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A BEST PRACTICE MANUAL

For designing, delivering and evaluating programmes about sexual rights and human rights for young people with learning disabilities and their intermediaries

Abstract

This manual aims to support IPPF Member Associations in designing, delivering and evaluating programmes about sexual rights for young people with learning disabilities and their intermediaries



**Keep me
Safe**



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No parts of the manual can be used for commercial purposes

About this manual

This manual is part of a package of three manuals:

- **A best practice manual** – Designing, delivering and evaluating programmes about sexual rights and human rights for young people with learning disabilities and their intermediaries
- **Two training manuals:**
 - sensitizing intermediaries on the sexual rights of young people with learning disabilities; and
 - empowering young people with learning disabilities against sexual abuse and violence.

This package is to be used as a set to support IPPF Member Associations in setting up programmes to empower young people with learning disabilities against sexual abuse and violence.

However, this best practice manual can also be used as a manual on its own.

An online version is available at www.ippfen.org which also includes an overview of additional resources and tools that can be consulted on the topic.

About the project

This package was developed within the framework of a project entitled '**Keep me Safe**'. This two-year (2013–2014) project aims at empowering young people with learning disabilities across Europe to protect themselves against sexual abuse and violence.

It is a Europe-wide initiative that brings together the IPPF European Network Regional Office as the coordinator and 13 of its Member Associations (MAs).

The project harnesses best practice, expertise and proven strategies for preventing sexual abuse and violence against young people with learning disabilities from the most experienced MAs in this area with the aim of disseminating these skills, tools and strategies among the partnership and initiating a strategy to intervene with young people with learning disabilities and their carers in less experienced countries.

The project works with three groups of MAs:

- **Expert group:** 6 MAs that have strong expertise and experience in the field: Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal and the UK.
- **Learning group:** 3 MAs that have experience of working in the area but that would benefit from additional support: Denmark, Latvia and Macedonia.
- **Entry-level group:** 4 MAs that have identified a strong need for support in their countries but that lack a strategy to respond to this need: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Romania and Spain.

To learn more about this project, visit www.ippfen.org

About the main contributors

This manual draws on the best practice, expertise and proven strategies for preventing sexual abuse and violence against YPWLD from the following member associations:



Associação Para o Planeamento da Família (APF), Portugal: www.apf.pt



Family Planning Association (fpa), UK: www.fpa.org.uk



Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA), Ireland: www.ifpa.ie



Pro familia, Germany: www.profamilia.de



Rutgers WPF, The Netherlands: www.rutgerswfpf.org



Sensoa, Belgium: www.sensoa.be

This manual was written by Paul Casey, training manager at UKfpa with extensive input and feedback from colleagues based in the above member associations. In particular, we would like to thank Anita Butt (IFPA), Annelies Kuyper (RutgersWPF), Karen De Wilde (Sensoa), Mette Gundersen (Sex og Samfund, Denmark), Miguel Feio (APF), Miguel Tudela De La Fuente (UKfpa), Perdita Wingerter (Pro familia Passau), Sigrid Weiser (Pro familia) and Vesna Turmakovska (HERA, Macedonia) for their valuable contribution to this manual.

The project coordinators, Sarah Standaert and Marieka Vandewiele at IPPF EN Regional Office, led the development of the comprehensive package.

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Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to support IPPF Member Associations (MAs) and their partner organizations in designing, delivering and evaluating programmes about sexual rights and human rights for young people with learning disabilities and their intermediaries.

Everyone working with and supporting young people with learning disabilities must be able to balance the rights of those they are supporting against the need to protect vulnerable individuals from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. They also need to uphold the rights of young people with learning disabilities to consensual and loving relationships and to freedom of sexual expression, no matter what the nature of their learning disability. This can be achieved by carrying out proactive programmes which actively enable young people with learning disabilities to be safe and to challenge any inappropriate or unwanted sexual contact and sexual abuse from other young people or from adults.

This manual will help you to:

- understand the principles for carrying out sexual rights and human rights programmes with young people with learning disabilities;
- understand the background information that you need to know or acquire to carry out such programmes;
- understand the overall framework that you need to put in place to ensure that the programme is successful and achieves your intended outcomes; and
- understand how the MA and its partner organizations can work in partnership to keep young people with learning disabilities safe from sexual abuse.

This manual should be read in conjunction with the manual for sensitizing intermediaries on the sexual rights of young people with learning disabilities and the manual for empowering young people with learning disabilities against sexual abuse and violence, which contain ideas for activities and session plans that you can use with young people with learning disabilities and their intermediaries.

This manual assumes that the MA and its partner organizations will be working closely together to develop the programmes, with the MA providing expertise on sexual rights, human rights and sexuality, and the partner organizations providing experience and knowledge of working with young people with learning disabilities in a range of contexts.

Why do we need to develop specific programmes for young people with learning disabilities?

Young people with learning disabilities may be more vulnerable to abuse than others for a range of reasons, including:

- they may not fully understand their rights, including the right to say 'no', as they may never have had the opportunity to take part in structured educational programmes about relationships, sex, sexuality and sexual boundaries;
 - the way that they have been socialized might mean that they want to please others and may not realize that what is happening to them is abusive;
-

- they may need to, or be encouraged to, rely on others, which means that they may feel powerless and dependent on the people who may be abusing them;
- if their behaviour changes as a result of being sexually abused, this may be misinterpreted as something that forms part of their disability, rather than as a possible indicator of sexual abuse;
- they may not have the ability to communicate well, as they may not have the words or the ability to tell others what is happening; and
- if they are living in a care home, hospital or some other institutional setting, then they may have learned to comply with the wishes of the people caring for them. This can make it easier for others to trick, manipulate or force them to do things they do not want to do.

What do we mean by learning disability?

If someone has a learning disability, it means that, compared to their non-disabled peers, they can find it harder to:

- understand new information;
- understand complex information;
- learn new skills; and/or
- cope independently with everyday life.

Having a learning disability is not the same as having a learning difficulty or mental illness, although some people with learning disabilities may also have these.

There are different ways of thinking about learning disability which include the social model and the medical model. The social model of learning disability considers the way in which society is organized and how this might affect someone with a learning disability. This model encourages those working with people with learning disabilities to consider the barriers in society that might restrict the life choices of people with learning disabilities and find ways of challenging and/or removing these barriers so that people with learning disabilities can live a more independent life and be in control of their life choices.

The medical model of disability considers how people are disabled because of their difference. It considers mostly the clinical aspects of the disability and how these can be treated or managed through some kind of medical intervention such as therapy or medication. Some people with learning disabilities will clearly need certain medications if they have a medical condition which requires them. But over-reliance on a medical model may mean that people with learning disabilities become too dependent on medical professionals rather than developing independent skills. This in turn can lead to people with learning disabilities having low expectations of themselves and the world around them, which, in a social model, can be challenged by providing a stimulating environment or tailored activities which improve their self-esteem such as those contained in the accompanying manuals for this programme.

For this reason, this manual assumes that your approach will incorporate a social model of learning disability, and the activities that have been provided in the other accompanying manuals (sensitizing intermediaries on the sexual rights of young people with learning disabilities, and empowering young people with learning disabilities against sexual abuse and violence) will encourage you to support people with learning disabilities to stay safe from harm and improve their life chances concerning their relationship and sexuality needs.

Getting started...

