessions.
- The resource gently guides staff discussions towards making a policy and creating a cultural change of confident support for the sexual, intimacy and relational needs of people living with dementia.

Drawbacks

Slight concern that the 'game' nature of this might undermine the importance of the topic.

Additional comments

To make full use of this resource, the use of a skilled facilitator with some knowledge of sexuality and dementia to lead the workshop is recommended.

There are a range of resources that are needed to elicit real cultural change and this resource is a good place to start.

Older people in care homes: Sex, sexuality and intimate relationships

Creator: Royal College of Nursing

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- The resource has been designed for nurses primarily but talks to care systems and care delivery more broadly. This resource would be appropriate for workers in allied health and care services as well as nursing staff.
- Consideration of many aspects of ill health and changes with might occur in later life - incontinence, medication, catheters, impotence, vaginal dryness, dementia increased dependency and moving into care and the impact of these factors on sexual wellbeing.
- Appreciation of people from an ethnic minority background and LGBTI+ communities.
- Offers information about useful assessment tools for clinical staff to assess sexuality needs.
- Asks the audience to reflect on their own beliefs, attitudes, and values.
- Provides clear guidance on working through concerns with easy-to-follow frameworks.
- Case studies include useful discussions points.

Drawbacks

In sections, the guidance is very focused on the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) standards, but the emphasis is also given to residents in care homes. It would be nice if the health and social care workers code of conduct could be incorporated into this guidance as well as NMC standards.

Additional comments

Useful guidance for anyone working in health and social care, do not be put off my NMC focus.

Relationships, sex and dementia: Operational guidelines

Creator: Health and Social Care Board, Northern Ireland

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- Easy to access in terms of getting and understanding the guidance, its principles and advice are generally applicable outside of Northern Ireland, but users need to check on any variations in any other countries that make up the UK.
- With detailed, diverse, thought-provoking case studies based in practice in care and at home, accompanied by learning and discussion points, parts of the resource could be integrated into staff development opportunities/events.
- Starts from the premise that sexuality and intimacy needs should be met as far as possible and gives practical advice and food for thought on such complex matters, which can also involve consultation with family/significant others.

- The resource underlines the importance of sex and intimacy for diverse people with dementia, including LGBT+ identified people. The coverage of trans individuals provided some useful detail.
- Explains the legal content and requirements and offers an explanation of dementia and its consequences, mental capacity, safeguarding and the law and sources of help.

Drawbacks

- At 52 pages, it may not be feasible for direct care staff to digest.
- At times, the document does have an official rather than user-friendly feel to it and maybe more suitable for managers to share aspects of the document with staff.
- Could have encouraged more reflection on attitudes towards older people and sex and LGBT+ individuals generally.

Additional comments

To note that some aspects of the law are specific to Northern Ireland.

Safe and visible: Creating a care facility welcoming to LGBT seniors (recommended)

Creator: Elder Life Care

Type/purpose: Film / to generally inform

Availability: Free to watch online

Strengths

- This is a nice introduction to the care of older LGBT people and would be suitable for anyone who works in health and social care.
- It contains advice on how to: create welcoming and safe spaces; appreciate and understand LGBT+ history and the impact on the individual (fear, trauma, shame, etc.); and have a sense of health and social implications (LGBT+ people have higher mental health issues, more likely to experience poverty, lack of family support, be isolated).
- It also contains advice on what should be included in policy and programmes to create inclusive spaces and offers simple, clear interventions and changes which organisations can adopt to create LGBT welcoming spaces.
- Includes films of LGBT+ people sharing their views - clear presentations with good advice.
- Time is given over to the transgender community which is excellent.
- It is visually appealing; the information is presented in an engaging way. It is broken up into sections so could be viewed in more than one sitting. The resource is only 33 minutes long, so could be viewed in a break, on a night shift or as part of in-house training.

Drawbacks

The term LGBT is used, and this should be reframed as LGBT+. However, this is not to detract from the excellent way this resource is presented.

Additional comments

This has been created by an American association. The advice contained within it is excellent, but the references to legislation are USA based.

