

Sex &

Brain Injury:

CONTROVERSY & OPPORTUNITY

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Sexuality and sensuality are core dimensions of the human condition, yet the expression and participation in these aspects of life are limited or unavailable to many people with disabilities. While brain injury services often aim for holistic care and support, the dimension of sexuality commonly remains neglected. Repeated studies have shown that conversations around sexuality and sexual needs post-injury are rarely initiated by professionals, despite a wish to explore this topic by survivors.

Supporting sexuality after brain injury has always been a neglected and uncertain area for professionals, survivors and significant others. Unfortunately, recent case law has only served to increase ambiguity and confusion, resulting in further shutting down sexuality conversations and a widening of the gap between need and support.

Never before have professionals from health, social, legal, sexual surrogacy provision and survivors themselves shared their knowledge and experience through debate and conversation of policy and lived experience. This unique and pioneering gathering is all the more timely, given the restricting influence of recent case law on professional thinking and support provision.

This ground-breaking agenda brings together clinicians, legal professionals involved in recent case law, sexual surrogates and survivors, to bring the conversation out of the shadows at this much needed time. Participants can expect to increase their knowledge of survivor support needs in the area of sexuality, current relevant law and the implications of such for professional practice. Furthermore, the new conversations that were generated in the panel discussions and audience contributions during the sessions will path the way for informed and responsive contemporary practice across professions and sectors.

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Session 1

Coaxing the conversation out of the shadows

This brief introduction will set out key dimensions of need in relation to sexuality following brain injury, current trends in service provision, and how service responses to these needs have been influenced in unintended ways within the current legal context. This will set up the main topics subsequently explored in the day's programme, and the scope of the anticipated debate and discussion during the day.

Dr Giles Yeates, Consultant Clinical Neuropsychologist & Couples Therapist, Rippling Minds

SEX, BRAIN INJURY AND THE LAW

Session 2

Supporting vs inciting sexuality and mental capacity – recent developments in case law

Ben McCormack, Barrister, Garden Court North Chambers

Session 3

Sexuality Relationships Capacity Assessments

This talk will discuss the practicalities of conducting a sexual relationships capacity assessment, useful tools to guide your assessment and of supporting teams and clients when these issues arise in brain injury rehabilitation.

Dr Catriona McIntosh, Consultant Clinical Neuropsychologist, Yorkshire Neuropsychology

Session 4

How Can I legally-support sexuality following brain injury?

Panel & Audience Discussion

This panel discussion will focus on the current legal context for professional practice in supporting sexuality after brain injury, and address delegate's own practice examples and dilemmas from their current work. Please note this discussion will also be developed further in the final session of the day.

SURVIVOR PERSPECTIVE

Session 5

Brain Injury, Sex & LGBTQ+ Perspectives

This talk will include a brief introduction of Greg's personal experience of stroke and rehabilitation. Greg will then reference the feedback and experiences of the community of thousands of stroke survivors in the UK. He will discuss their experiences of (and/or) changes in sex and sexuality after stroke

Greg Hollingworth, Communications, Different Strokes





Session 6

Sex after a Brain Injury performance

Anna Smith Higgs, Stroke Survivor & Burlesque Artist

Session 7

Sensually-surviving brain injury - are we going to go there?

Panel & Audience Discussion

This panel discussion will situate survivor experiences of sexuality post-injury alongside professional perspectives in supporting such experiences, inviting a dialogue with delegates on the intersection between these two positions. Please note this discussion will also be developed further in the final session of the day.

SUPPORTING SEXUALITY AFTER BRAIN INJURY

Session 8

Sex & Intimacy Coaching / Partner Surrogacy with Survivors

Beaver will discuss what she learnt, what needs to change and could Partner Surrogacy/Sex Coaching be a valid NHS service delivery model as a rehabilitation goal?

Beaver Meadows, The Disability Sex Coach

Session 9

Safety & play between the sheets for single survivors and couples following brain injury

This presentation will explore the inter-relationship of emotional safety and sexual adventure when both single survivors and couples reach out to professionals for support with sexuality changes post-injury. Dr Yeates will explore psychosexual interventions, couples therapy and the formulation of risk and safety during sexual encounters, for dating, established relationships and the use of sexual surrogates. The perspectives of sexual partners of survivors will be addressed, as will examples of multi-disciplinary working with case managers and other brain injury professionals.