It might seem a bit overwhelming at the beginning to find a starting point and eventually run a programme which will be useful to intermediaries and young people with learning disabilities. It will be helpful to do some initial mapping to decide what the priorities are in your country and your organizations(s), and some of the information provided in this manual is designed to help you to do this. It will also be helpful to focus on what your intended outcomes are for the young people with learning disabilities and how they will be safer from sexual abuse as a result of the work with intermediaries and with them directly. Once you have identified these outcomes, you can focus on the sections of this manual that are most relevant to your situation, identifying how the best practice suggestions made in each section can help you do what you need to do.

For example, if the MA and its partner organization have identified that robust policies are in place to support the work, then it may be most relevant to focus initially on the section that deals with ensuring that your programme contains a good balance between knowledge and information, skills, feelings and emotions, values and attitudes and that you identify a suitable sequence in which the activities can take place.

If the MA and the partner organization have identified that there are lots of people who are skilled in working directly with young people with learning disabilities but they are not sure of the capacity or willingness of these workers to deal with sexuality issues, you might want to focus initially on encouraging the workers to complete the individual checklist (Figure 2) as a way of helping you to develop a training programme for them so that they feel more confident in addressing sexuality issues with young people with learning disabilities.

Remember that you can support each other to identify what you think is the most useful starting point, remembering that you can adjust your plans as you carry out the work together, using the relevant parts of this manual as you need them.

Securing organizational commitment and support, knowing your own strengths and identifying partner organisations

Before starting any programme which aims to prevent the sexual abuse of young people with learning disabilities, it is important that you have both the commitment and support of your organization and that, as an individual, you are also aware of your own skills, knowledge, values and attitudes concerning sexuality and young people with learning disabilities.

If your organization has links to your country's government departments or ministers who set the policy and/or funding parameters for work with young people with learning disabilities, then you can ask how they might support the work you want to carry out, or how they might be able to disseminate the learning from your programme throughout the country to encourage others carrying out similar work. MAs will be in a position to take the lead in this area, as they will usually already be involved in advocacy and lobbying work with ministers and other government officials.

Building alliances

For your programme to be as successful as possible, it is important to consider what alliances and partnerships you can make with stakeholders and organizations that are already working with young people with learning disabilities in some capacity. Forging such alliances means that you will then have access to intermediaries and young people themselves with whom the programme can be carried out. You will need to identify the key stakeholders with whom you can build alliances, while ensuring that the purpose of the programme you wish to carry out is as clear as possible to the stakeholders.

IPPF has provided some tools to help you identify possible partners in your own country, and these are included here:

Partner Identification Tool

Name & Objective of Partner Organisation –

| | |
|---|---|
| a) Partners, places and areas our organization works well with: | b) Partners, places and external factors which are needed to improve our work |
| c) (SRHR) Activities our organization provides & tools used to reach YPWLD: | d) (SRHR) Tools and resources our organization still needs: |
| e) Type of young people our organization reaches out to: | f) Types of people our organization struggles to reach out to: |
| g) Most vulnerable group: | h) Why this group: |

Guidance for using the partner identification tool:

Purpose

It will help you to:

- Shortlist potential partners; and
- Identify the sub-target group of young people with learning disabilities. Since this is a very wide group: which young people with learning disabilities are these partner organizations targeting/working with?

This tool is designed predominately for potential partner organizations to answer and for you to take along to the first meeting with them. Try to make the potential partner feel as relaxed as possible; this is not an examination, just a time to share ideas and see how collaborating on the project would benefit both your organization and your potential partner.

Guiding Questions for discussion with potential partner

Name and type of organization:

This asks for the name and type of the potential partner organization, so you can keep a list of the people you have spoken to.

Types could be: school, college, day-care centre, institution, parent group, community group, NGO or other.

BOX 1: General information about the organization

The purpose of these questions is to learn a bit more about what the organization is doing in the area of young people with learning disabilities.

- What are the main objectives/aims of the organization/institution/body? By asking for their objectives you can see if their principles are in line with yours and also the KEEP ME SAFE objectives.
- What do they do? Areas of work?
- Where are they located?
- Who are their partners?
- Ask about the places and projects they work (if applicable), so you can build an idea of their expertise.

BOX 2: The potential partner organization and SRHR

Once you have gained more information about the general work of the potential partner organization, you can ask questions about their view and opinions on the need for SRHR education for young people with learning disabilities.

- This is an entry point to ask whether there have been occasions when they were faced with SRHR problems which they did not know how to deal with (for example, masturbation in public places, abuse, dating, relationships, young people with learning disabilities asking questions etc.)
- How do they deal with SRHR issues?
- Does the organization see a need for SRHR education and services? Why/why not?
- Does the organization provide SRHR education and services?
- If so, how and what is provided to young people with learning disabilities?
- For tools: ask them to tell you the names of successful tools they use when working with young people/carers/institutions, and how the tools work. If they are happy to share, ask them if the tools are available for you to see.
- Ask the organization to discuss the two main areas where they need the most support to be able to work successfully with young people with learning disabilities on SRHR. These areas might include: policies, training, best practice guidelines or key tools for reaching out to young people, for example.
- Ask them to think about their past experiences and what support they think they would require to (further) educate young people with learning disabilities about sexual abuse and violence.

BOX 3: Type of young people with learning disabilities

- What type of learning disability do the young people they work with have?
- What is their age, sex and housing situation (i.e. do they live in institutions or with their families)?
- Are there specific groups of young people with learning disabilities that are more difficult to reach on SRHR issues? What could be improved to reach out to them?

BOX 4: Most vulnerable group

This question will help you to think about which sub-target group is in most need, and if your organization would be able to reach out to them.

- Who are the most vulnerable among the young people with learning disabilities they work with? As an example, if the organization works with young people with Down's syndrome aged 14–30, they may classify young girls with Down's syndrome aged 16–18 who live in rural areas as the most vulnerable group.
 - Why does your potential partner think this group is the most vulnerable? They may say that young girls in rural areas are most vulnerable due to isolation and gender issues.
-