Safe to be me: Meeting the needs of older lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people using health and social care services (recommended)

Creator: Age UK/Opening Doors

Type/purpose: Training pack / to train staff with

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- Easy to read, covers the range of services and is backed up by very positive and diverse images of older LGBT+ individuals.
- Full of resources including information, advice, quotes from people who draw on care and support, case studies/scenarios, questions and exercises and a checklist of good practice designed to encourage empathy and help staff, including managers, to think through some of the important issues involved in delivering LGBT+ inclusive and 'life-affirming' services.
- This also involves encouraging staff to reflect on the influences on their attitudes towards LGBT+ individuals as a precursor to challenging prejudice.
- Some of the practical resources could be used/adapted for staff meetings/discussions.
- Recognises that equality of outcomes for LGBT+ people can only be secured by differentiating services in ways that go beyond 'treating them all the same' (which often means as if heterosexual and cisgender and can reinforce discrimination). Readers are reminded that there are differences between LGBT+ people as well!
- Recognises the complexities of 'coming out' as LGBT+ and the importance of healthcare services in creating a welcoming environment where sexual (lesbian, gay and bisexual) and gender (trans) difference are seen as integral to the service so individuals might feel happy to disclose their difference, which could impact upon the support required.
- Challenges the notion that sexuality (in the sense of being sexual) is insignificant in later life and acknowledges that sexuality is more than one's sexual desires/practices and involves considerations of identity culture.
- Provides information on important legal provisions concerning LGBT+ people and their rights and on legal duties on health, care service providers to avoid discrimination and promote equality.

Drawbacks

- Assumes that many LGBT+ individuals are part of a couple and does not recognise that isolation could be an unmet need that service providers could help with.
- Whilst there were positive images of black and Asian older LGBT+ people, more could have been included about the needs of LGBT+ individuals from faith and minoritised ethnic communities.

Sex, intimacy and dementia

Creator: Alzheimer's Society

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- It's primarily aimed at carers but would be useful to health and social care students, care home staff at induction.
- Easy to read information, covering the physical, emotional, and psychological aspects of sexuality and dementia and offers some practical tips and signposting.
- Presents the complexity of capacity and consent clearly and concisely.
- Provides useful guidance on what questions to ask if one partner needs to move into residential care (sexuality policy, equality policy, privacy, staff support in relationships, etc).

Drawbacks

- The advice is skewed to a negative view of sexuality. There is a sense of it's something that needs to be 'managed' rather than normalised. Also, it's very much information for the carer and not for the person living with dementia, whose voice is largely missing.
- Question and answer style works to an extent - it does ask questions that carers may very well ask, but the resource is very text-based. It would be nice to see some film clips or personalisation within the resource, particularly given the topic.
- There is only one mention of same-sex relationships. A more inclusive approach is needed.

Additional comments

This resource would be useful to carers who are experiencing difficulties but would welcome more signposting to other resources which address the positive aspects of living, loving and being sexual as a person with dementia.

Sexualities and dementia: An education resource for health professionals

Creator: Dementia Training Australia

Type/purpose: To train staff

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- Users need to set up an account to access this up-to-date resource (2020). This process is quick and easy and gives access to lots of other free resources about dementia.
- Each module has clear learning outcomes and is underpinned by positive images showing a range of intimacies, plus short-answer questions designed to test/reinforce learning and reflective questions.
- Clarifies key concepts relating to sexuality and transgender and the distinction between intimacy and sexuality.
- Identifies the practical, health-related, environmental, familial, attitudinal and cultural-organisational barriers to the expression of sexuality by people with dementia.
- Provides food for thought about sexual risk and positive ways of managing difficulties.
- This is a needs-driven approach to enabling expression of sex and intimacy, framed as a human right, as far as possible in line with ascertainable wishes.
- Contains useful practical content on developing a sexual expression policy and useful appendices such as 'Sexual behaviour assessment' and 'Awareness of actions schedules'.

Drawbacks

- The resource is written more for graduate-level healthcare staff and this is reflected in some of the more academic language. It could be adapted by using plainer English in some parts.
- It places more emphasis on questions to test knowledge rather than reflective exercises which can prompt changes in attitudes and a deeper understanding of the issues.
- Whilst it recognises the needs of trans service users, it does not mention those who could identify as non-binary - neither male nor female but another gender.

Additional comments

Some caution as laws are Australian but the principles within the resource apply to the UK.

Sexuality assessment tool sexAT for residential aged care facilities

Creator: Australian Institute for Primary Care and Aging

Type/purpose: Assessment tool / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- Really helpful assessment tool for any care home/facility that wishes to identify areas of weakness in their organisation's support of resident sexuality. It is quick and easy to use and would enable managers to construct a plan to action any weak spots to build a robust strategy.
- An easily accessible and relatively straight forward assessment tool to enable care homes to identify any gaps in terms of policy, ability to identify resident needs, education and training for staff, information and support for older people wishing to express their sexuality, support for families, assessment of the physical environment and risk assessment/management.

