



**TURNING
POINT**
inspired by possibility



Sexual health and wellbeing



Booklet 3



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Sexual health



It is really important for people to have the right information about **sexual health**.

Sexual health is making sure you are safe when having sex.



This means making sure you understand:

- all the information you are given about sex
- it is your choice. You must want to have sex with a person and say yes
- how to have safe sex and stop yourself from getting infections





Lots of people with a learning disability don't get the right information and support about sex.



Parents and carers sometimes don't want people to have information about sex and relationships.



This means people with a learning disability have more chance of having unsafe sex and relationships.

Sexually transmitted infections



These are often called **STIs** for short. We say this as **ess tee eye**.



STIs are infections that can only be passed on through having sexual contact with someone.



There are lots of different types of STIs you can get.



You can have a test to see if you have an infection. You might need a blood test, wee test or a **swab**.



A **swab** is when a cotton bud is put in your vagina. The swab is then checked to see if you have an infection.



Enjoying sex

Getting pleasure from being close to someone else and having sex is an important part of life.



It helps us feel well in our body and our mind.



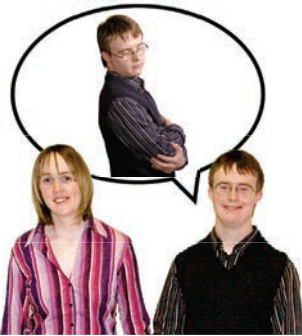
People with a learning disability are often treated like children. They are not always seen as people with sexual needs.



Often nobody has asked the person what they want. Or how they feel about sex and relationships.



This can lead to people with a learning disability having the wrong ideas about sex.



Good support means talking honestly about your feelings around sex and relationships.



You should get information in a way you can understand.



There is not much support for people with a learning disability around sex and relationships.



Some areas have courses for people and sex and relationship training.

Consent

Consent means agreeing to do something.



It is really important that people give consent when they have sex.



The law says only people over age 16 can consent to sex.



To be able to properly give consent, a person must be able to:

- fully understand and remember what sex is and the things people do when they have sex





- fully understand what they are agreeing to



- say yes or no to having sex. And understand that the person you are with can also say yes or no to having sex



- understand that you could catch an infection from having sex. And that a woman could get pregnant from having sex



- understand that using **contraception** means there is less chance of getting pregnant.

Contraception is things like a condom or a tablet.



Using condoms can mean you have less chance of catching an infection.



Using a tablet for contraception means you still have the same chance of getting an infection.

It is best to use a condom as well.



Gender and who you fancy

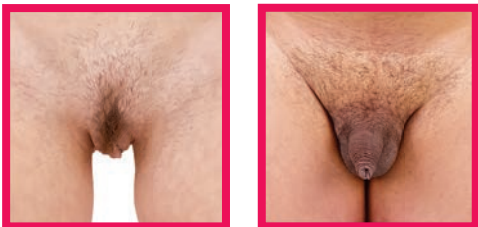


Nowadays, people are much more aware of people of different genders.

Gender is how we see ourselves.



When we are born, doctors and nurses say whether we are a boy or a girl.



They do this by looking at whether a baby has a penis or a vagina.
This is your gender at birth.



As some people grow up, they might feel differently.

For example, someone might be called a girl at birth. But then they grow up and feel like they are a man inside.



It is important that people can talk about their gender. Especially if they do not feel comfortable with the gender they were born.



You could talk about how you feel about being a man or a woman.

Or you might not feel like either. This is ok.



People who see themselves as different genders can face lots of **barriers**.

A **barrier** stops you from doing or using something.



Sexual orientation mostly means who you fancy. You might be:

- attracted to both men and women



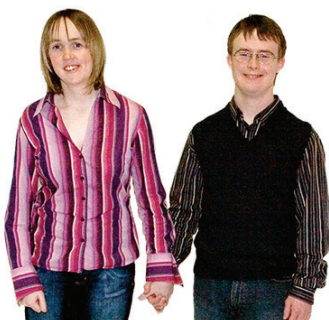
- a man who is attracted to other men



- a woman who is attracted to other women



- a man who is attracted to women or a woman who is attracted to men



People often think that people with a learning disability only fancy someone who is a different gender to them. This is not true.

Staying safe



- people are not always able to get out to meet new people and make relationships



- lots of people use online dating apps but this can be unsafe



- you can become an easy target online. This means people might think you are easy to trick into having sex



- people with a learning disability need safe places they can go to for help and support



Reproductive health

Reproductive health is about whether a person gets pregnant or not.

Good reproductive health means you understand about things like:

Contraception

Contraception is things you can use so you can have sex and not get pregnant. Things like condoms or a tablet.



Pregnancy and abortion

Abortion is when you are pregnant and you see a doctor to help you stop being pregnant.



Periods and menopause

A **period** is when a person bleeds every month from their vagina. It happens to people who were called female at birth.



When you have periods, you can get pregnant if you have sex with someone.



If you were called female at birth, when you get older your body might go through a change.



At the end of this change, you don't have periods anymore.

But there are lots of other things that happen at this time too. Whilst your body is changing you might:



- feel really tired



- find it difficult to remember things



- have a low mood and feel sad or angry



- feel really hot



- not want to have sex



It is important you get the right support whilst this is happening.

You can talk to your doctor, family or staff about it.



Sometimes, people with a learning disability are not included in making decisions about their body.



For example, when the family of someone decides what is best for them. Even when the person can make their own decisions.



People with learning disabilities have been **sterilised** without saying it is ok to do it.



Sterilised is when you have an operation that stops you from being able to get pregnant.



This means you do not get the choice to have children.



People with a learning disability need to be able to make their own choices about contraception.



This is even more important for people with learning disabilities whose body can get pregnant.



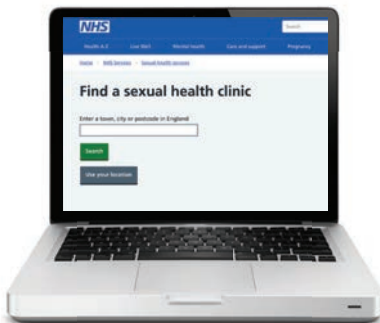
To make your own decisions you need information in a way that you can understand.



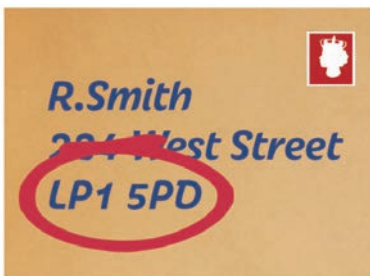
And you need to be given time and support to think about the right decision.



You can find more information about contraception and planning to start a family online at these websites:

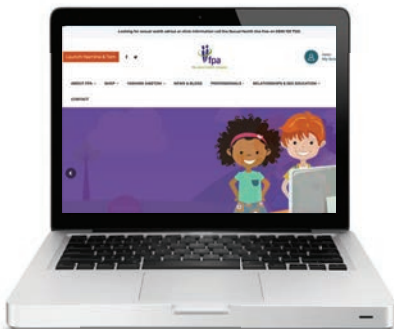


NHS Find a Sexual Health Clinic:
www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-sexual-health-clinic/



You will need to type your **postcode** in the box.

Your **postcode** is the numbers and letters at the end of your address.



Family Planning Association
www.fpa.org.uk