Assessing organizational commitment and support

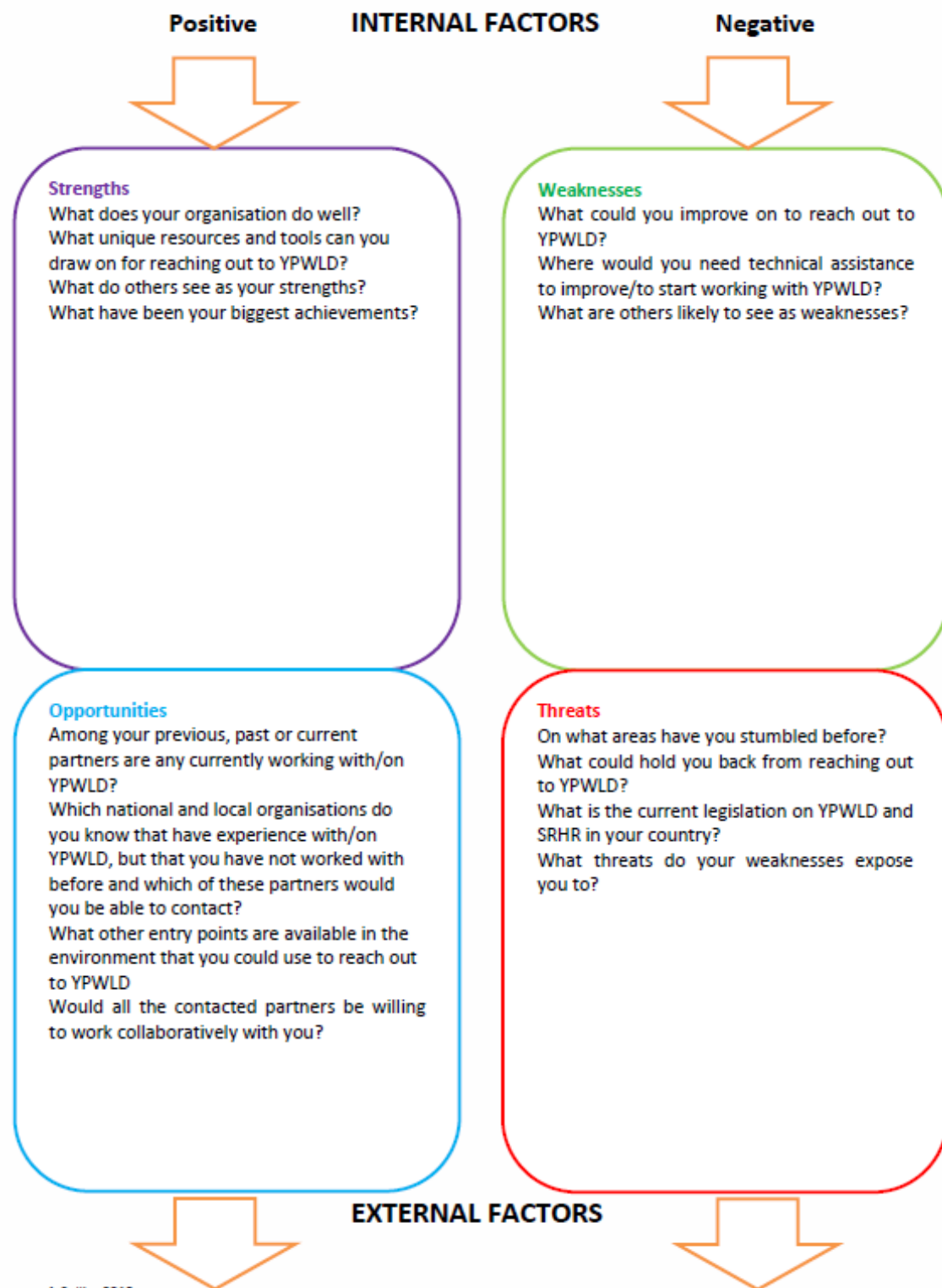
To assess the situation in your own organization, you can use the following SWOT analysis as a guide to working out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats within your organization, enabling you to prioritize the areas within the organization that need to be addressed to ensure that your programme is successful.

An example of a straightforward SWOT analysis that MAs can use to assess their strengths and weaknesses is given below in Figure 1.

The partner organization can also adapt this SWOT to check their own readiness to engage with this work by adding the phrase 'and sexuality programmes' after 'young people with learning disabilities' in the Opportunities section. It may be helpful for the MA and the partner organization to share their SWOT analyses with each other as a way to begin the discussion about how best they can work with and support each other.

You should also remember to check whether your own organization and, more widely, your own country has any tools for ensuring that young people with learning disabilities are protected from sexual abuse, and you can use these in conjunction with the SWOT analysis below as a way to check that all the important issues are covered in your organizational assessment.

Figure 1: SWOT analysis



Guidance for using the SWOT analysis

This SWOT analysis is designed as a 'map' to assist in discovering your organization's current capacities and gaps in being able to work with young people with learning disabilities at a national level. Furthermore, it is a method of assessing potential national partner organizations that would be willing and have the means to work with young people with learning disabilities on issues involving sexual abuse.

There are four areas highlighted on the SWOT analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Strengths and weaknesses are **internal** indicators based primarily on factors within your organization such as in-house capabilities, resources and people, which will highlight your organization's ability to work with young people with learning disabilities. Opportunities and threats are mostly **external** factors, outside your organization, based on secondary data and the environment which your organization cannot control but which impact the project in positive and negative ways. By looking at the world outside your organization, you will be able to discover both national and local potential partners that would be willing and able to collaborate with you.

The SWOT analysis is meant to be used as a participatory sharing activity with all staff and, if possible, beneficiaries/partners for their feedback. It is good to engage as a team on all four sections, as ideas are interlinked within the sections. This is not a time to point fingers and criticize; it is a time to share and come together to strengthen and adapt your skills and capacities, so you can move forward to be able to work successfully with young people with learning disabilities. Be creative, take your time and include words, pictures and diagrams. And remember, no idea is a bad idea, merely a suggestion!

First step: Strengths – internal:

What does your organization do well?

Look at previous work you have done, and think of the top two skills/expertise which make your organization stand out. This question does not have to be directly related to young people with learning disabilities; it is designed to identify your strengths as an organization in general.

What unique resources and tools can you draw on for reaching out to young people with learning disabilities?

Think about the past activities and resources your organization has developed, as you want to capitalize on these resources and adapt them for this project. These resources can be staff, location, office buildings, previous packs you have designed and any other unique traits that your organization has which make it stand out from the crowd.

What do others see as your strengths?

Sometimes it is hard to analyse your own strengths. Think about feedback you have received from funders or partner organizations. This can also be an individual task – what do you as a representative of your organization bring to the project; think about what skills staff

members have which would be useful or relevant in working with young people with learning disabilities.

What have been your greatest achievements?

This question should be the most exciting one for your organization. Think of projects that you have been really proud of and excited about. Why was it successful, and how can you recreate that for future work with young people with learning disabilities?

Second step: Weaknesses – internal

What could you improve on to reach out to young people with learning disabilities?

Now you know your strengths, think about what could/should be adapted for reaching out to young people with learning disabilities on sexual abuse. Discuss if any key elements are missing or areas need improvement such as capabilities or resources.

Where would you need technical assistance to improve/start working with young people with learning disabilities?

This is a key question for understanding which would be the best fit among the Expert MAs to reach your full potential. In your group discuss the two areas where you would need the most support to be able to work with young people with learning disabilities; is it experience, contacts, training? Be specific, and think feasibility about the number, location and types of young people you would be able to work with.

What are others likely to see as weaknesses?

Sometimes we have to distance ourselves to get a full picture of our strengths and weaknesses, so for this question imagine what an external person would say about your organization in terms of improvement, especially for connecting with young people with learning disabilities and SRHR. Refer to any critical feedback you may have from beneficiaries or partners, and look at the areas they discuss for improvement.

Third step: Opportunities – external

Among your previous, past or current partners are any currently working with/on young people with learning disabilities?

This may require some internet research if you have little knowledge of the organization/individual's recent background. Look up their annual reports: who are they funded by? And have a browse through their website for ideas. Discuss if your organization has collaborated on a previous project involving young people with learning disabilities by looking at stored documents, files and back data. Look at old files and diaries, e-mails, etc. to discover if you have details of partners and then contact them to arrange a meeting. The more contacts you get in touch with, the more likely you are to find a potential partner.

Which national and local organizations do you know that have experience with/on young people with learning disabilities but with which you have not worked before, and which of these partners would you be able to contact?

