



**What you  
asked about your rights,  
relationships  
and sex?**



Produced by

**HLDRG**

**Highland Learning Disabilities and Relationships Group**

This leaflet provides information for people with learning disabilities about what support you can get and the rules staff must follow when helping you with these things.

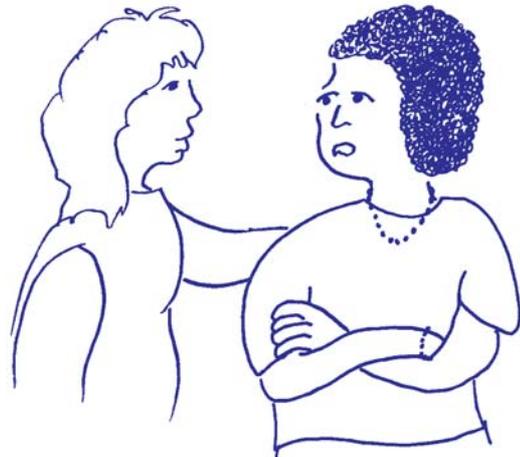
**Use the pictures to help talk about these rules.**

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## Why do staff need rules about helping you with relationships and sex?

Public agencies in Highland have agreed a set of rules for staff working with people with learning disabilities about helping you with relationships and sex. Staff will follow these rules so you need to know about them too.



People with learning disabilities often find it difficult to get information and help about relationships and sex because:

- There is a lack of information about relationships and sex.
- People sometimes find it embarrassing to talk about relationships and sex.
- Some people think that it's too risky for people with learning disabilities to have sex.
- People aren't sure what the law says about relationships and sex for people with learning disabilities.

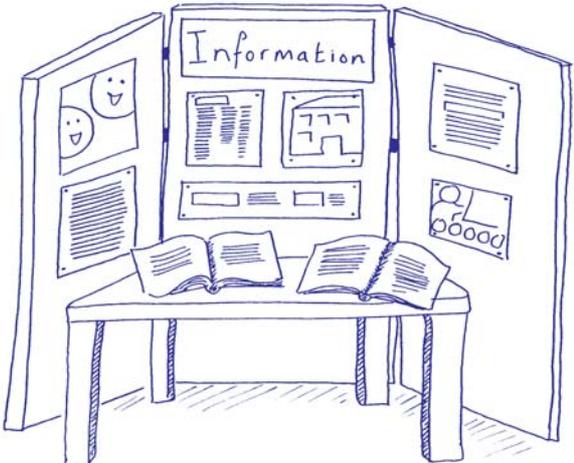


Resource:

Growing up, sex and relationships: a booklet for young disabled people. Contact a Family website: <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/>. Aimed primarily at physically disabled young people.

If you are over the age of 16 and are able to make decisions for yourself you have the same rights as anyone else to develop personal relationships and to have sex if you want to. There are some people you are not allowed to have sex with, including staff.

The rules will help staff feel more able to give you information, advice and support about relationships and sex. This should help you to make your own choices about relationships and sex.



Health Information & Resources Service (HIRS), NHS Highland, Assynt House, Inverness IV2 3BW  
HIRS will supply FAIR keep yourself healthy guide booklets about health and body issues. Email: [hirs@hnb.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:hirs@hnb.scot.nhs.uk) or telephone: 01463 704647

## What are your rights?

If you are over 16 you have the same rights to have sexual relationships as people without learning disabilities of the same age so long as:

- You are able to understand what you are doing.
- You are not being abused or forced into something.

The law forbids people to have sex in some situations, for example between close family members, between staff and service users or in public.

### You have the right:

- To get information about your body, your feelings and how to behave in public
- To be treated with respect
- To make and break relationships
- To privacy and confidentiality
- To live with someone, marry and start a family
- Not to be sexually abused
- To decide you are attracted to people of the same sex or of the opposite sex
- To support from an advocate if you need one to help get your rights



Resource:

Sex: For Young people with Spina Bifida or Cerebral Palsy. ASBAH - Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus. [www.asbah.org/](http://www.asbah.org/) . Explanation of different areas regarding relationships and sex. Old publication but still be of use as has practical advice.

