



Love, Sex and Relationships



This is an easy read Sex and Relationships policy and guidelines for people using the Brothers of Charity Services in England. It is also for your support staff to help them in best supporting you with your relationships and to stay safe and keep healthy.



‘Love’ and ‘Relationships’ are **core values** of the Brothers of Charity Services. This means they are very important to us. We believe we all need ‘Love’ and ‘Relationships’ in our lives in order to live a full and valued life.



The right for people with a learning disability to practice and enjoy personal and sexual relationships, if that is their choice, is positively supported by the Brothers of Charity Services. This policy and booklet will help you and your support staff to uphold and protect these rights.



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

- There is a lack of information about sex and relationships
- People sometimes find it embarrassing to talk about sex and relationships
- Some people think it is 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



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

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



Your Rights

People with a learning disability have the same rights as everyone else.

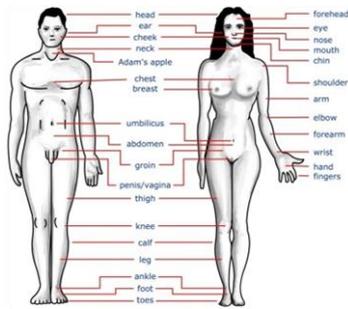
This means that you should be treated the same as everyone else.



The right to have a sex life.



The right to decide when to begin and end a relationship.



The right to find out about your body.



The right to engage in sexual activity including with yourself.



The right to get married, enter into a civil partnership, or live with your partner.



The right to have children.



The right to explore your sexuality to decide if you are attracted to people of the same sex or of a different sex to you.



The right to be treated with respect and dignity.



The right to be free from abuse including sexual abuse and not to be made to do things you don't want to.



The right to your own personal and private space.



The right to information and to learn about sex and relationships and staying safe.



The right to be given support and assistance if you feel that your rights have not been heard. This includes the right to an independent advocate.

Responsibilities



Responsibilities mean that we all have to follow certain rules and act and behave in a way that is acceptable and within the law.

There is a responsibility on all people including people with a learning disability to follow the law.

We all have responsibilities...



To respect the rights of others.



To treat others with dignity, respect, fairness and equality.



NOT to break the law.



Relationships

Relationships are about how we get on with other people. We all have a right to choose to have relationships and we all need relationships in our lives.

There are many different types of relationships...



Family

These are your parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters and anybody who is related to you.



Friends

These are the people you really like and choose to socialise and spend time with.



Marriage

This is the person you want to marry and become your husband or wife.

A marriage can be between a couple who are heterosexual (*man and woman*) or homosexual (*man and man*) or (*woman and woman*).



Boyfriend and Girlfriend

A 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend' is a special friend and a person you want to have a close and intimate relationship with.

A man in a relationship is called a **boyfriend**.
A woman in a relationship is called a **girlfriend**.



'Heterosexual' or 'Straight'

This is the name given to a man or woman who is attracted to people of the opposite sex.



'Lesbian' or 'Gay'

This is a woman who is attracted to another woman (*person of the same sex*).



'Gay' or 'Homosexual'

This is a man who is attracted to another man (*person of the same sex*).



'Bisexual'

This is a man or woman who is attracted to both people of the same and opposite sex.



Support Staff

These are the people who are paid to support you.



Professional and paid staff

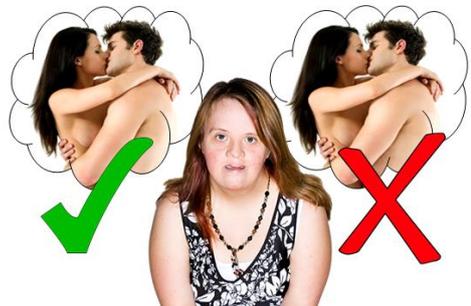
These are the people whose job it is to give you the help and support you need.



Every relationship is different and every relationship can be special.
Most of our relationships are non-sexual.
This means that we do not engage in any sexual activity.



People in a 'sexual relationship' are people who are happy to kiss, be touched by each other on private and intimate parts of the body, and happy to have sex and make love with each other.



Some people in relationships choose to have a 'sexual relationship' and some people don't.
Both are ok.



It is against the law to have sex in some situations.

You cannot have sexual relationships with...



Family members.



Support Staff.



Professional and paid staff.



Children and young people under 16 years.



In a public place.



Mutual and Consenting Relationships and Mental Capacity

All sexual relationships must be **mutual** and **consenting** and people must have **mental capacity**.



‘Mutual’

This is when two or more people feel the same about something and are happy about it.



'Consent'

This is when you give your permission and agree to something and are happy for it to happen.

Usually by saying 'Yes' to something, you are giving your permission and giving your consent.



'Mental Capacity'

This is when you are able to make your own decisions.



Having full mental capacity means that you are aware of and understand your responsibilities and the possible consequences of your actions and the decisions you make.



The Mental Capacity Act

The Mental Capacity Act is a law that helps you to make your own decisions.



Some people are able to make every decision about their own lives. Some people are able to make some decisions. A small number of people cannot make any decisions. Being unable to make a decision is called "lacking capacity".



The Mental Capacity Act is about making sure that people have the support they need to make as many decisions as possible. The Mental Capacity Act also protects people who need family, friends or paid support staff to make decisions for them.



The Mental Capacity Act has 5 rules



1) Assume that people are able to make decisions, unless it is shown that they are not



2) Give people as much support as they need to make decisions



3) Unwise decisions

If a person makes unwise decisions, this is ok, as long as they understand what they are doing. Adults have the right to make decisions that other people disagree with.



4) Best Interests

If someone is not able to make a decision, then the people helping them must only make decisions in their 'best interests'. This means that the decision must be what is best for the person, not for anyone else.