For this question it would be good to look into both national and local potential partners such as state agencies, which may have local initiatives in your area. Find out about local institutions such as schools, colleges and local federations such as parent groups in your organization's community, as it is good to start in places about which you know the context and have knowledge about the environment surrounding young people with learning disabilities. Discover if any colleagues have past links with the national/local organizations: for example, do you attend the same church or social group? Can you find the contact details on the organization's website, or perhaps you have attended the same conference and have the details of an employee from their business card.

What other entry points are available in the environment that you could use to reach out to young people with learning disabilities?

Entry points refer to environmental factors happening around you nationally and locally, such as favourable legislation, recent headlines in the media around young people with learning disabilities or sexual abuse, or organizations using person-centred planning. Examine how your organization can tap into these national and local entry points and use them to the project's advantage.

Would all the contacted partners be willing to work with you?

This question can be discussed by referring to the research you have conducted into organizations' recent history. Once you have completed the SWOT analysis and feel secure enough, now is the time to contact the person/organization to discover if they are keen to be involved in the project. The first step is to arrange a meeting with the organization to get your foot in the door. A mapping tool will be provided to use in the meeting, which will assist you and your potential partner to see what they could bring to the project and what capacities they lack.

Final step: Threats – external

On what areas have you stumbled before?

If your organization has approached this topic before and had difficulty, this is the time to explore why and how this has affected your organization moving forward. We learn from our mistakes by re-evaluating them and adapting our work accordingly.

What could hold you back from reaching out to young people with learning disabilities?

This question is based more on the situation in your country as opposed to your own organization's weaknesses, as you have already discussed those in the previous question. Now is a time to discuss practical matters which you cannot control but which you see and can take into account in your design to work with young people with learning disabilities.

What is the current legislation on young people with learning disabilities and SRHR in your country?

Do your research! It is imperative that you know the legal environment around working with young people with learning disabilities. IPPF's policy for protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults as well as the national legislation are important to know and adhere to, to ensure that your staff and then the young people you work with will be safe.

What threats do your weaknesses expose you to?

Refer back to your weaknesses and analyse the potential long-term issues those weaknesses could lead to in terms of working with young people with learning disabilities on sexual issues. If you can acknowledge them now, then you are able to face them, express them and, together with the other MAs, overcome them to make a success of the project!

Once you have completed the SWOT analysis, you should have a good picture of your organization's capabilities, resources and processes. Furthermore, you should have ascertained an understanding of the areas in which your organization excels as well as the areas which need improvement to begin the process of connecting with young people with learning disabilities. From the SWOT analysis, a list of potential partners has been created, with which you can get in contact, rekindle a professional relationship and with assistance from IPPF EN suggest a partnership with your organization to protect vulnerable young people from sexual abuse and violence.

Assessing individuals' strengths, commitment to the work, and possible support needs in carrying out sexuality programmes with young people with learning disabilities

As well as assessing organizational strengths, individuals within the MA and partner organizations may find it helpful to assess their own strengths and areas for development to determine what skills, knowledge, information and support they might need in carrying out the proposed sexuality programme. Figure 2, below, outlines some of the issues you might consider.

Reflect on each point in the grid below and score yourself (where 1 = low and 5 = high) by asking the following two questions for each point in the grid:

- How competent (C) am I on this point?
- How far do I include (I) this point in my work currently?

Once you have completed the scoring, think about what actions you might take to improve your lower scores, but do not forget to value the positive aspects of your practice that you have identified with the higher scores. It would be useful to discuss your findings with colleagues and with your line manager/supervisor.

Figure 2: Self-Assessment Grid

| How would I rate my knowledge concerning... | C | I | Actions I might take |
|---|---|---|----------------------|
| The law? | | | |
| The meaning of consent? | | | |
| Who does/does not have capacity to give consent? | | | |
| How to maintain professional boundaries? | | | |
| The rights and responsibilities of young people with learning disabilities? | | | |
| The rights and responsibilities of professionals working with young people with learning disabilities? | | | |
| National policy and guidance concerning young people with learning disabilities? | | | |
| Local policy and guidance concerning young people with learning disabilities? | | | |
| What are the different forms of sexual abuse? | | | |
| Practical activities that can raise awareness among young people with learning disabilities of the different forms of sexual abuse? | | | |
| How to respond to young people who say, or indicate in other ways, that they have been sexually abused? | | | |

| How would I rate my skills in.... | C | I | Actions I might take |
|---|---|---|----------------------|
| Talking about sex, relationships, sexuality and sexual health in an accessible way with young people with learning disabilities? | | | |
| Talking about different types of contraception and sexually transmitted infections in an accessible way with young people with learning disabilities? | | | |
| Delivering proactive sexuality work with young people with learning disabilities? | | | |
| Communicating the importance of sexuality programmes to young people with learning disabilities? | | | |
| Communicating the importance of sexuality programmes for young people with learning disabilities to their parents and carers? | | | |
| Communicating the importance of sexuality programmes for young people with learning disabilities to your colleagues? | | | |
| Recognizing my own training and support needs to carry out this work, and getting these needs met? | | | |

| How would I rate my awareness and understanding of.... | C | I | Actions I might take |
|---|---|---|----------------------|
| My own values, beliefs and attitudes towards sexuality and young people with learning disabilities? | | | |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| My society's values, beliefs and attitudes towards sexuality and young people and learning disabilities? | | | |
| Balancing the rights of young people with learning disabilities against the importance of ensuring that they are protected from all forms of sexual abuse? | | | |
| The multiple discrimination the young people with learning disabilities face, especially in relation to their sexuality needs? | | | |

The above grid was adapted from Fanstone, C. and Katrak, Z. (2011) Sexuality and learning disability: a guide to supporting continuing professional development. London: FPA.

Building organizational capacity and knowledge

The IPPF EN Keep Me Safe project has developed two training manuals to develop work with young people with learning disabilities and their intermediaries. These are:

- for sensitizing intermediaries on the sexual rights of young people with learning disabilities; and
- for empowering young people with learning disabilities against sexual abuse and violence.

Using this best practice manual as a foundation and the training manuals for direct work, any MA will be able to build on its ability to train intermediaries to carry out successful programmes with young people with learning disabilities. This will help to develop and strengthen the MA's organizational capacity and will influence and build skills within strategic partner organizations.

Assessing the national and international context concerning sexuality, sexual abuse and young people with learning disabilities

It is important that you know or find out whether:

- any work has been undertaken in your own country to assess the sexuality needs of people with learning disabilities;
- any work has been undertaken to identify the risk of sexual abuse to such young people; and
- your country has any national strategies, assessment tools or suggested ways of preventing and responding to the sexual abuse of young people with learning disabilities.

Use any relevant tools or assessment methods that have been developed in your country, as this information will ensure that any programme you plan to carry out is relevant to the needs of the young people within the context of your own country.

Knowledge and understanding of the law and other relevant legal guidance (in summary)

Before carrying out any programme with young people or their intermediaries, it will be helpful to be well informed about the following legislation and other relevant legal guidance that exists:

- within your organization;
 - locally;
 - nationally;
 - within the European Union (EU);
 - internationally, including the United Nations '[International Bill of Human Rights](#)', the United Nations '[Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)' (of which there is a simplified
-

version called [‘It’s About Ability: an Explanation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities’](#) available from UNICEF and any other relevant human rights instruments as they become available; and

- within IPPF, including [‘Sexual Rights: an IPPF Declaration’](#) (2008), which in itself is grounded in core international human rights instruments and authoritative interpretations of international standards. FPA in Northern Ireland has produced a version of the Declaration for people with learning disabilities, which is reproduced in Appendix 1.

