



Women's Health Event 6th September



This event was about sexual and reproductive health for women with intellectual disabilities.



There were talks from researchers to help you to learn about sexual health.



We talked about relationships, contraception, consent, and menopause.



There was also a workshop with other women where you could share your opinions.

This workshop was confidential.



The event took place from 10am to 2pm on the 6th of September.



The event took place in the
Dublin Chamber, 7 Clare Street,
Dublin, D02 F902.



The event was for women with
intellectual disabilities, their
carers, nurses, and doctors.



If you have any questions after
the event, please contact
Stephanie by phone on
0861283875 or by email at
corrigst@tcd.ie



Thank you for coming.

Here is an easy read summary of
what was discussed on the day.



History of Sexual and Reproductive Health



My name is Patricia Blee.

I am a PhD student at
Trinity College Dublin.

What did Patricia talk about?



Women with intellectual disabilities have not been treated right in the past. Language like “idiots” and “imbeciles” were used to describe people with intellectual disabilities.

Nowadays we use language like “women with intellectual disabilities”



People with intellectual disabilities were put in “institutions” and kept separate from other people.



Institutions were places where people with disabilities and mental illness were sent.



In Europe, thousands of women with intellectual disabilities were sterilised without their consent.



Sterilised means having an operation which means you can no longer have children.



Up until **2017**, there were laws making it illegal for people with intellectual disabilities to have sex.



Up until **2021**, there was a law that prevented people with intellectual disabilities from getting married.



These laws assume all individuals with intellectual disabilities do not have the capacity to consent, which is wrong!



The **UNCRPD** stands for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

It is an important agreement made to protect the rights of people with disabilities.

It became a law in Ireland in 2018.

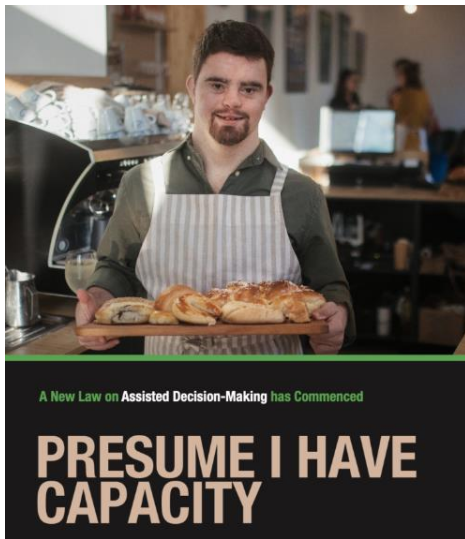


This law helps to support the health of women with intellectual disabilities.

It supports their right to access sexual and reproductive health services.



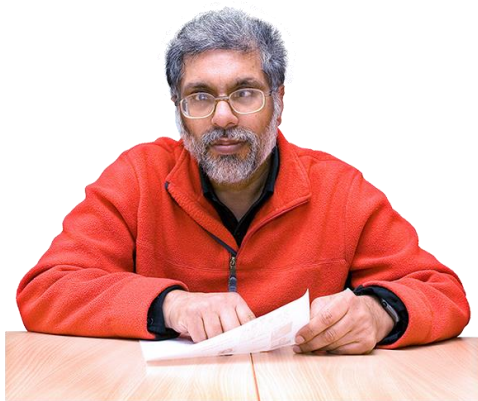
This law supports women to make choices about their bodies and their lives.



In Ireland, we have the Assisted Decision-Making Capacity Act (ADM).

This act makes sure that individuals are supported to make decisions.

This is a good start, but we still have a long way to go!



We need to give people the tools so they can make their own decisions!



Contraception



My name is Rachael Eastham.

I work at Lancaster University.

In my job I talk to people about things like periods, sex and having babies.

I do this to learn about what they need to be healthy and happy.



What did Rachael talk about?

Rachael has done work about contraception.

Contraception is used to stop pregnancy.

Some contraception is called long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) and goes inside a person's body.

Some people like LARC because:

- it cannot be seen by other people
- you do not have to remember to use it





But there is a worry that using LARC makes it harder to decide about getting pregnant because you need a nurse or doctor to put it in and take it out.

There is also a history of contraception like LARC being used to control who can or cannot become pregnant.



Capacity means being able to make your own decisions.

Being able to make your own decisions is a **human right**.

What did we find out?