## What should you know about relationships and sex?

Some of the things you might want to learn about are:

- What words you need to know to talk about relationships and sex
- How your body works
- What having a relationship is like
- Coping with feelings and emotions in relationships
- All the different kinds of relationships people have
- What the law says about sex and what your rights are
- How to say 'no' if you don't want a relationship or sex
- Contraception – how you can have sex and not get pregnant
- Infections you can get by having sex and how to prevent this



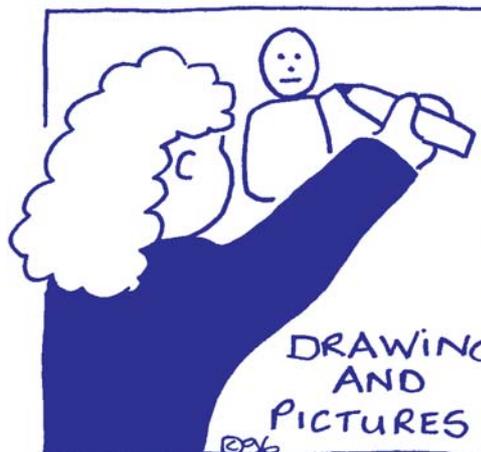
Resource:

You, your body and sex (video). Life Support Productions. A sex education video and accompanying booklet for young people with learning disabilities.

## Asking staff about relationships and sex

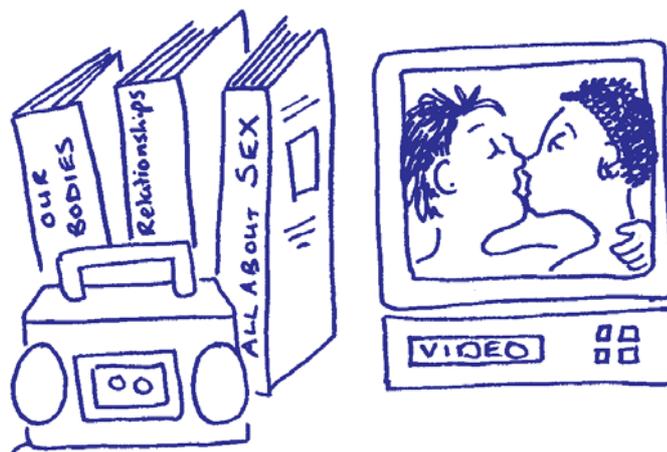
If you want to know more about relationships and sex or have any problems or worries about these things you can ask your support staff for information, advice and help.

If they can't answer all your questions or provide the help you need they should make sure you get help from someone else who can.



Information should be given to you in a way you can understand. This may mean getting it on tape or a video or getting someone to spend extra time explaining things to you.

If you don't get the help you need or you feel a member of staff isn't following the rules you can complain. Staff should tell you how to complain and how to get help to do so.



### Resource:

Jason's Private World (video). Life support Productions. A sex education video and accompanying booklet for males with learning difficulties.

Kyllie's Private World (video). Life support Productions. A sex education video and accompanying booklet for females with learning difficulties.

If you don't want to ask your support staff for information and help about relationships and sex there is a list of other places you can go for help at the back of this booklet.

If you talk to your friends about relationships and sex you should check whether their information is correct. They might not know more than you do but be too embarrassed to say so.

## **What are the rules?**

### **Having different types of relationship**

Staff should help you to have lots of different types of relationships with neighbours, friends, family, workmates, boyfriends and girlfriends.

You should have opportunities to do things you want to do and to meet people on your own if you want to.

Staff should make sure you can do these things and keep safe. They may need to talk to you about any risks involved in relationships and whether these are reasonable.