The Keep Me Safe project has developed a mapping framework which can help you identify and map what is available in your own country relating to young people with learning disabilities, sexuality and sexual abuse. This is reproduced below:

Guidance for a mapping

Of available research and data

Is there any data or research available in your country related to young people with learning disabilities and the incidence or their vulnerability to sexual abuse and violence? If so, what does it say? Briefly summarize.

Of the legal framework

It is important to be aware of the legal framework in your country, as the laws and regulations might have an impact on the lives of young people with learning disabilities and on the interventions of intermediaries.

It is important to map and analyse the legal framework in your country, in preparation for some of the specific exercises outlined in the manual for sensitizing intermediaries on the sexual rights of young people with learning disabilities.

First, check whether the United Nations 'International Bill of Human Rights' was ratified by your country and is being implemented – thus whether national legislation is in line with internationally recognized human rights.

The most important framework for our work in this project is the United Nations 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'. Find out whether it was ratified by your country, and whether national laws and regulations are in line with the Convention. How does this legislation affect the sexual rights of young people with learning disabilities and interventions of intermediaries?

In particular, look out for national legislation related to:

- Age of consent (for sexual activity, is there a difference between homosexual acts for men and for women? When is someone able to consent according to the law? What is used to assess someone's capacity to consent? Who does and who does not have the capacity to consent?);
 - Parental consent laws in relation to accessing sexual and reproductive health services;
 - Sexual assault laws (there might be different laws for rape, sexual assault, other sexual offences, statutory rape etc.);
 - What should intermediaries do in case of sexual abuse? (duty to report to authorities vs. duty to maintain confidentiality);
 - Laws where sexuality and new media (mobile phones, internet, Facebook etc.) intersect – for example, laws in relation to sexting, indecent exposure. Also see what this would mean for sexuality education for young people with learning disabilities;
 - Laws in relation to pornography – also see what this would mean for sexuality education for young people with learning disabilities;
 - Is there legislation that governs sexual activity with someone with an intellectual disability – what does this say?;
 - Is there legislation that deals with sexual activity between a person with a disability and their care worker?;
-

- Is there non–discrimination legislation that specifically relates to young people with learning disabilities?;
- Legislation related to sex work: can people with disabilities have access to sex workers? And can an intermediary assist their access?; and
- Sexuality education legislation and regulations:
 - Is sexuality education mandatory? If so, also for young people with learning disabilities?
 - Is there a national curriculum? If so, would you say it is comprehensive?
 - Are there any guidelines for sexuality education for young people with learning disabilities?

Of legislation in relation to child protection and the reporting systems you need to use (focusing on young people with learning disabilities)

It is important for MAs to know what to do if a case of sexual abuse is reported to your MA or to someone in your organization (e.g. during discussions in a training or education session). Inform your project partners and all stakeholders involved in the project about national child protection policy, your MA's specific procedures and policy for child protection – and what should happen if there is any disclosure reported to the MA. And find out whether your partners have a child protection policy in place or what they do in case of sexual abuse.

- On a national level: is there a child protection policy or law, and what does this say? (Is sexual abuse explicitly part of it?)
 - In case of sexual violence and abuse:
 - Does it give guidance on responding to it?
 - Does it give guidance on confidentiality?
 - Which institutions do you need to report to? (This can be different for different types of organizations – e.g. schools or care institutions.)
 - What follow-up will take place after a notification?
 - How will the reporter of the incident be involved in the process?
- At institutional/partner level: the same questions should be asked in each institution/organization that will be involved in the project – do they have a protection policy, what does it say, whose responsibility is it to report and to whom, and is it being implemented?

Working within a clear and robust policy framework

Before carrying out any programme with young people or their intermediaries, it is best practice for the MA to check that the partner organization has a robust, agreed policy concerning young people with learning disabilities, sexuality and sexual abuse which guides the work and helps you to ensure that you and/or the intermediaries have a policy to refer to if any issues arise during the planning and delivery of the programme. The policy should also ensure that any young people with learning disabilities are supported in their right to express their sexuality appropriately as well as being protected from sexual abuse.

If the partner organization does not have a policy, or the policy does not cover all of the areas below, then this can form part of the action planning for a later date and should not stop the work from going ahead.

The following checklist can be used to evaluate any existing policy and policy guidelines so that you can prioritize any issues that need to be addressed:

Policy Checklist

| Is the following in your policy? | Yes | No | Needs to be addressed |
|---|-----|----|-----------------------|
| Introduction | | | |
| Name of your organization and an explanation of who it is for and what it does | | | |
| An explanation about the evidence base concerning what sexuality work is and why it is important | | | |
| What is sexuality work? What are the benefits? Why is it important (including the fact that sexuality work can help to prevent sexual abuse)? | | | |
| How does sexuality work relate to other work – for example, life skills and emotional health and well-being? | | | |
| The aims of the policy | | | |
| The principles on which the policy is based | | | |
| Law, policy, guidance and duties | | | |
| The rights of young people with learning disabilities, including the right to express their sexuality and be protected from sexual abuse | | | |
| Responsibilities of intermediaries working with young people with learning disabilities | | | |
| The law relating to young people with learning disabilities | | | |

| Is the following in your policy? | Yes | No | Needs to be addressed |
|---|-----|----|-----------------------|
| Duty of care | | | |
| Mental capacity | | | |
| Consent | | | |
| Confidentiality | | | |
| Privacy | | | |
| Protection of children and young adults with learning disabilities | | | |
| Inclusive practice in terms of age, disability, gender, marriage or same-sex registered partnership, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (depending on the equality legislation in your own country) | | | |
| Guidance on specific issues relating to young people with learning disabilities, including: | | | |
| Public and private behaviour | | | |
| Inappropriate sexualized behaviour | | | |
| Masturbation | | | |
| Intimate touching – safe and unsafe | | | |
| Sexual relationships | | | |
| Gender issues | | | |

| Is the following in your policy? | Yes | No | Needs to be addressed |
|--|-----|----|-----------------------|
| Transgender issues | | | |
| Sexual orientation | | | |
| Marriage, same-sex registered partnerships, cohabitation | | | |
| Pregnancy choices including continuing a pregnancy and keeping the baby, having the baby adopted, abortion | | | |
| Parenthood | | | |
| Contraception, including male and female sterilization | | | |
| Safer sex and condom use | | | |
| Sexually transmitted infections | | | |
| Ethnicity, culture and religion | | | |
| Pornography | | | |
| Legal and practical issues involved in accessing sex workers | | | |
| Other relevant issues in your organization or in your country | | | |
| Supporting and protecting staff | | | |
| Managing any inappropriate behaviour by young people with learning disabilities or by others | | | |

| Is the following in your policy? | Yes | No | Needs to be addressed |
|--|-----|----|-----------------------|
| Reporting suspected or actual sexual abuse | | | |
| Supervision | | | |
| Access to a sexuality 'expert' within your organization | | | |
| Reporting procedures | | | |
| Discussing dilemmas with an 'expert' within the organization | | | |
| Access to training | | | |
| Access to suitable resources | | | |
| Partnership working | | | |
| Parents and carers of young people with learning disabilities | | | |
| Other agencies and services | | | |
| Monitoring and evaluation of the policy | | | |
| Who will monitor the implementation of the policy? | | | |
| How will the work be evaluated? | | | |
| When will the policy next be reviewed (once every two to three years is advisable) | | | |

The above table was adapted from Fanstone, C. and Katrak, Z. (2011) Sexuality and learning disability: a guide to supporting continuing professional development. London: FPA.