Drawbacks

- This is a tool which has been developed in Australia, but helpful resources are not Australia specific and would be useful to a broader audience, although they are outdated.
- Only two out of the eight helpful resources links still work.

Sexuality and intimacy among care home residents (with journal workbook)

Creator: Nursing Times

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- Key points are sex-positive rather than prohibitive and it's from a rights/need-based perspective.
- The resident's voice is included in the resource.
- Makes mention of the LGBTI+ community and moving into residential care and why some feel they need to go back in the closet.
- Includes a handout for journal club discussion which can be used to elicit individual/team discussion as part of CPD or reflective log.

Drawbacks

- The piece uses some quite bold language e.g., 'stereotype of older people as pitiful recipients of care' which seems both outdated and potentially offensive to

those working hard in health and social care. There has been a lot of work done to recognise and humanise care. This language feels incongruous with that ethos.

- It over-generalises points in places. Consent is not a grey area, and to refer to it as such isn't helpful to those on the front line.
- It urges the audience not to make stereotypical judgements, but then makes stereotypical judgements about teenagers in the workbook.

Additional comments

Useful summative comments but would require further reading beyond the piece to have a broader understanding of issues.

Sexuality and long-term care: Understanding and supporting the needs of older adults

Creator: Gayle Appel Doll

Type/purpose: Book / to train staff with / to generally inform

Availability: Buy hardcopy

Strengths

- Although the book, which doubles as a practical resource, is written in a US context, many of its key principles could apply and/or be adapted for use in UK care homes accommodating older and people with a disability. It will be useful for managers and direct care staff.
- An excellent, thought-provoking, and accessibly written book, underpinned by evidence, experience and observation and aimed largely at care workers and organisations.
- Each chapter begins with a short glossary and a case study based on experience and contains sidebars, quizzes and various specific learning activities and other resources designed to reinforce key points of learning.
- Well-structured and addresses: residents' needs; staff attitudes; family influences on residents' sexuality; dementia; sexual and differences relating to LGBT+-identified residents; care environments and how they can constrain (and enable) sex and intimacy; and developing care home policies and practices on this subject, which, helpfully, include ways of assessing sex and intimacy needs and sample policies.
- The resource is particularly useful in explaining the concerns of adult children and how these could be productively negotiated as well as dementia and 'inappropriate' sexual behaviours.

Drawbacks

- The resource does not describe any of the specifics of how LGBT+ older people are desexualised and specifically in care home settings.

- The chapter covers bisexual and trans ageing but omitted information on the distinct ways that lesbians and gay men experience ageing.

Additional comments

Written in a US context – so any legal and policy elements apply to the USA and the UK position would need to be explored. It is quite old published in 2012.

A superb resource, worth investing in by care homes. If this had been UK-focused, it would have a top recommended resource.

Sexuality and people in residential aged care facilities: A guide for partners and families (recommended)

Creator: Australian Centre for Evidence-based Aged Care, La Trobe University

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- This is a much needed and easy to read resource that, for a change, focuses on concerns that partners and family might have about a resident's expression of sexuality and intimacy.
- Although this is an Australian resource, most information and advice could be applied to the UK.
- It's reassuring about how concerns and feelings are quite 'normal' among significant others while stressing the importance of sexuality and intimacy for residents, including those with dementia, in maintaining identity and self-esteem, quality of life and overall health/wellbeing.
- Contains useful information and advice on balancing the protection of vulnerable older people and enabling them to meet their sex and intimacy needs with dignity.
- Emphasises the value of recognising sexual diversity among residents and of asking about policies on diversity that cover sexuality.
- Emphasises the value to partners/significant others of seeking help from appropriate team members and in terms of referral to appropriate services (within/ outside the facility) and of asking about care policies concerned with sexual health, staff development and holistic assessment and care planning to include sexuality and intimacy needs.
- Refers to other useful resources that could be adapted to UK contexts and especially a sexuality assessment tool developed by the authors based on research and practice.

Drawbacks

- Whilst partners/relatives may need to be consulted and decisions will be complex where capacity is compromised, the resource could emphasise more the

(demonstrable) autonomy of the resident who might want to make decisions that relatives may find uncomfortable.

- There is little mention of the need to recognise the ways that faith and minoritised communities think about sexuality and intimacy in later life concerning their looked-after relative.

