

Access to sexual health care

Some people might assume, that having a learning disability/difficulty/ASD stops you from being a sexual being and having sexual interests and rights.

ICNI's experience shows this is not the case.

The NI Census 2011, reported a total of 40,177 residents to have a "learning difficulty, an intellectual difficulty, or a social or behavioural difficulty"

This figure accounts for 2.22 per cent of the resident population.

That's 40,177 people who might need the same information and support about their sexual health as anyone else.

Information on how to have safer sex; reproductive healthcare and access to pregnancy choices counselling; accessing a method of contraception that suits them as well as emergency contraception; to testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections.

If your service isn't seeing people with learning disabilities/difficulties/ASD asking for these services, it isn't because those people don't exist, or those services aren't needed.

Sadly, individuals can often experience barriers in accessing healthcare.

If you would like support in your service:

Informing Choices NI provides awareness training to frontline staff, managers and GPs by:

- Exploring how our own values and attitudes can impact on individuals;
- Looking at ways in which we communicate information;
- Ensuring information is given in a clear manner; and
- Developing your staff teams confidence in this area.

For more information and costs contact:

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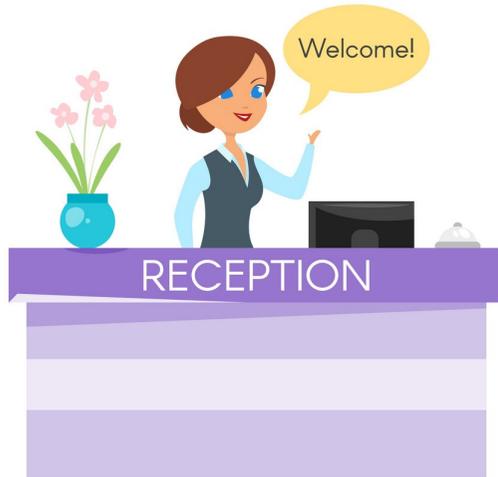


Training

Accessible sexual healthcare for people with a learning disability/difficulty/ASD

Our training is suitable for a range of staff members, including administrators within GP surgeries, CASH clinics and GUM clinics, all medical professionals and surgery managers.

Here are some ways you can help ease access to your service



Make sure people aren't stopped before they even arrive

The first step is making the appointment and individuals will often be required to speak to a receptionist or someone in a similar role.

Make sure your frontline staff have the appropriate training required to support the individual. This will avoid miscommunication and make sure that the person gets the correct appointment and feels confident to attend.

Make sure you have enough time available

Healthcare professionals always aim to make sure information provided, services needed, prescribed medication and any planned course of actions are fully understood.

This same essential task might just take a bit longer with someone who has a learning disability/difficulty/ASD.

You may need to take more time to ensure the individual has understood information given and is comfortable with it.

It is important to ensure that additional time is available, if needed.



Use clear language

We have a whole raft of euphemisms for sexual terms, either to avoid embarrassment or just for amusement's sake.

But these can be confusing for someone with a learning disability/ difficulty/ASD. Use clear and accurate terms – like penis, vulva or vagina and don't assume an individual has understood a term you've used without checking.

Have the right materials

Make sure that you have leaflets and the materials available that can be clearly understood. Informing Choices NI can provide guides for people with a learning disability/difficulty/ASD on both contraception and sexually transmitted infections.

Remember they're an individual

Just like all the other people you see, someone with a learning disability/difficulty/ ASD will have their own problems and life circumstances. Try not to make any assumptions about their personal lives, relationships or experiences.

Don't think that you'll be able to clearly communicate in the exact same way with everyone who has a different learning disability/difficulty/ASD.

Try to remain flexible, and adjust your communication with each individual to see what works for them.