Guidelines and procedures

Given that you may be working with young people with learning disabilities, their intermediaries or both, there are specific issues that you should consider, having reviewed the policy for young people with learning disabilities, and you should ensure that there are guidelines and procedures in place to cover the issues and situations listed above.

Facilitating a programme with intermediaries about the sexual rights of young people with learning disabilities

Now that your MA has set up partnerships with organizations working directly with young people with learning disabilities, and you have built your organization's capacity and knowledge in this particular field, you are ready to bring about change in the lives of young people with learning disabilities.

It is best practice to have a component of your programme aimed at training and sensitizing intermediaries. Intermediaries are persons such as carers, teachers, parents or social workers who support young people with learning disabilities and can have a big impact on the extent to which they can exercise their sexual rights or not.

Below are some general tips for facilitating and evaluating a programme with intermediaries. However, for more tips, tricks and concrete exercises, we refer you to the specific training manual for sensitizing intermediaries (which is part of the comprehensive package).

Facilitating a programme with intermediaries

- Ensure that the aim and outcomes of the session(s) have been circulated in advance so that the intermediaries have some idea of what the session(s) might involve.
 - Ensure that you have clear working agreements/ground rules which cover:
 - Confidentiality – keeping personal information private within the group you are working with; what good practice can be shared outside the group;
 - Facilitator's exception to the confidentiality agreement – what you will need to do if someone in the group discloses that a young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm; explain the procedure that you will follow; explain to the group that you will always discuss an exception to confidentiality with the person concerned before taking any further action; in any case, encourage all intermediaries to know their own policies and procedures for reporting suspected or actual sexual abuse by another young person or by an adult;
 - Each person should take responsibility for their own learning and how much they decide to share;
 - Everyone should use 'I' statements as much as possible to avoid generalizations or stereotyping and so that it is clear that what someone has said is their own view or opinion;
 - Accept and respect others – there could be a wide range of experiences and opinions in the group; 'different' does not mean 'wrong';
 - It is OK to disagree with what someone has said; it is OK to agree too!
 - Listen actively to each other;
-

- There is no such thing as a silly question – intermediaries should be encouraged to ask questions at appropriate points, as one person's question can often help others to understand issues too.

You should also ensure that you have an appropriate, comfortable and private space to work in, with refreshments at appropriate intervals.

You should also ensure that you cover an appropriate balance of activities, which should include:

- Giving information which helps intermediaries engage with a range of young people;
- Respectfully challenging any attitudes, values or practice which might limit a young person's access to information or services or infringe their human rights;
- Participatory/experiential activities so that intermediaries can discuss issues or ideas with each other and with you as the facilitator; and
- Materials, resources and exercises which allow intermediaries to express their thoughts, feelings, current experience and how they might want to work in the future.

Evaluating the work with intermediaries

It is best practice for any programme to establish aims and some learning outcomes so that everyone involved knows the purpose of the programme that they are attending. You will develop these at the beginning of your programme, but you can then evaluate the work that you have carried out to see how effective it was.

An example of an evaluation from UK FPA is given below:

Evaluation form

Sex and relationships work with young people with learning disabilities: an introduction

Trainers: _____

Date: _____

We would be grateful if you could complete this form, giving as much information as possible so that we can improve our training in the future. This information is confidential and will be used to improve future courses.

The purpose of this course is to enhance and confirm the existing skills of experienced practitioners working with people with learning disabilities in the area of sexuality and sexual health. How well did we achieve this aim?

- ☐ Not well
- ☐ In part
- ☐ Well
- ☐ Very well

Please rate how the course outcomes were met.

Please rate your answers by circling the appropriate number for each area on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = not well and 5 = very well

| Learning outcomes | Not well | | | | | Very well | | | | |
|---|----------|---|---|---|---|-----------|--|--|--|--|
| Updated knowledge of legal issues and government guidance regarding young people with learning disabilities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | | |
| Examined case studies and discussed good practice in the workplace | | | | | | | | | | |
| Addressed values and attitudes and the impact these have on work | | | | | | | | | | |
| Examined a range of current resources suitable for young people with learning disabilities, and experienced examples of exercises | | | | | | | | | | |

Taking into account the above learning outcomes, do you feel overall that you have increased your knowledge and or skills as a result of attending this training? (Please circle)

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

What did you find most useful during this training?

What, if anything, was not useful?

What will you change in your workplace as a result of this course?

The course (Please circle)

| The pace of the course | Too slow | Just right | Too fast |
|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| The level of the course | Too slow | Just right | Too fast |
| The opportunity for participation | Too little | Just right | Too much |
| The handouts and leaflets | Bad | Sufficient | Very good |

How would you rate the trainer/s in terms of organization, knowledge and facilitation skills?

If you have any other comments about the course, please write them below:

Would you recommend this course to those carrying out similar work? (Please circle)

YES NO

THANK YOU

Facilitating a programme with young people with learning disabilities to protect them against sexual violence and abuse

Once you have the intermediaries and their institutions or settings engaged as allies for change, they will support you to uphold the sexual rights of young people with learning disabilities in their daily lives and routine. Below, we have included some general tips for designing, facilitating and evaluating a programme for young people with learning disabilities. However, more tips and concrete exercises are available in the specific training manual for empowering young people with learning disabilities against sexual abuse and violence (which is part of the comprehensive package).

Taking into account the specific issues faced by young people with learning disabilities when deciding on the structure, topics and sequence of the sessions

Young people with learning disabilities may be unable to access specific information available to their peers who are not disabled because of literacy difficulties, cognitive difficulties or because they rely on others to help them access information. Therefore, it can be difficult to determine what a young person with learning disabilities knows or would like to know. There is published material available that you can use to assess the sexual knowledge and understanding of young people with learning disabilities so that you can tailor the programme directly to their needs. Examples of assessments that can be used include 'The Big Question? Assessing Sexual Knowledge' from NHS Lothian, UK, and 'Sexual Knowledge and Behaviour Assessment Tool' from Me-and-Us, available at www.me-and-us.co.uk/assessmenttool

If you do not have access to these assessment tools, you can provide a simple tool yourself by providing a list of topics (such as those in the table below) and asking the young people with learning disabilities to choose those topics that interest them the most. You will need to include the topics that are designed to help them protect themselves from sexual abuse if they do not choose these themselves.

To address these topics, it is important that the programmes you intend to run have an appropriate balance of knowledge and information, skills, recognizing and managing feelings and emotions, and attitudes and values. The table below summarizes the kinds of topics that you should consider, depending on the needs of your participants and what prior knowledge they have. These are specific issues which may need to be deliberately taught.