## Information and help about relationships and sex

Staff should discuss with you whether you need any information or help about relationships or having sex.

Staff should answer any questions you have about developing and enjoying personal and sexual relationships or help you get the information you need from someone else.

Staff should give you support with relationships and sex if you need and want it, including:

- giving you privacy in your own bedroom,
- obtaining information and advice about how to enjoy sex more
- helping you to get condoms and other types of contraception
- talking things over if you have difficulties in a relationship.

You may need help to decide whether you want to have sex with someone and staff should find the best person to help you with this decision.



## Keeping things private

Some things must be kept private. You need to know what things can be kept private and what things can't. Staff working with you should talk to you about this.

Staff should keep information about your relationships and sexual matters private unless they are worried that you could be hurt. If a member of staff has to tell someone else about your business you must be told about this and involved in deciding what will happen next.

If you are unhappy about what a member of staff says to other people you can complain. You should be told how to complain and where to get help to do so.

If you don't live with your family you should be able to lock the door to your room and staff should not come into your room without asking you if they can. Staff should help you to have your friends round in private if you want to.

Staff should close bedroom and toilet doors when helping you to bath or go to the toilet. There are special rules about this which you should ask about.

If you have sex or want to masturbate it must be in a private place. It is against the law to have sex where other people can see you, for example in the street or a public toilet or your work place. If you need a private space speak to your support worker to get help with this.



## Your family

Families are important and may play a big part in your life.

Staff should ask them what they think: about what help you need with relationships and sex; and when an important decision has to be made about your sexual health.

However you have the right to keep stuff about relationships and sex private from your family if you want to. Staff should always ask you first before talking to your family.

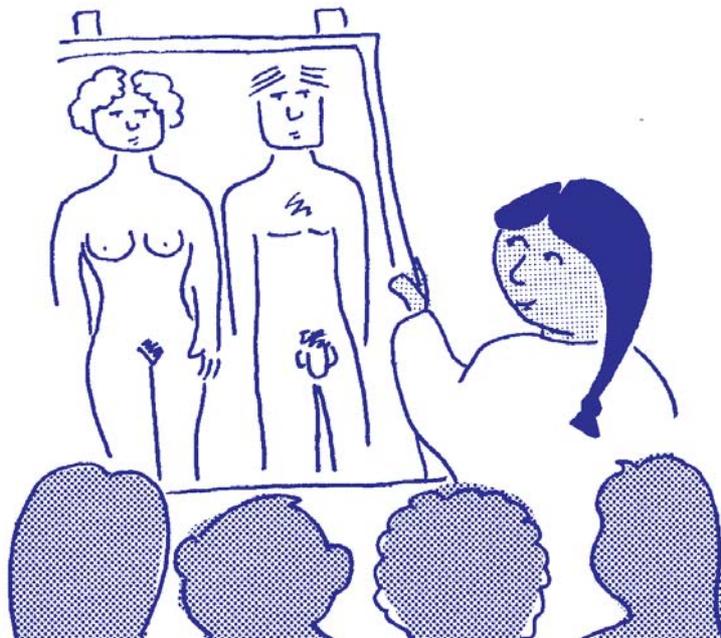
## Your health

Staff should tell you about the different services that can help you with sexual health matters and make sure you can find out about how to enjoy good sexual health.



You may need to find out about:

- If you are a woman getting a smear test and checking your breasts
- If you are a man checking your testicles for unusual lumps or bumps
- Finding out about having a baby
- Finding out about how NOT to have a baby
- Information about infections such as HIV, AIDs, or Chlamydia that can be caught by having sex with someone



Resource:

Becoming a Woman. E Cooper.

A teaching pack on menstruation for people with learning disabilities.

