



# “Mean As!”

People with a learning disability telling and reading stories of relationships and sexuality



Figure 1. A photograph of Janet holding her artwork: The art is an abstract collage. A painted grey CD evoking the gendered Venus symbol is foregrounded on a sea of forest green, royal blue and grey and brown crayon tracing

Janet Bailey is a mixed media artist, currently working out of the Studio2 Gallery, Ōtepoti / Dunedin.

No one knows for certain, but it is believed Janet was placed at Templeton Hospital (Christchurch) as a very young girl before being moved to Cherry Farm Hospital (on the outskirts of Dunedin). Without any traceable family, Janet would become one of the first women to be resettled from Cherry Farm as it began to close in the 1990s.

Janet loves music and dance and singing and cups of tea and stories. Appropriately, therefore, Janet created the cover art from a deconstructed accordion case and compact disc, washed in her favourite green. The work travelled Dunedin as part of the Fringe Festival event “the road less travelled.” During the event a set of suitcases began by riding the carousel at Dunedin airport before members of public picked them up and put them down about the city.

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“ Just because you don't want to be creative,  
Doesn't mean you don't have something to say,  
And just because you don't want to be a leader,  
Doesn't mean you don't know the way.

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**The Shell (Historian)**

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**Ethical Approval:**

Southern Health and Disability Ethics Committee  
(NZ/1/7B02113)

# Acknowledgement

## **Mā whero, mā pango ka oti ai te mahi**

When the mahi (work) of unpacking each of the seven stories that now populate the “Mean As! Library was complete and the researchers with a learning disability sat down to reflect on and write their report, they imagined the project as a jigsaw. A jigsaw, they said, that couldn’t be completed without the work of many and the skills, creativity and care of each, differently shaped piece.

In this sense, therefore, “Mean As! has begun a much wider project. Namely to draw people into a community of listeners and actors, connected by the narratives of eight men and women, simply asking for the same right to live and love the way other New Zealanders do.

Placing people with a learning disability at the heart of the project transformed its kaupapa in a way that was consistent with their aim. “Everyone brought value to the project,” they wrote, “because we all saw people as equal – nobody is higher or lower.” To all those who embraced their kaupapa and brought life, vitality and resolve to the “Mean As!” Project, we are extremely grateful. Those who gifted their time, creativity and resources include;

- The **IHC Foundation** who first recognised the Project’s importance and funded the research as a way of giving voice to the formally voiceless.
- **Mike Hammond** (SDHB), **Anna** (Rape Crises), **Katie Wishler** (PACT Group) and **Louise Pearman** (University of Otago) who set the waka of this project off on a safe and well considered trajectory and especially to **Gary Williams** (Ngati Pouru) and **Kelly Tikao** (Waitaha/Kāti Māmoe/Kai Tahu) who helped to ensure the project included whaikaha Māori voices in ways that would resonate within their communities and align with tikanga Māori.
- **Mike Brummitt, Stacey McCullough, Katie Wishler** and **Gary Williams**, who introduced people with a story to tell to the project and continued to offer support to navigate the risks and possibilities of narration.
- **Aiden Geraghty, Tairoa Flanagan, Lucia Veitch** and **Sam Orchard**, who read, listened and answered the stories and instructions of Storytellers with their art.
- **Megan Brady** and **Kay Murray** for opening the door to Studio2 and the creativity of all of the artists who work there, but most especially to **Janet Bailey** and **Kama Warburton** whose work adorns the project’s cover and the narrative “Love yourself pretty much.”

- Actors **Kelly Tikao, Rihari Taratoa-Bannister, Craig Story, Bella Veitch, Sof Scott** and **Brittany Sillifant** for giving Storytellers a voice in the “Mean As!” Library and **Britany and Ellie Swann** (Otago Actors) for connecting and corralling their talents.
- **Dr Michael Holland** (appropriately Mike) who recorded, edited and formatted all of the stories in the “Mean As!” Library. Mike invited us into the Otago University Music Department studio and his own home when that became difficult, calmed nervous actors with his quiet professionalism and offered invaluable insight about the place of voice in research.
- **Lisa Hutchison** (Crush Creative) who brought our report formatting into the 21st Century.
- Brigit, Paul, Kelly and Niha (Donald Beasley Institute) and **Hahna Briggs**, who stepped into people’s lives to gather stories without knowing where they might take them.
- Assoc. Prof. **Patsie Frawley** (Deakin University), whose drive and commitment, both to inclusive research and sexual citizenship galvanised and guided the project.

