



Promoting Inclusion for People with Intellectual Disabilities

POLICY ON Matters Relating to Sexuality

Kare Policy Document.

Policy Owner: Senior Clinical Psychologist.

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Rev 3.0	August 2023	August 2023	September 2023	September 2023

*** Previous revision details located at the end of the document.

Section 1: Policy

This policy advocates the rights and responsibilities of people with an intellectual disability to appropriate sexual expression, as well as providing for the responsibilities of staff and Kare to provide support and protection to people who use the service.

This policy is underpinned by National and International Legislation

- Assisted Decision Making Act 2015
- UNCRPD (2007)
- UN declaration of Human Rights
- EU convention of Human Rights
- Equal Status Act (2000)
- Sexual Offences Act (2017)

And Kare policy:

- Individualised Planning Policy
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults
- Social Media Policy
- Total Communication Policy
- Restrictive Practices Policy
- Risk Management Policy

1.2 Aim of policy

This policy aims to support individuals to engage with and make choices about their sexuality. This policy aims to support individuals to develop meaningful intimate relationships and connections.

This policy aims to support individuals who wish to express their sexuality without relationships.

This policy aims to promote a non-punitive and non-judgemental approach to sexuality and relationships.

Staff in Kare will be protected when supporting service users to engage in their will and preference around their sexuality. This policy will state the procedures to support staff.

Staff in Kare will uphold the values and rights of all individuals to engage in their sexual will and preferences.

Definitions and Glossary

1.3 Scope/non-scope of this policy

This policy applies to all services and supports provided by Kare to adults. It does not apply to children under 17 years of age.

1.4 Details of the Policy

1.4.3 Rights and Responsibilities

Kare believe in a human rights approach to service delivery. We commit to the following key principles in supporting service users to express their sexuality and engage in relationships of their choosing.

<p>Principle 1: Rights and responsibilities All people, including those with a disability, have the same rights and responsibilities as people without disabilities. They also have a right to information about their rights and responsibilities.</p>	<p>Policy principle 6: Freedom from exploitation and abuse People with a disability have a right to enjoy relationships and sexuality without being abused or exploited.</p>
<p>Principle 2: Values and attitudes People with a disability have the right to explore, express and act according to their own values and attitudes.</p>	<p>Policy principle 7: Privacy People with a disability have a right to access supports that respect emotional, physical, and sexual privacy.</p>
<p>Policy principle 3: Relationships People with a disability have a right to engage in relationships of their choice</p>	<p>Policy principle 8: Confidentiality People with a disability have a right to have personal information treated confidentially.</p>
<p>Policy principle 4: Social skills People with a disability have a right to appropriate and ongoing support to enhance social skills and develop and maintain relationships.</p>	<p>Policy principle 9: Access to education, information and supports People with a disability have a right to education, information and supports that are accessible and appropriate to their individual</p>

	relationships, sexuality needs and communication requirements.
Policy principle 5: Sexuality and sexual health People with a disability have the right to explore, express and enjoy their sexuality, and to receive appropriate sexual health information and services.	Policy principle 10: Competent and skilled staff People with a disability have a right to receive support from staff who are competent, skilled, and well supported to deal with relationships, sexuality, and sexual health issues.

2.0 Policy Statements

2.0.1 Principle 1: Rights and responsibilities

All people, including those with a disability, have the same rights and responsibilities as people without disabilities. They also have a right to information about their rights and responsibilities.

This means that Individuals in Kare have the right to:

- The same freedoms, choices, and life experiences as people without a disability
- Treatment with respect, consideration, and sensitivity
- Adequate, accessible, and accurate information about their legislated rights and responsibilities regarding personal relationships
- Information regarding the legal, social and health consequences of their actions
- Support, education, and resources to understand their rights and responsibilities.

Individuals in Kare also have the responsibility to:

- Respect the rights and responsibilities of other people.

Furthermore, Kare and Kare staff have the responsibility to:

- Act in accordance with the rights of people with a disability
- Understand and keep up to date with all relevant legislation and policies
- Assist people with a disability to be aware of and understand their rights and responsibilities
- Be able to demonstrate knowledge of, and act according to, [our policies]

2.0.2 Principle 2: Values and attitudes

People with a disability have the right to explore, express and act according to their own values and attitudes.

People with a disability have a right to:

- Have their attitudes and values heard and respected
- Explore, express and act on their values and attitudes with respect to personal relationships
- Receive information and support that helps them explore, express and act according to their values and attitudes

People with a disability have a responsibility to:

- Respect the values and attitudes of other people

Kare staff have a responsibility to:

- Model positive values and attitudes in their day-to-day work
- Ensure they do not impose values or attitudes that restrict, deny, or unduly influence the choices of people with a disability regarding personal relationships.

