

FOI 2046

13.12.23

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – INFORMATION REQUEST

What policies and procedures, relating to any aspects of intimate relationships, including sexual activity for people with intellectual disabilities are given to qualified social work staff in Learning Disability Services?

The Southern Health & Social Care Trust does not have its own policy and procedure in respect to personal relations and sexuality for people with intellectual disabilities. However community teams have access to the “Regional Adults with Learning Disabilities Personal & Sexual Relationships Operational Protocol” 2016 reviewed 2023. Please see attached.

What training is provided to qualified social work staff in Learning Disability Services when assessing capacity for sexual consent for women with intellectual disabilities?

There is no specific training provided to qualified social workers in relation to sexual consent for those with intellectual disabilities. However, although not specific to the area of personal relationships and sexuality, social work staff would have training and access to Human Rights & Mental Health (NI) Order 1986 legislation and would follow the Regional Adult Safeguarding Policy and Procedure – Prevention and Protection 2015 to ensure the service-user is safeguarded from potential abuse.

Within our Learning Disability Forensic Services, where the need arises social work staff would be offered the opportunity to complete a sex education programme. The programme is psychoeducation in nature. It is a practical resource to help staff teach relationship skills in a structured way to adults with an intellectual disability and designed to increase the service users understanding of personal and sexual relationships as well as assists in managing forensic risk.

In what way are qualified social work staff involved in the assessment of capacity to consent to sexual activity of women with intellectual disabilities?

Where a concern has been identified with regards to a woman’s capacity to consent to sexual activity due to an intellectual disability, Social work would play a pivotal role in completing assessment, risk assessment and refer to other key professionals to seeking additional assessment to support the service-user’s understanding or evidence concerns around their capacity. The capacity assessment would be undertaken by an appropriate professional medical practitioner Consultant Psychiatrist, GP etc.

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