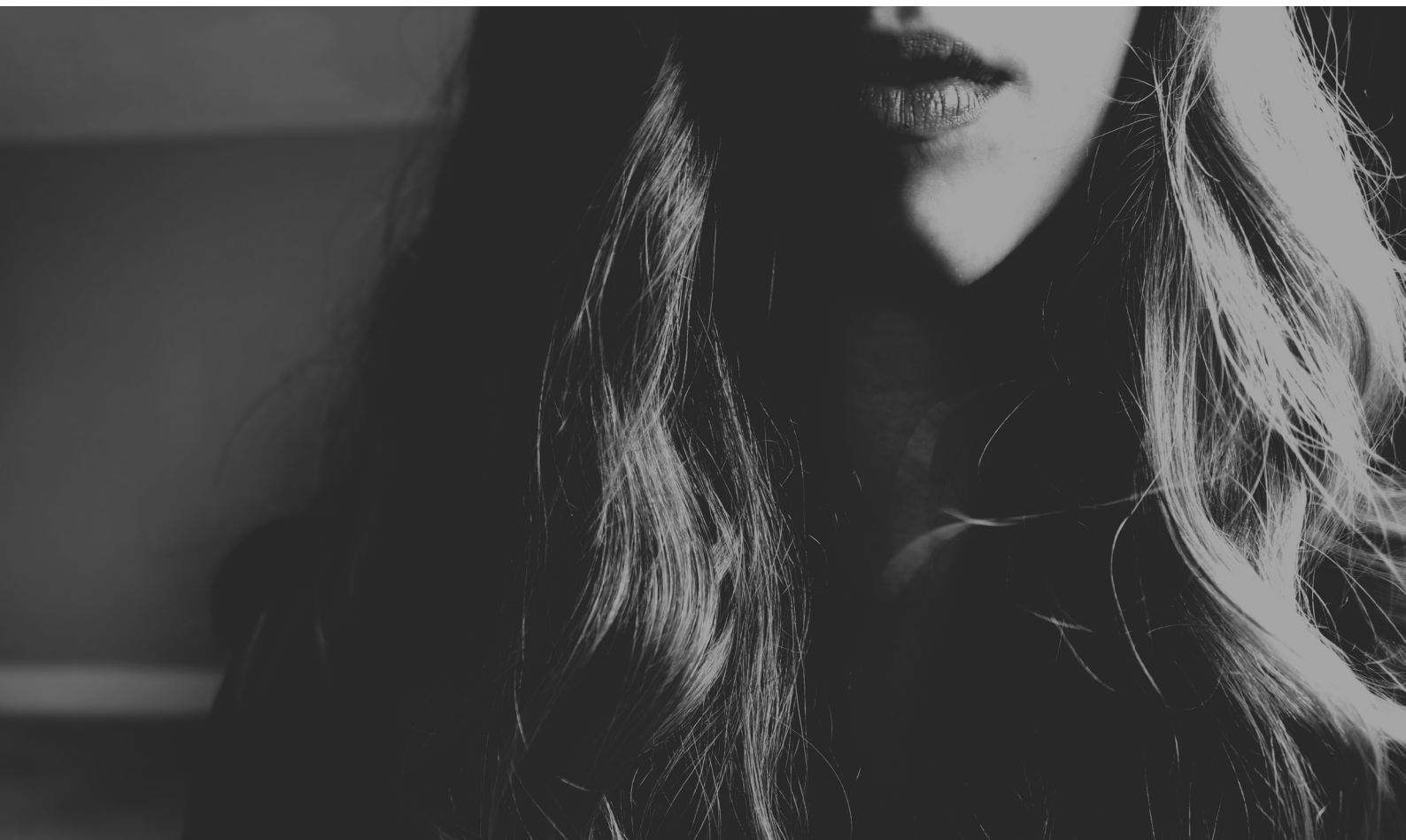


Being assertive & knowing your rights

I was an incredibly late starter with boys as I was so nervous and had real self-confidence issues. I lost my virginity with my first proper boyfriend. Looking back this was a mistake for me as he didn't treat me well and was violent but I so wanted someone to love me that I was willing to put up with it.

It's only as I got older that I realised that I deserved more and stopped being in relationships which were unhealthy for me. My self-confidence issues came from thinking that my disability would mean that people wouldn't love me or want to be in a relationship with me as I wasn't 'perfect'. As I got older I embraced and accepted my disability and therefore realised I deserved more...