Dr Giles Yeates, Consultant Clinical Neuropsychologist & Couples Therapist, Rippling Minds

Session 10

Supporting, enabling or safeguarding sexual experience?

Panel & Audience Discussion

This panel discussion will explore with delegates differing perspectives on how support for sexuality needs post-injury can be conceptualised and facilitated. Please note this discussion will also be developed further in the final session of the day.

Session 11

Neuro-sexuality: The Essential Conversation

Whole Panel & Audience Discussion

This elaborate discussion between all speakers and delegates will weave together the key threads of the day - namely the juxtaposition of the current legal context, support needs evident for survivors and significant others when these are explored and addressed by professionals, and the dilemmas faced by professionals who are committed to supporting sexuality for survivors. There will be more time for delegates to share their own practice examples and concerns with the panel of experts. The cross-connection of differing perspectives from the day's speakers will lead to the reframing of current challenges and fresh perspectives on the topic.

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Biographies



DR GILES YEATES DCLinPsych, MSc (Clin Neuro), AFBPS, C Psychol

Consultant Clinical Neuropsychologist & Couples Therapist, Rippling Minds

Dr Giles Yeates is a Consultant Clinical Neuropsychologist and Couples Therapist. He works in private practice (Rippling Minds), assessing and supporting the psychosexual needs of survivors, their sexual partners and significant others. Dr Yeates has also collaborated with prominent UK brain injury charities (Different Strokes, Headway, SameYou) to generate free information booklets, videos, podcasts and webinars on the topic of sexuality following brain injury. These can all be accessed at www.ripplingminds.com.

Dr Yeates is an active researcher, writer and academic, publishing several research studies, articles, chapters and books covering these topics, and with colleagues has pioneered teaching on neuro-sexuality for clinical neuropsychologists in training worldwide. Dr Yeates provides national and international training on neuro-sexuality and related topics for professionals and staff teams.



BEN MCCORMACK

Barrister, Garden Court North Chambers

Ben has extensive experience in dealing with mental capacity cases in the Court of Protection. He mainly acts for disabled adults and their family members in a wide range of cases, from health and welfare applications and cases involving DOLS, to enduring powers of attorney and property and financial cases. He is regularly instructed by the Official Solicitor and is ranked as a Tier 1 Leading Junior by The Legal 500 and in Band 1 by Chambers and Partners.

He has appeared in several significant Court of Protection cases, including Secretary of State for Justice v C and others [2021], where the court had to decide whether to approve as lawful care plans that envisaged help being provided to a disabled man to access the services of a sex worker.

Ben will provide an overview of that case, its broader implications, and other relevant recent developments.





Biographies



DR CATRIONA MCINTOSH

Consultant Clinical Neuropsychologist, Yorkshire Neuropsychology

Dr McIntosh is a Consultant Clinical Neuropsychologist from Yorkshire Neuropsychology who works as a treating psychologist and expert witness for the courts. She has a special interest in sexual relationships capacity assessments and supporting people with brain injury with their rehabilitation needs. She frequently works with care teams to assist them in understanding the legal and clinical frameworks for these areas and in promoting discussions about sexual needs and intimacy. She promotes the view that sexual or relationships needs can and should be an integrated part of brain injury rehabilitation which is relevant to interdisciplinary working and promoting recovery.



GREGORY HOLLINGWORTH

Communications, Different Strokes

Greg survived a stroke following a car accident in 2004. After years of rehabilitation learning has gone from learning to walk again in his late twenties, to driving to a place of work where is now the main admin for the Different Strokes UK Charity Facebook group.



ANNA SMITH HIGGS

Stroke Survivor & Burlesque Artist

Anna suffered a life changing stroke on Christmas day, a month after her son was born.

Anna was told that she would never walk or talk again, but she has defined the odds and is now a disabled burlesque performer who has performed her signatures act "A stroke survivors tale" in Europe and on the stage of one of London's most renowned cabaret clubs.



BEAVER MEADOWS

The Disability Sex Coach

Bea is a corporate disrupter, a champion for disability representation and an accessibility activist. She is an able-bodied partner surrogate / somatic sex & intimacy coach for adults with disabilities, neuro-diversity, chronic medical conditions and terminal illness.

Bea is passionate about conscious sexuality, enthusiastic consent and sexual equity and inclusion for all.

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