Additional comments

Some caution is advised given that the resource applies to Australia.

The expression of sexuality in dementia

Creator: Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- Provides an accessibly written and concise introduction to key concerns.
- Could be used to stimulate conversations in staff meetings about good practice.
- Designed to encourage thinking about the key ingredients of an inclusive service that recognises the various expressions of sexuality in later life.
- Flags up the importance of positive, encouraging stances towards the sexuality of older people with dementia.
- Reminding staff that sexual activity/pleasure extends into later life and can be crucial in helping to maintain an identity, especially for people affected by dementia and their partners/spouses.
- It is easy to access, and the website offers other resources that give a wider picture of basic good practice in supporting people affected by dementia.

Drawbacks

It does not offer detailed advice on how to manage a range of scenarios but does give food for thought about safeguarding in less intrusive ways through suggestions that could enable sexuality to be expressed safely, in private and with dignity.

Additional comments

Reminds staff that dementia alone does not equal a lack of capacity and that consent can be non-verbal, historical (in the sense of consistency with the person's preferences) and that decisions about capacity are best made as part of a multi-disciplinary effort that includes, with due sensitivity, the person and spouse/partner.

The last taboo

Creator: International Longevity Centre - UK (ILC-UK)

Type/purpose: e-learning / to train staff

Availability: Free to use online

Strengths

- A really helpful resource aimed at dementia care workers and managers. Includes an overview of sexuality, intimacy, and sexual behaviour.
- There is an emphasis on person-centred, holistic care.
- Sets out guidance to support pre-existing relationships, new relationships, and individual sexual expression.
- Offers good practice guidance to when sexual expression occurs in an inappropriate place, is aimed at staff, how to respond to verbal and physical sexualised acts aimed at staff and supporting partners, spouses and family through relational change as a result of dementia.
- Suggests simple interventions to support sexual expression, massage, do not disturb signs, the importance of sexual history, staff supported visits.
- Includes a section on the LGBT+ community.
- Includes case studies, top tips, assess your own perceptions quiz and a policy framework.

Drawbacks

- The policy framework is outdated and some of the links no longer work to the additional information/reading.
- The mental capacity assessment section lacks reference to the ability for the person to assess the capacity of the other. This is a recent addition to the assessment process.

Additional comments

The resource is care home focused but would also be useful to those who work with those on the autistic spectrum and with a brain injury.

The MCA is currently being tested in terms of sexuality, intimacy and relationship needs. It's recommended that care home managers/staff keep abreast of current legal cases.

The whole of me: Meeting the needs of older lesbians, gay men and bisexuals living in care homes and extra care housing

Creator: Age Concern

Type/purpose: Guidance document / to generally inform

Availability: Free download

Strengths

- Provides useful information/advice on positive messages concerning lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) service users - information on key legislation and policy designed to support equality and diversity within care/residential settings.
- Recognises how heterosexual assumptions can undermine inclusive and personalised care e.g., reinforce the invisibility of LGB individuals.
- Reminds readers that sexuality is not just about sexual preference but also about the cultural experience (e.g., expressed in what we 'know' and how we relate to other people).
- Highlights the value of a collective/organisational approach to LGB issues and of staff development opportunities to support such approaches and addressing prejudice and hostility from fellow residents.
- Contains a self-reflection questionnaire to encourage thinking on attitudes to sexual difference, an organisational checklist on promoting LGB inclusion and resources and helpful LGBT organisations.

Drawbacks

Could also have included issues relating to older trans and non-binary identified individuals. Whilst trans itself can cover a spectrum of identities and could the subject of a separate resource, quite a few of the principles in the resource could apply to those identifying as trans/non-binary and trans-specific issues could have been addressed without requiring a lot of extra materials/coverage.

Conclusions

The review shows that there are resources available for social care staff to use when supporting people surrounding sexuality and relationships, however gaps exist in terms of topic coverage, the amount of resources available for different social care groups, the skills and confidence of staff to use the materials and the formats available.

Gaps in topic

Our focus groups told us the topics which would be helpful for learning materials to include were:

- writing policies and guidance
- capacity and consent and the law and people's rights
- changing organisational culture and values and attitudes
- impact of medication/condition/ injury
- confidence to have conversations about sexuality
- working with families and working with different religions and cultures
- working with people who have experienced abuse/ trauma
- developing healthy relationships
- online safety.