Kare have a responsibility to

- Encourage staff to be open and non-judgemental when dealing with personal relationships

2.0.3 Policy principle 3: Relationships

People with a disability have a right to engage in relationships of their choice.

People with a disability have a right to:

- Have their relationships treated with respect and confidentiality
- Engage in any form of relationship that is legal and non-exploitative
- Live with partners of their choice, marry or have children
- Receive adequate and ongoing support, education, and resources to create opportunities for socialising and developing social networks.

People with a disability have a responsibility to

- Treat the relationships of other people with respect.

Kare staff have a responsibility to:

- Model positive relationships in their day-to-day interactions
- Respect the choices people with a disability make about their relationships

- Create positive and supportive environments where people can feel comfortable to create and enjoy relationships
- Respect all forms of relationships
- Provide, or facilitate access to, education, support and resources for those people who need assistance to develop and maintain relationships

2.0.4 Policy principle 4: Social skills

People with a disability have a right to appropriate and ongoing support to enhance social skills and develop and maintain relationships.

People with a disability have a right to receive:

- Ongoing support in developing and maintaining social skills
- Support from people who consistently demonstrate respectful and appropriate social behaviour
- Support from people who understand the importance of enhancing interpersonal skills for people with a disability.

Kare staff have a responsibility to:

- Model positive social interactions in their day-to-day behaviour
- Understand the importance of appropriate and ongoing social skills training for people with a disability who require such support
- Provide ongoing, informal social skills support
- Assist people with a disability in developing and maintaining social skills.

2.0.5 Policy principle 5: Sexuality and sexual health

People with a disability have the right to explore, express and enjoy their sexuality, and to receive appropriate sexual health information and services.

People with a disability have a right to:

- Have their sexuality treated with respect
- Express and enjoy their sexuality in any way that is legal and does not exploit or infringe on others
- Receive adequate and ongoing information about sexuality that is relevant to developmental and life stages
- Receive information about sexuality that is relevant to specific disability types
- Receive adequate resources and information to reduce the risk of negative outcomes such as sexually transmissible infections or unwanted pregnancy

- Receive support in finding out about and/or accessing products and services specific to their sexuality needs.

Kare staff have a responsibility to:

- Treat each person's sexuality with respect
- Foster environments that respect diversity of sexuality
- Provide, or facilitate access to, accurate and ongoing sexuality information, education, resources, and services that are appropriate to developmental and life stages, individual need, cultural and linguistic diversity and disability type.

Kare have a responsibility to:

- Support workers in dealing with sexuality issues.

2.0.6 Policy principle 6: Freedom from exploitation and abuse (safeguarding)

People with a disability have a right to enjoy relationships and sexuality without being abused or exploited.

People with a disability have a right to

- Live, work and socialise in environments that are safe and supportive
- Receive information and education about appropriate touch, boundaries, and relationships.
- Receive information and education on assertiveness skills and how to avoid or end abusive and coercive situations or relationships.
- Have allegations of emotional, physical, financial, or sexual abuse or neglect taken seriously
- Report allegations of abuse to the Garda Síochána
- Receive support in reporting allegations of abuse.
- Receive immediate medical service if they have been physically or sexually assaulted
- Receive information about support services for people who have been abused
- Receive counselling for any form of abuse they have suffered.

Kare staff have a responsibility to:

- Create environments that are safe and supportive
- Treat allegations of verbal, physical, financial, or sexual abuse or neglect with seriousness, sensitivity and respect

- Ensure people with a disability have adequate support in reporting allegations of abuse
- Be aware of, and able to refer people to, specialist services for people who have been abused

Kare have a responsibility to

- Provide a safe environment for support workers and people with a disability.

Kare staff

- Must not engage in any form of sexual relationship or activity with a person with a disability who they are supporting. Such activity is a criminal offence, even if the person with a disability consents.

2.0.6.1 Positive Risk Taking

Kare endeavours to raise the knowledge of people who use the service to reduce the risks associated with sexuality and/or relationships. These risks may include the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STI's), unwanted pregnancy, sexual exploitation, and abuse.

The level of risk will vary with individuals and situations. Situations where there may be increased risk may involve individuals who use the service interacting with other people who use the service, staff, family, or community members. Particular attention should be given to increased risk where there have been prior concerns.

Kare aims to raise risk awareness through the provision of:

- Education of people who use the service
- Staff training
- Policy and procedures as outlined in this document

Where staff have concerns about an individual's wellbeing or potential risk around relationships or sexuality, they should raise this with their line manager. The line manager may initiate a formal risk assessment which might identify the need for sex education and/or clinical input.

