

Case Study

Both Steve and Karen have learning disabilities. They met at a local group and group and got chatting. Steve invited Karen back to his house for coffee and Karen agreed to go back with Steve.

Over the next couple of weeks Steve invited Karen to his house most days and Karen was happy to go. She was enjoying his company, she didn't have many other friends. Steve started to call Karen his girlfriend and told her that boyfriends and girlfriends have sex with each other. Karen did not really understand what sex was even though her key worker has previously spoken about it. She felt too embarrassed to ask Steve about it.

That evening Steve cooked Karen a meal and kept saying nice things about how she looked. After dinner he asked her to come to his bedroom with him and have sex. She didn't really say yes or no but went along with it as she felt like she should, especially after Steve had cooked for her and said such nice things. Karen did not enjoy it and felt upset afterwards, she waited for Steve to fall asleep and then left.

Things to consider

Did Karen consent to having Sex with Steve?

No Karen did not consent to having sex with Steve. Consent must be actively sought. Both people must show that they are happy to continue with the sexual activities and consent can be withdrawn at any time.

Is there anything Karen's key worker could have done differently when speaking to Karen about Sex?

The key worker could have found out more from Karen about her understanding of sex, what sex is and the mechanics of sex.

The key worker could have explained what consent is and how to show consent.

The key worker could have provided Karen with information about sex, consent and relationships. Such as the SARSAS easy read consent booklet.

The key worker could have found out about any local groups providing any healthy relationships or consent training.

Top Tips

- Don't shy away for conversations about relationships and sex. Don't make it a taboo subject or something that shouldn't be spoken about.
- Think about how you can support people to understand more about consent.
- Support people to think about what a relationship means to them and what they would like from a relationship.
- Find out what resources are available to support the person to understand and support their decision making around sex and relations. There are many easy read and plain English resources available. Remember capacity can be gained through education and learning.
- When assessing capacity assess each decision separately for example the decision to share a bed is different to the decision to have a sexual relationship.
- Don't be worried to contact the Court of Protection if dealing with a complex situation. Always seek advice.
- Support people to find out about healthy relationships and consent. Look for workshops, training, education and information in your local area.
- Always remember if you have information where a client is at risk of harm then you have a legal obligation to share safeguarding concerns.

SARSAS Resources

- SARSAS easy read consent booklet to find this visit:
<https://www.sarsas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/What-is-sexual-consent-Draft-23.11.17.pdf>
- SARSAS can provide healthy relationships and consent workshops in the community or training to staff teams. To find out more contact:
info@sarsas.org.uk
- **Consent activity** – Stop and Go flashcards. An activity to think about consent. Looking at statements or actions and considering whether consent is being given.

Other useful resources

- **Supported Loving toolkit** – guides to help support people with issues surrounding sexuality and relationships.

<https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/supported-loving/supported-loving-toolkit>

- **Teacups consent video**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGoWLWS4-kU>
- **Everyday consent video**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LO3i1EJE6DI>