In this blog post I want to speak about something called 'intimate citizenship' and people with learning disabilities. This article is written in Easy Read, so that lots of people can read it.

**What is “intimate citizenship”?**

Intimacy, and being intimate, is about touch, love, affection, privacy, bodies, care and being close.

Citizenship is about our rights and access to equality, fairness and justice.

Intimate citizenship brings these together to refer to our rights and access to equality within our intimate lives - the spaces in our lives where we love and care for others, ourselves and our bodies.
Whether we are single, in a relationship, want to have a family, or be part of a family, we should have access to intimate rights which include things like who we love; where we live; and our sexual health.

However, for people with learning disabilities intimate rights and citizenship can often be denied, ignored, or overlooked. This is wrong.

Why does intimate citizenship matter?

For most people, intimacy is important to happiness and well-being. Many of us enjoy intimacy and closeness in our private and personal lives, whether it comes from friends, family members or romantic and/or sexual partners.

It matters because being with others feels nice, can be pleasurable, make us feel good about ourselves, and feel safe and secure in our lives.

We all have the right to have relationships with others and be supported to find and/or maintain our relationships if we need it.
But, intimate citizenship also relates to our rights to say no to intimacy if we don’t want it, and our rights to not be sexually abused, raped or exploited. Women with learning disabilities experience greater rates of sexual violence than women without learning disabilities.

**Our intimate citizenship can also include things like:**

- Accessing contraception and sexual health care.
- Learning about our bodies.
- The right to parent and start a family.
- Learning about consent (saying yes or no to a sexual act).
Receiving good quality sex education.

Building sexual confidence.

Rights to privacy.

Choosing what to wear and expressing ourselves with our bodies (e.g. tattoos/body piercings).

Support to end a pregnancy.
Where we live: who we want to make a home with.

Researching intimate citizenship?

In September 2015, researchers Katherine Runswick-Cole, Dan Goodley, Kirsty Liddiard, and Jodie Bradley and Vicky Farnsworth from Speak Up Self-Advocacy are going to Toronto, Canada, to speak to other researchers and self-advocates from all around the world about intimate citizenship.

The aim of the trip is to think about how researchers and self-advocates can work together in future research to explore how people with learning disabilities can be better supported within their intimate lives.
To learn more, check out some of these free Easy Read resources:


2. Easy Health: [http://www.easyhealth.org.uk/listing/contraception-%28leaflets%29](http://www.easyhealth.org.uk/listing/contraception-%28leaflets%29)

3. Stay Up Late: [http://stayuplate.org](http://stayuplate.org)

5. Surviving Sexual Abuse:


6. Surviving Rape:


Words by Kirsty Liddiard https://kirstyliddiard.wordpress.com
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