Most of the topics above relate to the training that staff felt they needed, as opposed to the people they support. Legal issues such as capacity and consent and the law are reflected numerous times throughout the review. However, the main issue we identified was that legal information quickly becomes out of date as case law changes, especially in hard copy books and must be updated regularly.

Resources that provide guidance on how to change organisational culture, values and attitudes, working with families and within different religions and cultures were rare, with the exception being a few resources for people with a disability and older adults. Guidance on working with different cultures/religions and families can be found in some documents, predominantly for staff working with older adults but this was felt to be needed across all social care groups. References to developing healthy relationships and online safety were prevalent in learning disability resources but were identified as being equally relevant for other groups of people.

Gaps for specific groups

The review identified disproportionate resources relating to certain social care groups, in particular older adults and people with a learning disability. Only two resources were found for staff supporting people experiencing poor mental health

surrounding sexuality and relationships. One was a video and the other an older training pack for staff that, while it had some merits, was not suitable as a complete training course.

Staff in the focus group shared their concerns surrounding adequately supporting the relationships and sexuality needs of people with mental ill-health. Their concerns focused on supporting people to develop healthy and safe relationships, boundaries, positive self-esteem, and sexual autonomy, in particular when working with people who had experienced abuse or trauma. Staff also felt they needed more support to understand how specific mental health conditions or medication impacted on sexuality and/or relationships.

There are also only two resources for people with a brain injury and neither were training resources for social care staff. One resource contained information for the person (their family) with an injury and the other was a training pack for healthcare (including sexual health) staff. This leaves a large gap for staff working in adult social care. There are also few resources aimed at staff working with autistic people without a learning disability in this area, leaving staff supporting this group with minimal guidance and support.

Gaps in resources

There are only a small number of 'off the shelf' training packs available for organisations to train their staff and this was an issue across all social care groups. There were some books which contain information which could be used to train staff, as well as films which could form part of a training programme, but it was not clear if staff would access the information in this format to develop their own materials.

There were a greater number of staff resources for those supporting older adults compared to any other social care group. There was a large collection of training resources available to assist staff in providing sexuality and relationships education to people with a learning disability and/or autism but little training for the staff themselves on how to support this in practice.

The review emphasised that the resources that do exist are fragmented with no central location for staff to access what they need. This fragmentation has contributed to the majority of the social care workforce not knowing what resources already exist in this area.

Gaps in workforce skill and confidence

Even when staff are aware of the resources available and have access to them, a substantial barrier was their confidence and skill in using the materials. Staff were explicit in the focus groups that they needed training which enabled space to discuss sensitive and complex issues. They felt this could be achieved via face-to-face or online training but not e-learning. This was perhaps reflective in the small number of e-learning packages identified on this topic. However, only a minority of social care organisations provide sexuality and relationships training for their staff, and few make this mandatory and regularly refreshed. As identified by CQC's report 'Promoting Sexual Safety Through Empowerment' there needs to be a change in organisational culture and commitment that supports any work surrounding sexuality and relationship support. This includes providing a space for staff to discuss practice issues, engagement at every management level and the provision of ongoing post training support.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 - The development of a central storage location for all sexuality and relationships resources for all social care groups/staff. This would need to be regularly updated, to ensure that it remains current.

Recommendation 2 - A committed approach by Skills for Care, CQC and Department of Health and Social Care to highlight the resources that already exist in this area (such as Skills for Care and CQC guidance) and any outputs from this project (such as a centralised database).

Recommendation 3 - The creation of a generic sexuality and relationships training pack for social care staff covering the key elements which are universal to all client groups. The pack should include signposting to specialist training/books/resources as needed. This should also include a train the trainer element to develop internal expertise and help facilitate organisational change. Additionally, the use of coaching and mentoring is recommended, alongside advocating engagement within the Supported Loving Network and other networks, for support and practice development. Staff training should be done in parallel with training for other stakeholders such as people who draw on care and support, their families, and universal services.

Recommendation 4 - Work with organisations that represent different social care groups such as those with a brain injury and mental ill-health to develop supplementary training packs in addition to the generic one, relating to the specific practice issues they face. This should include the voices of people who draw on care and support, either through co-delivery or incorporating their views in other ways throughout.

Recommendation 5 - Ensure that the training pack includes practical guidance for direct support, such as appropriate, accurate and legal communication, as well as how to develop care plans and strategies regarding sexuality and relationships.

Recommendation 6 – Explore the accreditation of a national course on this topic which could be mapped to the health and social care competency frameworks.

References

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