



Frawley & O'Shea

**RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY
EDUCATION BY AND FOR PEOPLE
WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY**

**Living Safer Sexual Lives: Respectful
Relationships. Looking at attitudes
values and practices that enable
people to have relationships.**

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Background – our starting point

- A review of the literature on violence and abuse including sexual abuse, indicates a significantly higher level of risk of all violence and abuse and in particular sexual abuse for people and in particular women with an intellectual disability.

Violence and abuse of people with an intellectual disability is a significant personal and social issue

- Programs reviewed indicate that there are very few that involved people with an intellectual disability in the design and delivery of programs

A commitment to the self advocacy dictum – Nothing about us without us

- Evidence that programs that use stories and adult learning approaches including peer education are effective in violence and abuse prevention

Build on existing evidence based programs and approaches – mainstream and disability

There is a dearth of research to inform policy and practice and a lack of evaluation in existing programs (Barger & Wacker, 2009)

Research and evaluation built into program design



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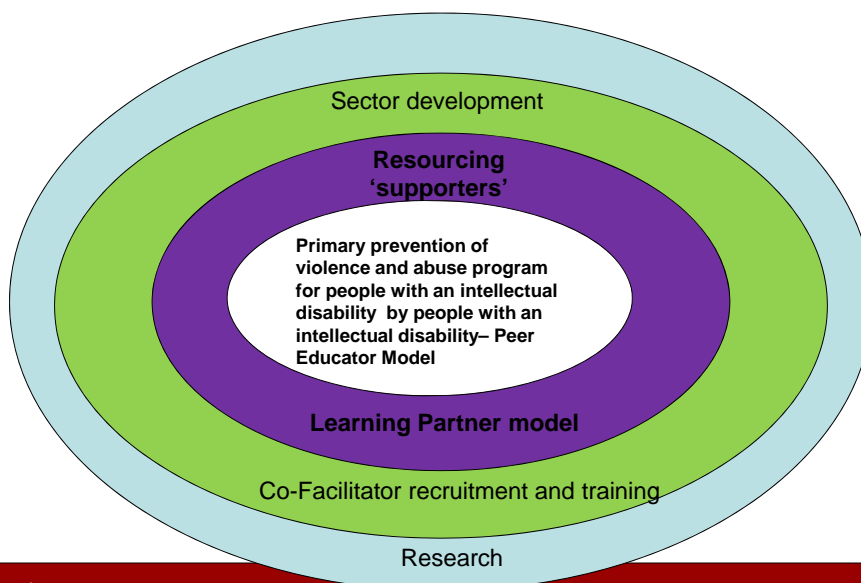
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Issue	Findings	Study/studies
Incidence and prevalence of violence and abuse	People with a disability are at a greater risk to violence and abuse than the general population	Brownbridge, (2006); Chenoweth, (1996); Fitzsimons (2010); French, (2007); Martin, (2006) ; Nosek,(2001); Sobsey & Mansell, (1990) , Sobsey, (1994 & 2000)
Women with disabilities have increased risk of particular experiences of violence and abuse	40% greater likelihood of IPV 4 x more likely to experience sexual assault Likely to experience specific types of violence and abuse relating to disability Abuse (all forms) more prevalent for people with an intellectual disability – compared to people with no disabilities and people with other disabilities.	Brownbridge (2006) Martin et al (2006) Cockram (2003) Horner & Drum (2006)
Lack of evaluated programs and research	“Do and hope” approach Limited evidence	Barger & Wacker (2009)

What we do

- Recruit and train peer educators (people with an intellectual disability) and co-facilitators (people who work in disability and/or sexuality, sexual health, sexual assault counselling/education)
- Training on using LSSL RR materials – uses stories by people with an intellectual disability to highlight key messages about respectful relationships
- Support peer educators and co-facilitators to run the program (4 sessions) with a group of people with an intellectual disability
- Research with peer educators and workshop participants

Living Safer Sexual Lives: Respectful Relationships



What we hope to achieve

- Access to a violence and abuse prevention program for people with an intellectual disability
- Opportunities for people with an intellectual disability to be **peer educators**
- Strengthen cross sector capacity to work in this area – **co-facilitators**
- Change – personal, social, policy, practice
- Increased awareness of violence and abuse in the lives of people with an intellectual disability and an **evidence based approach to prevention education**

What we are doing today

- Consider relationships and sexuality from a **rights perspective**
- Listen to and reflect on the LSSL stories – they will tell you about the real experiences of people with an intellectual disability **negotiating self determined relationships**
- Discuss how Disability Support Workers can be part of the change needed to **enable people to have respectful relationships**

Rights based approach

- The right to grow up and be treated with respect and dignity accorded to adults
- The right to know, to have accessible information that can be understood and applied
- The right to be sexual, to make and break relationships
- The right not to be at the mercy of the individual sexual attitudes of different caregivers
- The right not to be sexually abused
- The right to humane and dignified environments (Craft, 1987)



Rights Activity

- Look at the rights cards
- Think about someone you support and the environment you support them in
- Consider what would be needed for them to have this right recognised – what is it like now? what are the barriers?
- Try to imagine their life with these rights – what would the 'enablers' be?



Learning from the LSSL stories

Molly's Story:

- What would you say to Molly if she was here?
- What would you say about her experiences?
- What could be some 'enablers' to support Molly?



Learning from the stories

Kevin's story:

- What would you say to Kevin?
- What do you think the barriers are to Kevin having a happy, safe, private relationship?
- What could be some 'enablers' for Kevin to have a respectful, happy, safe and private relationship?



Key Messages – our approach to learning from the stories

- Project team brainstormed key messages from each story
- Used a rights perspective to develop these and a view that people with an intellectual disability can learn about and understand personal and social issues that impact on their relationships
- It is up to everybody to create the change needed



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Key messages - Molly and Kevin

Molly	Kevin
<p>Being a woman – It is up to a woman to decide what kind of contraception she wants to use – it is good to get information about this; it is good to have someone to talk to about woman's health; it is up to a woman and her partner to decide about having a baby</p> <p>Relationships & Sexuality – Molly's boyfriend is cool, calm and collected – these are good qualities in a person; Sharing decisions about sex in your relationship is a sign of a Respectful Relationship. The two people together make these decisions about what is Ok and what is not OK. Getting married is something some people want to do. It is the decision of the two people who want to get married.</p>	<p>Being a man – Men can be loving and really open about their feelings</p> <p>Sex & Sexual relationships – Having sex is just one way to be close to your partner, you can kiss, cuddle and touch each other too.</p> <p>Some men have sex with men, some women have sex with women. This is OK and nobody can tell you if you are gay or not.</p> <p>Sexual Health – You can't really tell if you are OK from just looking at your penis, you need to see a doctor or sexual health nurse to make sure</p>



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What do these stories tell us about sex and relationships in the lives of people with a disability

- Other people making decisions for them
- Not seen as adults
- Knowing that they are treated differently
- Limited knowledge about safe sex – limited access to information they can understand
- Lack of privacy
- People want close and intimate relationships
- Can negotiate with partners in their relationships
- Not 'allowed' to have self determined relationships



What Disability Support Organisations can do

Consider your organisation & discuss:

- How you measure up in recognising relationship rights – what are the barriers and what enablers can you identify?
- Think about the stories– how would/could your organisation enable the people in them to have respectful, safe, happy and self determined relationships?



Sobsey (1991)

It is society's response to disability,
not the disability itself that
accounts for much of the
increased risk experienced by
people with disabilities



References and resources

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