5) Find the least restrictive way of doing what needs to be done

When a decision is made for somebody, it must give them as much freedom as possible.



Sex and Sexuality

All people are sexual beings and can experience a wide range of sexual thoughts, attitudes, feelings, desires, fantasies and activities. Sex and sexuality is a natural and healthy part of being human.



Sex means different things to different people. Above all it is a healthy and natural activity. It is something most people enjoy and find meaningful.



Sexual activities can be everything from kissing to intercourse, from holding hands and hugging to fondling and touching another person.



Sexual activities can also be things you do all by yourself - like masturbating or pleasuring yourself sexually. This must take place in a private place like your bedroom or bathroom.



Staying safe

Keeping yourself and others safe when having sex is very important.



To keep safe from sexually transmitted infections you should always use a condom for protection.

To stop you getting pregnant you should use a condom, contraception pills or other types of contraception.



You should talk to your doctor or visit the Sexual Health Clinic. They will be able to help you and give you more information and advice about contraception and staying safe.



Sexuality is not just about sex and sexual activities.
Sexuality is about knowing who you are as a person.



Sexuality includes;

- **our gender identity**
(the core sense that we are male or female)
- **our gender role**
(the idea of how we should behave because we are a male or female)



Some people are '**transgender**'.
Transgender means someone whose gender differs from the one they were given when they were born. A transgender person feels they were born in the wrong body.
A transgender 'male' would identify him/herself as **female**, and a transgender 'female' would identify her/himself as **male**.



Sexuality also includes;

- **our sexual orientation**
(heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual)
- **our body image**
(how we feel about our bodies)
- **our sexual experiences, thoughts, ideas, and fantasies**
- **how we experience intimacy, touch, love, compassion, joy, and sorrow**



Sexuality is expressed in the way we speak, smile, stand, sit, dress, dance, laugh, and cry.

Sexuality is an integral part of who we are, what we believe, what we feel, how we act and behave, and how we respond to others.



We are all different, unique and special. Everybody needs to be happy and comfortable with their sexuality and with who they are as a person.



Sexual Health and Staying Safe

Everyone has the right to feel healthy, safe and well.

We all need to keep ourselves safe and to protect ourselves from any kind of illness, upset, harm or abuse.



Sexual Health is feeling good about yourself and having information to help you make safe and healthy choices about relationships and sex.



We all need information and support to help keep ourselves safe when in a relationship and especially when in a sexual relationship. Sexual Health Clinics can provide you with lots of information about sex and how to stay safe.



Everyone should have the opportunity to learn about sex and to learn about the different kinds of relationships like; being a friend, a lover, partner, getting married or being a parent.



It is important that you have the chance and the choice to learn about sex and relationships and how to keep yourself safe.

This should include;

- How your body works
- Safe sex
- Condoms and Contraception
- Pregnancy
- Good relationships and Bad relationships
- Saying 'No' and Staying Safe
- Good touch and Bad touch
- The Law and Your Rights
- Abuse and how to report it



If someone is hurting you and making you feel unhappy, or if you don't feel safe and things don't feel right, you must tell someone.



It is important to tell someone straight away.

Talk to and tell someone you trust, like a close friend or relative, your support worker or the police.



It is wrong for someone to force you to have sex or to touch you in a way you do not like.

It is called '**sexual assault**'.

If you do not want to be touched or to have sex, it is your right to say "NO!".



You have the right to be protected from abuse and it is against the law for anyone to hurt or abuse you, or to sexually assault you.



Our Promise to you!



The Brothers of Charity Services believe in the value of every person who uses the Service. We promise to support you in opportunities for personal development, the exercise of choice, the enjoyment of fulfilling, meaningful and loving relationships, and the right to privacy and protection from abuse and exploitation.



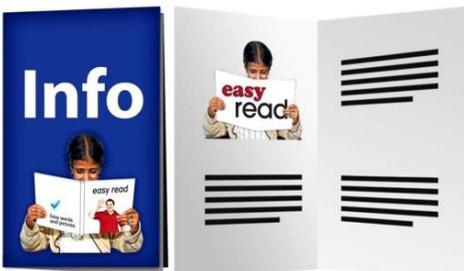
We will help and support you to better understand your rights to have relationships and we will respect your rights and the choices you make.



We will help and support you to build, develop and enjoy friendships and relationships. We will support you and respect your right to explore and express your own sexuality and individuality in the way you choose.



We will help and support you to learn and understand more about; love, sex and relationships, sexual health and staying safe.



We will help and support you in finding and accessing easy read information and accessible services that can best help you with all matters of personal relationships and/or sexuality.



We will provide individual and joint training opportunities for both you and your support staff regarding sexual health matters, sex education, sex and relationships guidance, support and counselling.



We will positively support your right to practice and enjoy personal and sexual relationships, if that is your wish.



We will at all times promote dignity when supporting you with your sexuality and personal relationships and we will respect your values and choices.
We will also respect your right to privacy.



We will ensure that all information about your personal relationships and sexuality is treated confidentially and recorded discreetly. Information will only be shared with others with your permission.
If confidentiality has to be broken (*e.g. for legal or health reasons*) your consent will be gained whenever possible.



We will actively promote the new BOC 'Sex and Relationships Policy' and 'Love, Sex and Relationships' booklet with support staff across all Brothers of Charity Services in England.



We will regularly review our Policy and Guidelines to ensure all information is up to date and most importantly, they help make a real difference to you when dealing with matters of 'Love, Sex and Relationships'.

The Brothers of Charity would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this easy read policy and guidelines, and in particular, the Voice for All Advocacy Group, Lancashire. For any persons outside Brothers of Charity England wanting to use or reproduce any content within this easy read policy and guidelines, please seek permission from Brothers of Charity Services.