

Chapter 4:

To love and be loved

We asked people with learning disabilities and their families what is important to them about relationships, loving someone else and being loved. They said:

- Loving and sexual relationships involving people with learning disabilities are not seen as important or supported.
- People living with disabilities having sex is seen as a health issue rather than something they have a right to do.
- Support services often stop people from having full social lives.
- Keeping family relationships was not a main concern during the pandemic. This was especially the case in places where people live together but they are not related.
- Professionals often focus more on how family members support a person with learning disabilities rather than loving family relationships.
- A lack of support for families during the pandemic left them struggling with their emotions and without enough money.
- People with learning disabilities are concerned that services don't care about their relationships.
- Carers are worried what will happen to loved ones with learning disabilities when they can no longer care for them. This is because of the quality of support services.



UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

What people said they want about relationships and love is similar to the basic rights outlined in Article 23 of the UNCRPD.

Article 23 is called 'Respect for home and the family' and talks a lot about personal and intimate relationships.

We will use Article 23 to guide our work on home and family life.

There is easy read information on Human Rights **here**.



Next steps

1. Providers of support services need to follow the No Bedtimes guidance developed by the charity Stay Up Late.

The guide has been created to help people with learning disabilities enjoy evenings out and have a full and active social life.

2. Providers of support services need to work together to promote that people with learning disabilities have the right to love others and be loved.

3. During its inspections, the Care Quality Commission needs to check if people are receiving the support they need to express their sexuality.

A CQC inspection also needs to look at if people are getting support and education to have close relationships and maintain them if that is what they need.

4. Local councils and service providers should give people the support they need to have a good family life and relationships.

5. All social care workers need to receive training on how they can help people express their sexuality and have close relationships.

6. The REACH Standards should be met to help people with learning disabilities live a good, ordinary life.

This includes them having the freedom to choose their relationships.

7. A large campaign needs to be launched to raise awareness of the sexual rights of people with learning disabilities.