But most importantly;

- **William Luskie, Vanessa Jane Murphy, Darryl White** and **Cheryl Wallace**, who listened with the empathy of an insider’s ear to stories that were sometimes difficult to hear. Together they have brought fresh ideas to a research space dominated by the voices and theorising of academics and other professionals, greatly expanded the horizons of Inclusive Research Methods and brought (biscuits and birthday cards) and the very best attributes of humanness to the task of reading and responding to the life stories of those at the very margins of ordinary citizenship.
- **8 Storytellers**, brave enough to gift themselves to the “Mean As! Library, knowing that the stories they created would need to do the talking for them. They are the first unfiltered stories of relationship and sexuality told by whaikaha Māori and New Zealand men and women with a learning disability and therefore simultaneously represent a bequest to people with a learning disability and the wider communities of self-advocacy and a call to action to all those who find the difficulty Storytellers have living and loving the way we do, dehumanising.

William, Vanessa, Darryl and Cheryl believe the jigsaw they helped create needs to be seen as a beginning rather than a completed project. In their imagining, there are many more pieces that need to be added if people with a learning disability are to experience the same kinds of intimate citizenship other New Zealanders do. In this report, you will hear them speak of the sense of responsibility they feel to take the stories into the community and to change organisations and habits in ways that might also transform the story telling of future generations of whaikaha Māori and people with a learning disability. In a sense, theirs is a challenge to us all. To meet within the kaupapa of equity – nobody higher or lower, and to create a more human future by telling, listening and responding to each other's stories.





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# Introducing the “Mean As!” Project

## Who we are: The research group

In the “Mean As!” research project, people with a learning disability<sup>1</sup> worked together as Storytellers and researchers to create an online library of life stories about sexuality and relationships. This research report has been put together by the “Mean As!” Project research group.

In the research group, four researchers with a learning disability were supported by four academic researchers to; listen to, talk about and to develop what we thought were the key messages Storytellers left in their stories. We all came to the project from different places and we all had different reasons for wanting to help.

### William Luskie



Figure 2. A photograph of William standing beside the Donald Beasley Institute entrance plate

I am known as an ideas person. A connector and a collector of people and their ideas. I am often connecting with theories by reading as much as I can. I am especially interested in reading about employment for people with a learning disability, citizenship, relationships and sexuality...and anything else that catches my eye.

I am a member of People First, have been a member of DPA and am currently on Advisory Boards at CCS Disability Action and the Ministry of Health. In my weekly life I am

<sup>1</sup> Like National Self-Advocacy DPO People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi, we prefer to use the term “people with a learning disability” instead of “intellectual disability” when we are talking about people from our community.

a member of the GASP dance collective. I attend political and disability related meetings across Dunedin and I am an artist. This year I received the Attitude Leadership Award.

I first came to the Donald Beasley, as a participant in a research project and then on a work experience placement. I liked that they listened to my ideas and have worked on a number of projects with researchers at the DBI since. I have also presented papers at national and international conferences and have made an online video for students completing their Graduate Diploma, Disability & Inclusion at Deakin University (Melbourne).

### **Vanessa Jane Murphy**



Figure 3. A photograph of Vanessa standing outside the Donald Beasley Institute

“ I work at Cargill Enterprises as a manufacturing assistant doing a variety of jobs like cups and headsets. I have a pet dog called Asha. She is a labrador. I like horses and love cats and dogs. All kinds of animals really.

I come from Fairlie. It's a small farming community in the McKenzie Country.

I think that explains my love of animals. I have also driven a tractor. And a quadbike.

This is the first time I have worked with the Donald Beasley Institute. I have really enjoyed listening to the stories. Some will stay with me for a long time. I especially liked the “Good man” poem.