Referrals to clinicians may be required for:

- Planned interventions for individuals which will outline recommendations of strategies to be carried out by front-line staff.
- Individual support work from clinicians/therapists

- An assessment of Capacity to Consent to a sexual relationship:
It is assumed that people who use the service have the capacity to consent. In situations where this is queried, it may be necessary to carry out a formal assessment to establish whether the person has the capacity to consent. A person's capacity to consent will be assessed by the most appropriate person. This should be a person who knows the individual who uses the service well. This may be a Kare clinician.

Kare has specific procedures for the investigation and management of non-accidental injury and sexual abuse of people who use the service both by staff members and others. In the case of alleged non-accidental injury and sexual abuse by a staff member the nationally approved "Trust in Care" policy will apply. In the case of an allegation against anyone other than staff the "Safeguarding of Vulnerable persons at Risk of Abuse" policy will apply. In the case of individuals under the age of 18 the nationally approved "Children First" Guidelines 2011 applies.

2.0.7 Policy principle 7: Privacy

People with a disability have a right to access supports that respect emotional, physical, and sexual privacy.

People with a disability have a right to:

- Maximum privacy, respect, and choice in having their support needs attended to.

People with a disability have a responsibility to

- Respect the privacy of other people.

If living in a residential support, people with a disability have the right to:

- Space to be alone if they want some time by themselves
- Space to be alone with friends, family, personal visitors or partners.
- Space to engage in private sexual activity
- Opportunity to make phone calls in private and receive personal mail promptly and unopened.

Kare staff have a responsibility to:

- Respect the emotional, physical and sexual privacy of people who use Kare services.

- Create positive and supportive environments where there is space for activity or discussion that is private
- Ensure people with a disability are not encouraged or coerced into revealing personal details, thoughts, or feelings that they would prefer to keep private.
- Attend to personal care needs in a way that ensures maximum privacy, respect and choice for the person with a disability.
- Wherever possible, ensure people in residential supports have space where they can be alone or receive visitors in private
- Be aware of instances where duty of care requirements may sometimes override privacy considerations.

Kare have a responsibility to

- Provide an appropriate environment in which privacy can be supported and maintained

2.0.8 Policy principle 8: Confidentiality

People with a disability have a right to have personal information treated confidentially.

People with a disability have a right to:

- Have information about their personal relationships remain private unless they consent to disclosure, or duty of care or legal issues require disclosure
- Have personal information provided to specific parties for specific purposes on a 'needs-to-know' basis only
- Have personal information stored securely
- Be informed beforehand in situations where, even if they wish otherwise or have no choice, the law allows for personal information to be provided to other parties.

Kare staff have a responsibility to:

- Treat all personal information as confidential
- Keep private all information about the personal relationships of a person with disability unless the person consents to disclosure, or legal issues require disclosure
- Refrain from discussing the personal relationships of a person with a disability with other support workers unless this is specifically required within their role
- Be aware of, and act according to, the provisions and requirements of the Kare Data Protection Policy and other relevant Acts.

Kare have a responsibility to:

- Enable staff to fulfil and maintain privacy requirements within the workplace

2.0.9 Policy principle 9: Access to education, information and supports (commitment to service user training)

People with a disability have a right to education, information and supports that are accessible and appropriate to their individual relationships, sexuality needs and communication requirements.

People with a disability have a right to:

- Receive relationships, sexuality and sexual health information, education and supports that meet their individual needs, cultural and linguistic diversity, and communication requirements.
- Access mainstream community services that meet their relationships, sexuality, and sexual health needs.

Kare staff have a responsibility to:

- Assist people with a disability in accessing relationships, sexuality and sexual health information, education and supports appropriate to their individual needs, culture, language and communication requirement.

2.0.9.1 Procedures to increase access to Education and Training

2.0.9.1.1 Education for staff and people who use the service

Kare will provide people who use the service with information and education regarding relationships and sexuality that is consistent with their functioning level, age and current needs as identified through the individualised planning process or through individual referrals to Lifelong Learning and/or CST

LEVEL 1: Education and training for service users will be provided by the Lifelong Learning Team and local service champions. This training focuses on information and education on relationships and sexuality. Applications for this training is made through LEAP. LLL aim to hold 3 groups per year.

LEVEL 2: Behaviours of sexual concern or safeguarding issues should be directed towards the Clinical Support Team. This training and education will focus on the specific safeguarding or risk issue that needs to be addressed.

LEVEL 3: Additional training and education may be provided on a bespoke basis by LLL and/or CST members. This is focused on the specific needs of the individual.

2.0.9.1.2 Goals for education of staff and people who use the service

The goals of education for staff and people who use the service are as follows:

- to provide general knowledge about sexuality and relationships
- to provide education to individuals on specific issues of sexuality and relationships
- to provide information to minimise exploitation and abuse
- to provide information to assist choice and decision making around intimacy.
- to provide skills for staff to support individuals to initiate and maintain relationships.
- to create opportunities for service users to express their sexual and intimacy needs
- To educate staff about being open minded about a services user's will and preference.