Claire Holland, @EnhancetheUK

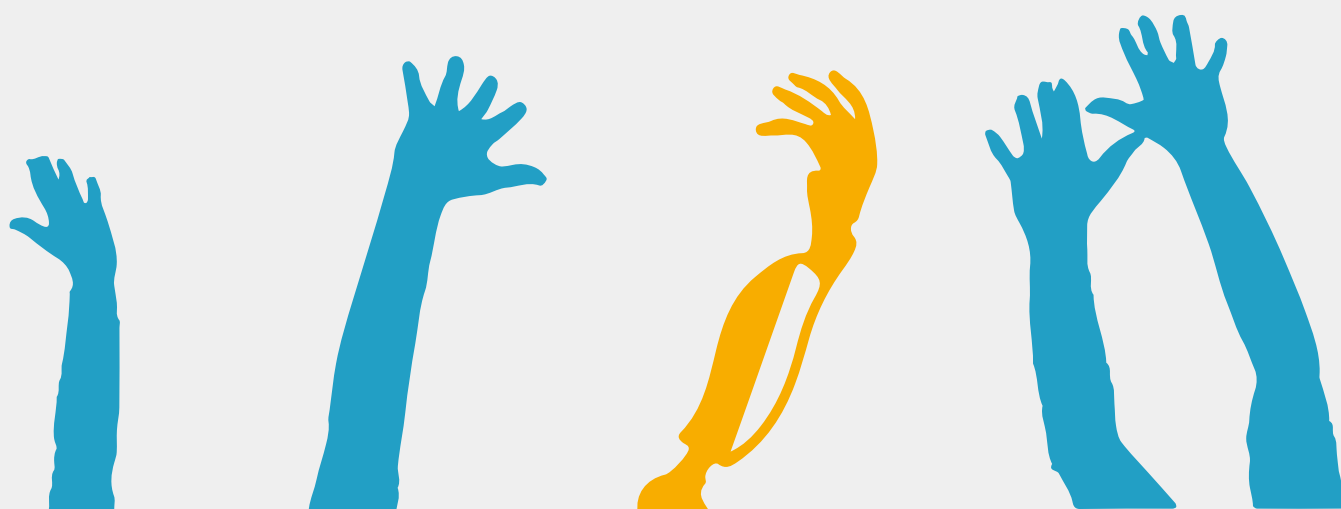


Unfortunately, sex education in schools is often not inclusive, meaning that many young people with disabilities are missing out on the knowledge and education they deserve, partially resulting in a terrifying fact: that disabled women are almost three times as likely as their non-disabled peers to suffer from sexual abuse.

If you have a disability: It is vital that you know and understand that you have the right to good and valuable sexual education, just as much as you have the right to a fulfilling sexual relationship with a partner that shows you love, respect, care and support. Equally, it should be just as easy for you to get contraception, or access a clinic, and your needs should be met just the same. If you have any queries regarding this, or would like to get involved in our campaign to make all sex education fully inclusive in schools across the UK, please contact us via our website: www.enhancetheuk.org

