



**Guidelines for Policy on**

**USING SEXUAL FACILITATORS AND ENABLERS**

**SHADA Guidelines for Making Policies on**

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**Introduction**

The Sexual Health and Disability Alliance (SHADA) was formed in 2005 by the Outsiders Trust to bring together and support professionals who work with disabled adults.

The following guidelines have been produced as a source of information. We hope you find these guidelines useful in that they can provide a starting point for you to develop the best working practices for your disabled patients

**Why have a sexuality and relationships policy?**

All types of service provision should allow for disabled adults to make informed choices and to be able to freely express their wishes and preferences. Therefore each person, whatever their impairment should, like any other person, be at liberty to pursue their sexual aspirations.

However, many disabled people complain that although their practical needs are met, their personal difficulties are never discussed, with the result that they experience sexual frustration, painful sex, on-going depression and social isolation. Professionals should support the rights of disabled adults to have access to sexual enablers, and facilitators based on the recognition of their human rights.

Many professionals working with disabled people look upon this option as a minefield, but if they looked into the options more clearly, they will discover that there are men and women who specialise in servicing disabled clients, who can be relied on to provide a good service. They should be embraced and supported, rather than feared and avoided. The TLC-Trust website is devoted to creating such mutual understanding.

Having the policy written into your general policy makes it transparent. This is very good protection for what you are doing. If the agency or relative funding the work you do with disabled people, be it social services or parents funding their housing, or the NHS funding their OT, signs to say they accept your policy, then they cannot then turn round and object if they find out that a disabled person, or couple, is using a sex worker.

## **Legalities**

The buying and selling of sex is legal in the UK. The only things that are illegal are kerb crawling, soliciting, brothel keeping, procuring, forcing someone into prostitution, or making money out of a sex worker. It is not illegal to *employ* a sex worker to work in your residence, college or establishment, so the booking must be made by the disabled person who will be hiring and paying him or her.

Hiring an independent escort is the safest route, rather than approaching a street walker or visiting a massage parlour. Some escorts visit clients in their home or in a hotel, while others work from a flat, many do both.

It is legal to phone up on behalf of a client to order a sex worker, so long as you don't get involved in the money aspect. There are no laws to prevent disabled people paying for sex workers out of benefits provided by the state.

Professionals listed on the TLC site all sign to say they work on their own free will and

are not trafficked.

## **Benefits of Using Sexual Facilitators**

The TLC-Trust website lists 50 ways that sex workers help disabled people.

There is great benefit in using professional sexual facilitators in situations where residential staff and other staff might be expected by the disabled clients to enter sexual activity, be it for teaching purposes or pleasure.

There needs to be a strict cut-off line for any health professional, between helping with non-sexual bodily functions, advice and support, and sexual activity. At that point, it is appropriate for the disabled person hire a sex worker, if that is required, so that they are not left stranded. Typical situations:

- when washing a person with no physical strength and his erection or her cravings are overwhelming.
- disabled person gets aroused but cannot masturbate due to physical impairment
- The disabled person needs teaching and helping with masturbation, learning about the body of the opposite sex, and being taught about how to enjoy the kind of sex they want.
- A disabled couple are unable to physically do the things that they want whilst making love.
- People need opportunities to experiment, and disabled people may need help with this. For example, deafblind people may experience different sexual fantasies to sighted hearing people, i.e. non-visual and none-verbal, and may need support in exploring and understanding their feeling, in order to enjoy sex.

Using a professional specialist sex worker is a safe way to ensure sexual activity does not leave the disabled person demoralised and vulnerable.

It is important for the personal development of all disabled people that :-

(a) any sex they experience is not clinical or mechanical

(b) their feelings are not patronised or trivialised

(c) disabled men and women don't have to be deprived or put up with amateur help. Specialist sex workers are professionals who know everything about sex, and are accustomed to being sexual with strangers who may be disabled. They are able to cope with emotions, falling in love situations, etc.

d) the disabled person is given control over what happens to them in their lives, including making the choice to hire a sex worker.

If there are objections from the relative or body financing the disabled person, one option is that the disabled person hires their own independent advocate (preferably CRB checked, and with as many relevant qualifications as possible, including Moving and Handling a disabled person), to help the disabled person handle this side of their lives.

### **More about the TLC**

The TLC Trust website has been created by a team of people including Dr Tuppy Owens from the Sex and Disability Helpline, Pru, a sex worker specialising in disabled clients and disabled client James Palmer. The site simply offers advice, and features approved profiles of sex workers around the country, listing their specialities and how accessible their working premises are. TLC has its own advocate, Greg Sams, who can make phone calls for disabled people with speech impairments, but most bookings are done by email. The site has a forum for feedback, with stories from sex workers and their clients, encouraging a learning process. The sex workers on the TLC are sensitive to the need for discretion, and dress in a demure style when visiting disabled people. They always use safer sex.

The sex workers say that they enjoy their work and find it fulfilling. "*Working with disabled clients makes me feel like I have done an honest day's work*", wrote Andrew Rosetta, a male sex worker who sees disabled women.

Although many disabled women say they would like to see a sex worker so that they can enjoy a professional experience, they tend to be too shy and nervous to make the move without a personal introduction. TLC, being a voluntary organisation, cannot provide this service, which is a shame.

### **Creating your policy**

These policy guidelines have been written as an adjunct to other SHADA policy guidelines on sex and relationships.

SHADA suggests that agencies and professionals get together with people doing similar work to form a working party, so you can create a workable policy together. SHADA is happy to assist.

[www.tlc-trust.org.uk](http://www.tlc-trust.org.uk)

**Sexual Health and Disability Alliance SHADA** [www.shada.org.uk](http://www.shada.org.uk),  
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