The issues marked with an asterisk (*) are those which should be prioritized to ensure that young people are protected from abuse, but best practice would be to include as many of the issues below as possible in a planned series of sessions over time. Some issues will need to be repeated, depending on the participants' needs. The table below is not sequential; you will need a starting point that is suitable for the individual or group of young people with learning disabilities.

| Knowledge and information | Skills | Feelings and emotions | Attitudes and values |
|--|--|---|--|
| Knowing my body | Giving permission* | Recognizing my own feelings* | How I see myself |
| Awareness of others' bodies | Refusing permission* | Recognizing others' feelings | What I value about myself |
| Vocabulary for sexual parts of the body* | Using the language of asking and initiating | Managing my own feelings | What I value about others |
| Similarities and differences between men and women | Using the language of refusing* | Showing feelings through body language and gesture* | What I think about gender |
| Growth and body changes | Recognizing appropriate requests | Expressing feelings verbally: the language of feelings* | What I think about sexuality |
| Touch: good and bad* | Recognizing inappropriate requests* | Recognizing and managing sexual feelings | What I think about sexual abuse* |
| Private parts of my body* | Recognizing options | Feelings about my body | What I think about different sexual orientations and different sexual activities |
| Public and private spaces* | Saying 'yes' and 'no' to options* | Feelings about who I am (self-esteem) | What I think about people who touch my body* |
| Relationships: family, friends and sexual relationships | Asking for help* | What makes me feel happy, sad, angry* | |
| Knowing the possible consequences of taking risks | Asking for information | | |
| Knowing how to report sexual abuse* | Taking and managing risks (e.g. what do I want to achieve by taking a risk?) | | |
| Knowing my personal space, touch boundaries and sexual boundaries* | Recognizing appropriate and inappropriate touch* | | |
| Masturbation and intimate touching | Telling someone if you have been sexually abused* | | |
| Relationships, including sexual relationships | Recognizing others' personal space, touch boundaries and sexual | | |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| | boundaries | | |
| Pregnancy choices including continuing a pregnancy and keeping the baby, having the baby adopted, abortion | How to negotiate and how to compromise | | |
| Parenthood | How to show that you care about someone | | |
| Contraception | | | |
| Safer sex and condom use | | | |
| Sexually transmitted infections | | | |
| Sex, ethnicity, culture and religion | | | |
| Sex and the law including age of consent and what consent means | | | |
| Pornography | | | |
| Legal and practical issues involved in accessing a commercial sex worker | | | |
| Any other relevant issues for your country or organization | | | |

When planning the topics you will also need to consider the methods that you will use to ensure that everything is accessible to the young people with learning disabilities who attend. There are suggested activities in the manual for young people with learning disabilities that you can use, but you should ensure that you:

- Have a range of visual aids and props available to support the main topic of the session;
- Remember to summarize the work of the previous session before starting today's session and explain how they are linked;
- Repeat information in different ways, using different levels of language, as appropriate;
- Link the work that you are doing in the session with the daily life and routines of the young people with learning disabilities so that they can make meaningful links to their own life and to considering how to keep themselves safe; and
- Highlight that sexual feelings are usual for everyone and that exploring sexual sensations on your own or with others who have consented is usual for young adults.

Other issues to consider when preparing your sessions with young people with learning disabilities

If you are working within a clear and robust policy framework which has accompanying guidance, as outlined in the section above, then you will already have identified many of the themes or topics that may need to be covered. However, you also need to consider the particular needs of the group that you will be working with, as follows:

- Has each member of the group given full consent to take part? (See the section in the manual for young people with learning disabilities for an example of using a consent form for group members.)
- Is there a needs assessment for this group?
- Do you have a sexual knowledge assessment for each member of the group?
- Are your proposed teaching and learning structures suitable for the needs of the group?
- Have you negotiated a clear working agreement with the group which includes what you will need to do if a group member discloses that s/he is at risk of harm or has been harmed or sexually abused?
- Are your session structures (for example, length of session, number of activities in the session) suitable for the young people in your group?
- If you are covering more than one topic over different sessions, have you considered the sequence of topics that will be most helpful to the participants?
- Have you identified the key message for each session that you will be running?
- Are all your materials inclusive of different genders and sexual orientations?
- Have you considered your own personal and professional boundaries and how you will work within these?
- Have you thought about how to set up the learning space so that everyone is comfortable and has enough room to do the activities?
- Have you made sure that the resources you plan to use meet the participants' needs and that you feel confident using them?
- Have you got a back-up plan for the session in case things do not work out as planned?
- Have you thought about what you will do if the young people with learning disabilities make personal disclosures about their sexuality?
- What support and supervision is needed to carry out the work?

In addition, having made the young people with learning disabilities aware of their rights and responsibilities concerning different areas of sexuality, you will also need to explain that not all governments and/or agencies take up their responsibilities. For example, although there are many effective methods of contraception available, not all methods are available in every country, so young people with learning disabilities may experience some frustration when asking for what they want. It would be useful to explain if there are organizations that are advocating for change so that the young people with learning disabilities know that the issues raised are being addressed.

Evaluating the work with young people with learning disabilities

To learn from the work that you have carried out and to develop future programmes, it is important to evaluate the work that you have done. There are many ways that you can evaluate the work with young people with learning disabilities, depending on their level of ability.

Examples include:

- Provide a list of statements with which they can agree or disagree by putting their thumbs up (for agree) or thumbs down (for disagree). For example: “I feel more confident about saying ‘no’ if someone asks me to do something I do not want to do” or “I know where to go for help if someone is hurting me.”;
- Provide a sheet with some statements on, which they can circle (as the example above) if they are confident reading and writing;
- Read out some statements and ask everyone to hold up a card with a tick (✓) if they agree or a card with a cross (✗) if they disagree; and
- Give participants a card with a smiley face (😊), a neutral face (😐) or a sad face (😞) and ask them to put one of these in a box before they leave to indicate whether they enjoyed the session and learned something from it.

Whichever method of evaluation you choose, it can be turned into one of the ending rituals for the group to help them understand that the session is coming to a close. You can find out more about opening and closing rituals in the other accompanying manuals.

Best practice summary checklist

It can sometimes be difficult to keep track of the important best practice that make up the elements of a coherent programme of work. The table below can help you to think about whether you have covered the important elements and to identify the work that you might still need to do.

| The organization... | ✓ or ✗ |
|---|--------|
| ...has a good understanding of why specific programmes are needed for young people with learning disabilities to protect them from sexual abuse | |
| ...has committed to working with intermediaries and/or young people with learning disabilities as part of its work plan, and this has been agreed at a senior level | |
| ...has mapped its strengths and knows what areas it needs to develop to deliver successful programmes with intermediaries and/or young people with learning disabilities | |
| ...has identified partner agencies that can support the delivery of the programmes | |
| ...has identified individuals within the organization who can deliver programmes; these individuals have also identified their own strengths and areas for development and will use training opportunities, mentoring and/or supervision to help them develop the skills and knowledge they need | |
| ...has mapped and developed a good understanding of the national and international context concerning sexuality, sexual abuse and young people with learning disabilities | |
| ...has a good knowledge of the child protection and vulnerable adult legislation in the country and understands the reporting systems that need to be used if a young person with learning disabilities discloses abuse or indicates that s/he may be at risk of abuse | |
| ...has a robust policy (or is developing one) which outlines the sexual rights of young people with learning disabilities and gives guidance on how to respond to them concerning their sexuality needs and incidents of sexual abuse | |
| ...has a good understanding of the specific issues faced by young people with learning disabilities, which might include: discrimination; being unable to recognize what is non-consensual behaviour and challenge abusive behaviour; lack of access to appropriate education, information and resources about issues of sexuality; being prevented by parents, carers and professionals from exploring their sexuality safely. | |
| ...has a good understanding of the elements that need to be addressed in a programme for intermediaries and/or young people with learning disabilities | |
| ...has identified a starting point for the work with intermediaries and/or young people with learning disabilities and has a clear plan which supports the | |

| The organization... | ✓ or ✗ |
|--|--------|
| development of that work | |
| ...has identified how the work will be evaluated and how the evaluation results will inform future work. | |

Conclusion

Following the steps in this manual and using it in conjunction with the manuals for sensitizing intermediaries on the sexual rights of young people with learning disabilities and for empowering young people with learning disabilities against sexual abuse and violence will help to ensure that your programme is coherent and meets the needs of those involved, with the ultimate aim of ensuring that the sexual rights of young people with learning disabilities are upheld and promoted and that they are kept safe from sexual abuse.

