



How best to support me...

Friendships and Relationships



Valuing Friendships, Sex and Relationships

The historic and distinct lack of services, supports, opportunity, training, education, accessible and meaningful information about Friendships, Sex and Relationships for people with a learning disability is at long last rapidly changing, thanks to the work, commitment, dedication and indeed the **'Voices'** of Becky Gammon and the 'Voice for All' Self Advocacy Group, Chorley.

'Friendships, Sex and Relationships' is finally on top of many agendas across the North West.

Voice for All (VFA) like many of us, truly believe in 'Relationships' being a **'core'** value. For the past 12 months Becky and VFA have continued to be instrumental in making positive changes and valued contributions.

Following VFA publishing and promoting across Lancashire their staff guide 'How best to support me with Friendships and Relationships' they have gone from strength to strength.

Throughout 2015/16;

- Becky, with several other VFA friends and self-advocates instigated and piloted the new joint training programme 'Y be shy about Sex'. An amazing and unique 6 week programme and opportunity for self-advocates and their support staff/carers to discuss and learn together about 'Friendship, Relationships and Sexual Health'.
- Becky and VFA were invited to present and deliver a workshop about 'Friendships and Relationships' at the North West Regional Advocacy Conference at Blackpool.
- Becky featured in a 2 page 'Community Living' article named 'Taking the Big Leap; Learning together about Sex and Relationships'. Here Becky talked about the impact of her attendance on a Sex and Relationships course as enabling her to take a 'big leap' into a world of potentially pleasurable, rewarding intimate relationships, a world previously closed to her by intense fear, misconceptions and other peoples negative attitudes.
- VFA support and campaign for 'acceptance and equal rights for all' regardless of disability, gender, race, sexual orientation and it was a pleasure and privilege to support and make many new friends whilst hosting a stall at the Annual Preston Pride LGBT event.
- VFA have taken the lead role in instigating and writing a new National 'Sex and Relationships' Policy for the Brothers of Charity Services, England, soon to be followed by an easy read version and guide.
- VFA continue to be active and valued members of the North West 'Being Safe' group, 'Lancashire Friends and Relationships Group', and continue to be invited to new groups and regions including 'Wigan' in promoting self-advocacy and the importance of 'Friendships, Sex and Relationships'.
- Becky was awarded the Derek Russell Award and named 'The Most Outstanding Leader in the North West' at the 2016 Regional Advocacy Conference. This was in recognition for the many contributions and all the tremendous work both she and VFA have done across the region, and particularly in the area of 'Friendships, Sex and Relationships'.
- And finally, members of VFA recently completed the 'Y be Shy about Sex - Train the Trainers' course and are now keen for themselves to deliver training and learning opportunities across Lancashire.

I couldn't be more proud of Becky and VFA for their passion, drive and commitment in wanting to make real and positive changes regarding Friendships, Sex and Relationships, and not only for themselves, but for every person with a learning disability, their carers, support staff, friends, families, providers, and indeed, every member of society!

John Whitehead