Talk with your family & friends

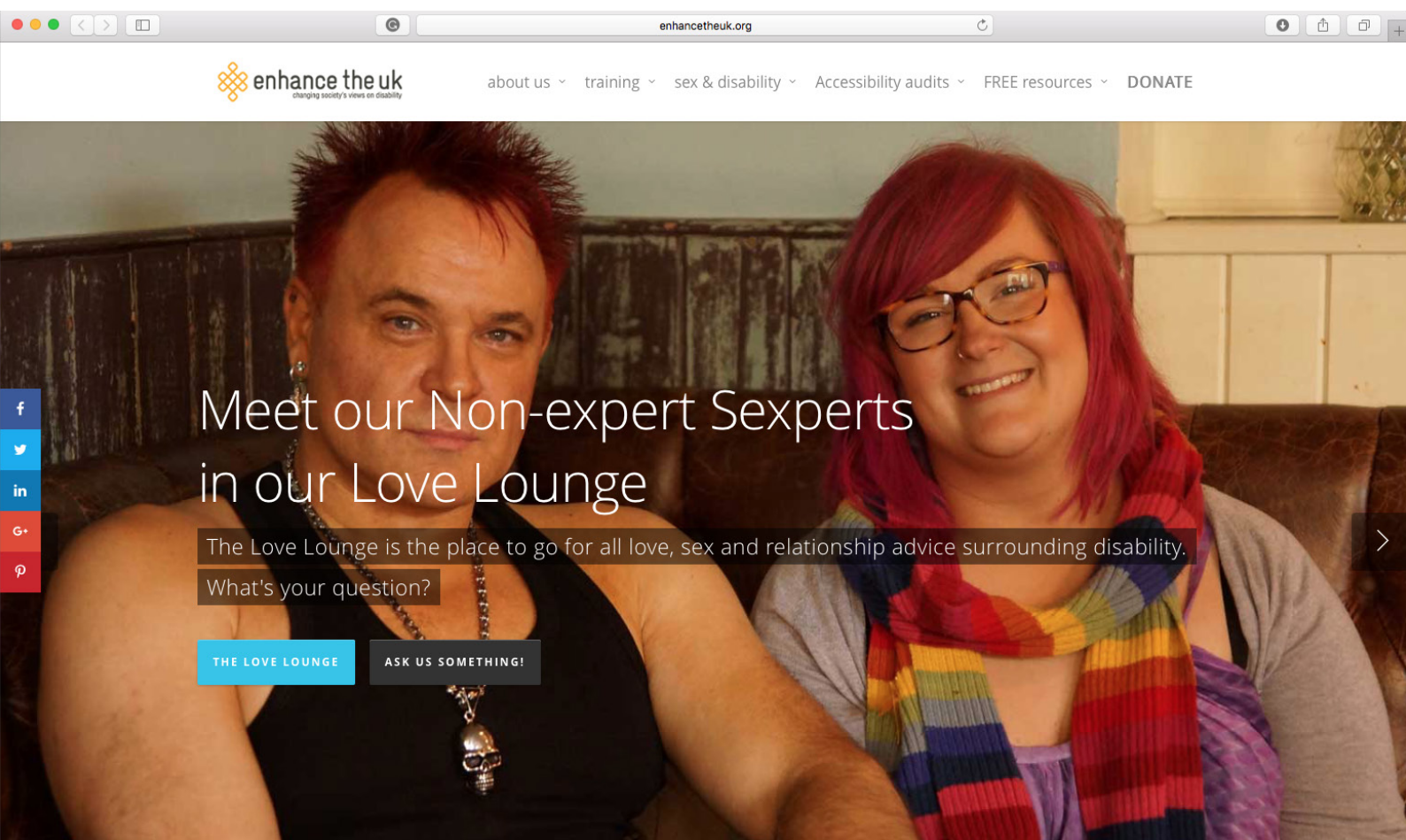
If you have a disability, it can sometimes be difficult to discuss sex and relationships with your family and friends, especially if they do not have disabilities themselves and cannot give you certain bits of advice. However, it's important that you are all assertive and know your rights; just because advice might be a bit more difficult to find, it doesn't mean it can't be found!



Do also visit the Love Lounge on the Enhance the UK website, where Emily and Mik will be able to give advice, suggestions and top tips to anyone wanting to know more about their rights and responsibilities around sex and relationships.

www.brook.org.uk also has a small section about sex and disability on their site. Their services are open for advice and support to anyone with a disability, and they say that, if you have a disability, you still need to understand:

- How your body works and grows
- What changes to expect at puberty
- The name of all the sex organs and how they work
- Relationships and responsibility
- How society expects you to act in public
- Keeping safe
- How to prevent an unwanted pregnancy
- How to prevent STIs.



And you will need:

- Social life with children or young people of a similar age
- Friendship
- Romance
- To explore sexuality
- Access to sex education
- Privacy for private activity
- Understanding of private and public areas of the body

So, although sex education is not at all where it should be for young people with disabilities, please know that we are fighting hard to change this and there is help and advice out there. Be assertive, and know your rights: change is coming!

Extra support

Feel free to contact Mik or Emily at The Love Lounge:

www.enhancetheuk.org/enhance/the-love-lounge

These guides are part of Enhance the UK's **#UndressingDisability** campaign: Sex Ed for Teenagers. Show your support by following us on Twitter and Instagram! **@EnhancetheUK**