Appendices

Appendix 1: THE SEXUAL RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

This leaflet is based on the premise that sexual rights are a part of human rights and complements the freedom, equality and dignity of all people.

In October 2008 International Planned Parenthood (IPPF) published 'Sexual Rights: an IPPF Declaration', which adds to the 'IPPF Charter on Sexual and Reproductive Rights'. The Declaration was developed to ensure that sexual rights as human rights are respected and fulfilled, so that all individuals can exercise control, freedom and choice in their sexual and reproductive lives. It is grounded in core international human rights instruments and standards and supports the value that sexual and reproductive freedom is central to a satisfying and fulfilling life. Depriving individuals of their sexual and reproductive freedom denies them the capacity to live their life according to their own internal values and beliefs system.

While the Declaration addresses sexual rights and reproductive rights in the broadest sense, this leaflet, using the 10 Articles enshrined in the Declaration, focuses on the rights of people with learning disabilities to sexual health and well-being and to be acknowledged as sexual beings.

Article 1: Right to equality, equal protection of the law and freedom from all forms of discrimination based on sex, sexuality or gender

Without exception sexuality is an integral part of every human being. Everyone has the right to enjoy all sexual rights in order to take an active part in the economic, social, cultural and political processes in their society.

People with learning disabilities have the right to have their sexuality recognized as a positive aspect of their life and to be protected by the law against discrimination.

Article 2: The right to participation for all persons, regardless of sex, sexuality or gender

Everyone is entitled to influence decisions concerning matters that directly affect their health and well-being.

People with learning disabilities have the **right** to support and advocacy to enable them to fully participate in the development and implementation of policies determining their sexual and reproductive health, without barriers or conditions.

Article 3: The rights to life, liberty, security of the person and bodily integrity

The medical care of women should never be based on any consideration other than ensuring her well-being, and no woman should be compelled to have children.

Women with learning disabilities have the **right** to education and learning to enhance their capacity to access health facilities, services and conditions which enable them to make informed and consensual choices and decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.

Article 4: Right to privacy

Everyone has the right not to be the victim of subjective interference with their privacy, including accessing reproductive health care services.

People with learning disabilities have the **right** to have their privacy respected and upheld and shared only with those directly involved in consensual decisions about their sexuality, sexual behaviour and intimacy without arbitrary interference.

Article 5: Right to personal autonomy and recognition before the law

Everyone has the right to be recognized before the law and make decisions about their lives in an environment free from discrimination, violence or abuse.

People with learning disabilities have the **right** to a transparent and consistent capacity assessment process which enables them to:

- Decide freely on matters related to sexuality;
- Choose their sexual partners; and
- Seek to experience their full sexual potential and pleasure within a legal framework of non-discrimination and with due regard to others.

Article 6: Right to freedom of thought, opinion and expression; right to association

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion without interference. Conversely, everyone also has the right to access reproductive health care services without interference from personal conscience and religion.

People with learning disabilities have the **right** to develop their own value base and express their opinions on sexuality and relationships, and access sexual health and reproductive health care services without interference from others personal conscience and religion.

Article 7: Right to health and to the benefits of scientific progress

Everyone has the right to the highest possible quality in health care, including all care related to their sexual and reproductive health, and to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress.

People with learning disabilities have the **right** to access high-quality sexual health and reproductive health care services which reflect their special needs, including the use of accessible language by service providers.

Article 8: Right to education and information

Everyone has the right to education and information presented in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner.

People with learning disabilities have the **right** to comprehensive relationships and sexuality education based on personal growth and development which enables them to develop skills to exercise their sexual rights.

Article 9: Right to choose whether or not to marry and to found and plan a family, and to decide whether or not, how and when to have children

Everyone has the right to freely and responsibly choose whether or not to marry and to decide if and when to have children.

People with learning disabilities have the **right** to enter freely and with full consent into marriage or other partnership arrangements and to decide whether or not to have children.

Article 10: Right to accountability and redress

Everyone has the right to effective, adequate, accessible and appropriate educative, legislative, judicial and other measures to ensure and demand that those who are duty bound to uphold sexual rights are fully accountable to them.

People with learning disabilities have the **right** to hold to account those who would seek unlawfully to violate their sexual rights.

For a more comprehensive breakdown of each article of the Declaration see International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) (2008) *Sexual rights: an IPPF declaration*. London: IPPF.

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“KEEP ME SAFE”

Litsa Charalambous

- **Two training manuals:**
- sensitizing intermediaries on the sexual rights of young people with learning disabilities; and
- empowering young people with learning disabilities against sexual abuse and violence.

An online version is available at www.ippfen.org which also includes an overview of additional resources and tools that can be consulted on the topic.

- This manual will help you to:
- understand the principles for carrying out sexual rights and human rights programmes with young people with learning disabilities;
- understand the background information that you need to know or acquire to carry out such programmes;
- understand the overall framework that you need to put in place to ensure that the programme is successful and achieves your intended outcomes; and
- understand how the MA and its partner organizations can work in partnership to keep young people with learning disabilities safe from sexual abuse.

Why do we need to develop specific programmes for young people with learning disabilities?

- Young people with learning disabilities may be more vulnerable to abuse than others for a range of reasons, including:
- [?] they may not fully understand their rights, including the right to say 'no', as they may never have had the opportunity to take part in structured educational programmes about relationships, sex, sexuality and sexual boundaries;
- [?] the way that they have been socialized might mean that they want to please others and may not realize that what is happening to them is abusive;

Why do we need to develop specific programmes for young people with learning disabilities?

- ☐ they may need to, or be encouraged to, rely on others, which means that they may feel powerless and dependent on the people who may be abusing them;
- ☐ if their behaviour changes as a result of being sexually abused, this may be misinterpreted as something that forms part of their disability, rather than as a possible indicator of sexual abuse;

Why do we need to develop specific programmes for young people with learning disabilities?

- they may not have the ability to communicate well, as they may not have the words or the ability to tell others what is happening; and
- ☐ if they are living in a care home, hospital or some other institutional setting, then they may have learned to comply with the wishes of the people caring for them. This can make it easier for others to trick, manipulate or force them to do things they do not want to do.

What do we mean by learning disability?

- If someone has a learning disability, it means that, compared to their non-disabled peers, they can find it harder to:
- ☐ understand new information;
- ☐ understand complex information;
- ☐ learn new skills; and/or
- ☐ cope independently with everyday life.