## Keeping you safe

Staff should protect you from people who may hurt you and help you learn how to protect yourself. You may need to find out about:

- How to make decisions about whether people can be trusted
- How to say you don't want to have a relationship with someone
- Good touch and bad touch
- Who to tell if someone is hurting you



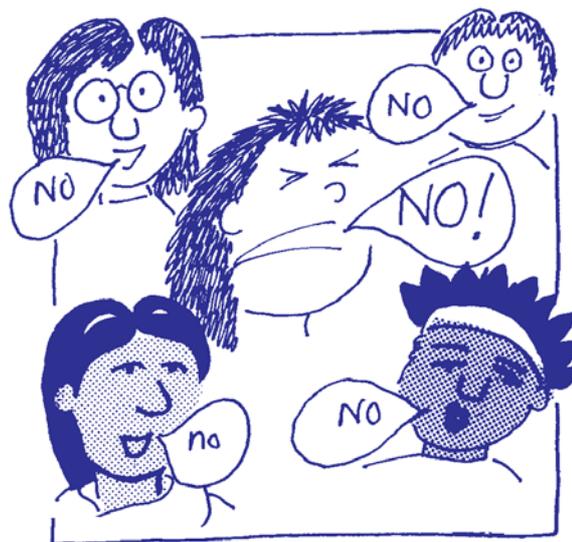
## What must staff NOT do?

Staff should not break the law. Staff should not help you to break the law.

This means:

- Staff should not be your boyfriend or girlfriend or have sex with you.
- Staff should not touch parts of your body that are private when teaching you about sex.
- Staff should not help you to buy books or videos about sex that can't be bought or borrowed from a shop.

You should tell someone you trust, if a member of staff is hurting you or trying to get you to have sex with them.



Pictures provided by Change Picture Bank

## Places you can go for information and advice about relationships and sex.

### Useful Local Resources

#### Highland Sexual Health

Contraception and family planning, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections and general sexual health advice, information and treatment. Clinics throughout Highland. Ring 01463 704202 for more information.

#### Terrence Higgins Trust Highland

34 Waterloo Place, Inverness IV1 1NB 01463 711585

Information, testing, support and counselling for anyone living with HIV and AIDS or for those close to them. Support and social groups for people who are or who think they might be gay. We offer lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans gender support and advice, counselling and safer sex materials for people with learning disabilities.

#### Highland Brook Advisory Centre

77 Church Street, Inverness IV1 1ES 01463 242434

Free and confidential sexual health service for under 25s.

#### HDLRG

Highland Learning Disabilities Relationships Group. We are a multi agency group who offer support advice and resources to help people with learning disabilities their carers and the professionals working with them to get information on relationships, sex and sexuality. We also raise awareness and take forward projects on these issues. Meetings held monthly. Christine Gow, Chairperson Tel: 01397 703397.

#### For Autism Spectrum Disorder advice

Clinical Psychology Service, Learning Disability/Autism Spectrum Disorders, New Craigs, 6-16 Leachkin Road, Inverness, IV3 8NP

#### RAL

Rape and Abuse Line, Dingwall, Tel 01349 865316

Helpline answered by women on most evenings from 7-10pm Tel: 0808 800 0123

Helpline answered by men on selected evenings from 7-10pm Tel: 0808 800 0122

24 hour answer services will provide latest times that lines will be open.

Website - [www.rapeandabuseline.co.uk](http://www.rapeandabuseline.co.uk)

#### Advocacy Highland

33 Academy Street, Inverness IV1 1JN Tel: 01463 233460

website - [www.advocacy-highland.org.uk](http://www.advocacy-highland.org.uk)

**Highland Carers Project** Tel: 01463 718817 For advice and support.

email - [carers@hccf.org.uk](mailto:carers@hccf.org.uk)

#### CHIP+

Birnie Centre, Raigmore Hospital, Inverness, IV2 3UJ Tel: 01463 711189

CHIP+ produced a useful booklet "It's My Choice" which has a section on friends and feelings including a resources list about relationships and sex and this has been included in Good Practice Guidance for Staff. CHIP+ also have leaflets and books for loan, free of charge which can be posted to anywhere in Highland, see resource list.



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