We found out about how people with intellectual disabilities can be seen by others, like doctors, as unable to make these decisions for themselves.

But we heard from lots of people with intellectual disabilities about how this is unfair.



We also heard that people with intellectual disabilities can feel pressured to make decisions about everything to do with having a baby – which can be called **reproduction**.

Things like periods, having sex and looking after their children.

Why does this matter?



It is important to know where, when and how people are treated unfairly so we can work together to change this.



From January 2024 Rachael will start more work with people with intellectual disabilities, to help understand what matters most.



If you have any questions, email her at:

r.eastham1@lancaster.ac.uk



Periods, sex, and babies



My name is Alex Kaley

I work at Essex University, England.



In my job I talk to people with intellectual disabilities about their health and wellbeing

I do this to learn about what they need to be healthy and happy.

What did Alex talk about?



Alex talked about her new project.

This new project wants to find out about what people think about important issues like **sex**, **periods** and **having babies**.



You can read more about this project in the easy-read handout.

If you have any questions, email Alex at a.kaley@essex.ac.uk



Menopause



My name is Stephanie Corrigan.

I am a PhD student at Trinity College Dublin.

What did Stephanie talk about?



Menopause is when a woman stops getting her monthly periods.



It usually happens between the ages of 45-55.

Sometimes menopause can happen **earlier** in women with an intellectual disability.



Changes can start happening before your periods stop completely, this is called perimenopause.

There are lots of changes that can happen around the time of the menopause...



Periods may **change** a couple of years before they stop.

They may be shorter or longer in duration.

They can become heavy or light.



Women can have hot flashes.

This is when you suddenly feel very hot. It can feel uncomfortable.



Women can also experience night sweats which means they might find it hard to sleep and feel tired.



Sometimes the menopause can make women experience mood swings for example: they can feel sad, angry, emotional, or anxious.



Menopause can be stressful and can cause changes in behaviour.



If you think you might be going through it, it is important to talk about it with your friends, family, carers, nurses, and doctors.



Sometimes nurses and doctors don't realise that women with intellectual disabilities are going through the menopause, and they are not given the right treatments.



It is important for you to learn about the menopause so that you know when you are going through it.

This will make sure you get the help you need.



There are special medicines like Hormone Replacement Therapy or HRT that can help to treat menopausal symptoms

It is important to get the right treatments and medicines to help you to feel better.



All women go through the menopause. Let's talk more about it!



Women's Health



My name is Éilish Burke.

I am a Professor at Trinity College
Dublin.

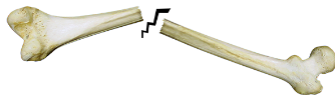
What did Éilish tell us about?



Poor health is very common.

Many people have several chronic
conditions.

Some women have problems with:



Weaker bones



Their digestive systems



And eye disease.



Women in the IDS-TILDA study now report having more health conditions than they did 16 years ago.

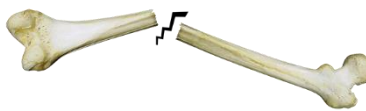
This tells us that women's health is getting worse!



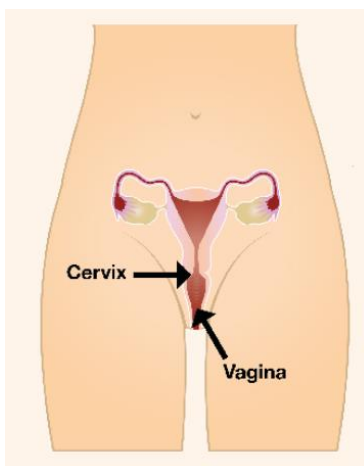
Older women are less likely to complain of pain.

But they report twice the amount of painful conditions, like arthritis, compared to older men.

The rate of osteoporosis is only slightly higher in women.



But the rate of broken bones because of bone health is much worse in women than men.



Less women with intellectual disability went for a breast check or cervical screening than women in the general population.

It is important to go for screening to make sure you don't have cancer!



A lot of women in IDS-TILDA told us that they were afraid of going to screenings.

We need to make sure we do more to make sure women feel safe to go. Let's talk about it!



Women in IDS-TILDA were not very active.

They were more likely to sit for a long-time watching TV than men.



Sitting too long is just not good for your health.

You need to be moving, exercising, and eating healthily!

Thank you for reading!