2.0.9.1.3 Ways in which education is provided by Kare

Education will be provided to suit the needs of individuals both in terms of form, content, and accessibility. For some people, a group approach might be suitable.

Education may take the form of:

- formal sessions with individuals/groups presented in modular form by appropriately trained staff (see 4.1.3)
- formal support provided-as follow-up to sessions, with appropriately trained front-line staff
- informal day-to-day interaction between staff and people who use the service

When formal sessions on relationships and sexuality are scheduled, information on how to apply will be sent to unit heads.

Applications for education in relationships and sexuality can be made by people who use the service, or by their families or staff in consultation with the individuals concerned.

2.0.9.1.4 Information for families

Line Managers will advise and support people who use the service to inform their families that they have requested or are being offered education in relationships and sexuality.

Further education on specific issues related to the sessions can be made available on request (Only with the person's consent). Families are also welcome to contact a member of staff for further information or clarification they may require on any specific issue or area of concern.

2.0.10 Policy principle 10: Competent and skilled staff (Commitment to staff training)

People with a disability have a right to receive support from staff who are competent, skilled, and well supported to deal with relationships, sexuality and sexual health issues.

People with a disability have a right to receive support from:

- Staff who understand personal relationships issues for people with a disability
- Staff who are able to provide, or refer to, relationships and sexuality information and services appropriate to culture, gender, age and disability type.
- Staff who have an appropriate level of training and skill in responding to personal relationships issues.

Kare staff have a right to:

- Access accurate information and, if required, be fully supported to better understand the personal relationships, sexuality, and sexual health issues of people with a disability.

Kare have a responsibility to:

- Ensure staff have adequate training and education to understand personal relationships issues of people with a disability
- Provide sufficient information and training for staff to be competent in responding to personal relationships issues
- Ensure staff have appropriate organisational and management support in dealing with personal relationships issues
- Ensure staff know where to get additional support or information in dealing with personal relationships issues.

2.0.10.1 Information and training for staff

Kare will provide training on this policy to all staff to ensure consistency of approach by staff on matters relating to sexuality. This will ensure that individual staff do not impose their own values and standards on service-users.

In addition, Kare will offer training in sexuality and intellectual disability which will equip staff with the knowledge, skill, and competence to respond appropriately to sexuality issues that may arise in daily situations when working with individuals with intellectual disability. It will also encourage staff to reflect on attitudes towards the sexuality, sexual development, and sexual expression of individuals with intellectual disability.

Staff involved in the delivery of formal sessions for people who use the service in relationships and sexuality will be provided with additional training to equip them with the necessary skills for this.

Education and Training for Staff

There will be two levels of training for staff. The first level will be a recommended training completed by all staff. The focus of this training will be on information on human rights, how to support service users to explore and find out more about sexuality.

The second level will be directed to staff who wish to do more to support individuals in our services. Kare will support staff to become champions for their service. Staff who complete this training and have QQI Train the Trainer will be enabled to provide Level 1 training to service users in their service.

3.0 Policy Implementation Process

Implementation of this policy is key to meeting the rights and needs of service users in Kare. We as an organisation will ensure that the policy statements will be implemented through a standard uniform process as laid out below.

3.0.1 Establishing a structure around this policy

It is recognised that our understanding of Sexuality and Relationships is constantly evolving. To ensure that this policy is relevant to the needs of staff and service users in Kare, we commit to develop:

- A R&S steering Group. This will be made up of psychology, Lifelong Learning, a local/residential service leader, outreach, and someone external to Kare. The purpose of this group is to ensure that this policy is relevant to the needs of the service, and to ensure that we are remaining loyal to the principles stated in this policy.
- A training facilitator group. This group is made up of a member of the training department, service user champion, staff champion and those who deliver training (membership of 5). The purpose of this group is to ensure that the training provided to staff and service users is consistent with the policy and the needs of the service users and staff.

3.0.2 Delivering training to staff and service users

Training and education of staff

All new staff complete a basic level R&S module

Existing staff complete basic level R&S module every 3 years.

Training and education of service user

All service users upon intake will complete a basic level R&S module

Existing service users to complete module on LEAP.

3.0.3 Identifying and nominating Service champions:

Each service will nominate a staff and service user champion who will ensure this policy is a working document and fully implemented

Previous revision details

<i>Rev. No.</i>	<i>Approved by OMT</i>	<i>Approved by Kare Board</i>	<i>Launched Heads of units</i>	<i>Operational Period</i>
Rev. 1	May 2006	May 2006	May 2006	May 2006 – Oct 2013
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