### **Darryl White**



Figure 4. A photograph of Darryl standing beside the Donald Beasley Institute entrance plate

“ I have lived in Mosgiel all my life. I like to think of myself as a supportive and helpful person. I keep up with current affairs and I love travelling. I also enjoy public speaking and have even MC.ed a local fashion show.

I was a bit nervous about becoming a researcher, but really enjoyed the chance it gave me to be the helpful and supportive person I want to be. Slowly I came to trust my own voice and in the end found the chance this work gave me to express my views very rewarding.

I think one of the most important things about this library is that it people with a learning disability have had the chance to talk about themselves using their own words. Sometimes beautifully spoken words. This has been a new experience for me and, like Tipa, I hope the stories help other people with a learning disability living in the community.

### **Cheryl Wallace**



Figure 5. A photograph of Cheryl standing outside the Donald Beasley Institute

“ Like Darryl, I was born in Mosgiel too, but I have also lived in Balclutha and Gore. I am on the National People First Committee and my real passion is helping to start new groups in smaller rural areas. I am interested in other people with a learning disability getting their voices heard and so became involved in starting the first People First groups in Balclutha and Gore.

I am continuing to help groups start by mentoring a new group in Oamaru.

I have had a long relationship with the Donald Beasley Institute. Almost twenty years ago I met the research team when I visited in my role as the first national woman president of Ngā Tānga Tuatahi - People First. I knew Brigit before then and I have helped out on a number of research project over the years.

This year I started to learn Te Reo Māori. In this project I really engaged with the two Māori pūrākau (stories) and believe anyone who wants to have their story told should be able to tell it in the way that lets others know who they are. Watching other people with a learning disability grow and come out of their shell and do things they never thought they could is so rewarding. It has been my journey too.

## Why we were interested in the project

What we all liked about the project was that it gave people with a learning disability the chance to speak for themselves. Because the “Mean As!” Project, allowed Storytellers to tell their own stories their own way, we had the chance to learn how things were for them directly. As researchers, we wanted people to learn from our stories too, because our stories are something like theirs, even though we came to the research for different reasons.

**William** had read a lot about sexuality, relationships and disability and wondered why nothing much was being done in New Zealand. William had read things that Tom Shakespeare wrote about work being done by groups in Ireland and in other places and wanted to become involved in getting something done in New Zealand.

**Vanessa** heard about the project at work and was interested in listening to other people’s stories. She said people with a learning disability don’t often get to hear each other’s stories.

**Darryl** met Paul from the Donald Beasley Institute at Rosemary Scully’s book launch. Rosemary is an advocate and life-member of People First (and now author). Darryl was interested in finding out more about the Donald Beasley Institute and disability research. As an advocate, Darryl was interested in how research can help people with a learning disability.

Through her work at People First, **Cheryl** thought that lived experiences are really important and helps you think about how things are for your peers. Cheryl believes we all need to be able to get access to what you like in life and that people with a learning disability can help each other to do that.

## The Donald Beasley Institute

The Donald Beasley Institute (DBI) was the place that had the motivation to get the “Mean As!” Project done. They created the space for the research to happen and employed researchers to do the story gathering. They also did all of the administration and kept the project going.

The DBI started to talk to people with a learning disability about relationship and sexual rights a long time ago. Five years ago, they invited Patsie Frawley to come over and run workshops about sexuality and relationships.



Figure 6. A photograph of Associate Professor Patsie Frawley and the Cover of the Sexual Lives and Respectful Relationships Peer Education and Program Partner Manual

Patsie told everyone at the workshops about the work people with a learning disability were doing in Australia as peer educators in the Sexual Lives and Respectful Relationships program to educate other people with a learning disability about sex and their rights. This program also uses people's own stories. You can see their work by going to their website [www.slrr.com.au](http://www.slrr.com.au)

Some of us were at those workshops. For most of the people there, the workshops were first time we had been able to talk about sex without feeling judged. It was the first time we had talked to other people with a learning disability about sex too.

We think it is so important to get people's messages about sex and relationships across. It is important to listen and think about what people are saying carefully and respectfully.

## Doing the research

We think the research was like a jigsaw puzzle. We all brought different things to the research. We were all of value to one another – we fitted together like a puzzle. Everyone’s contribution was valued.

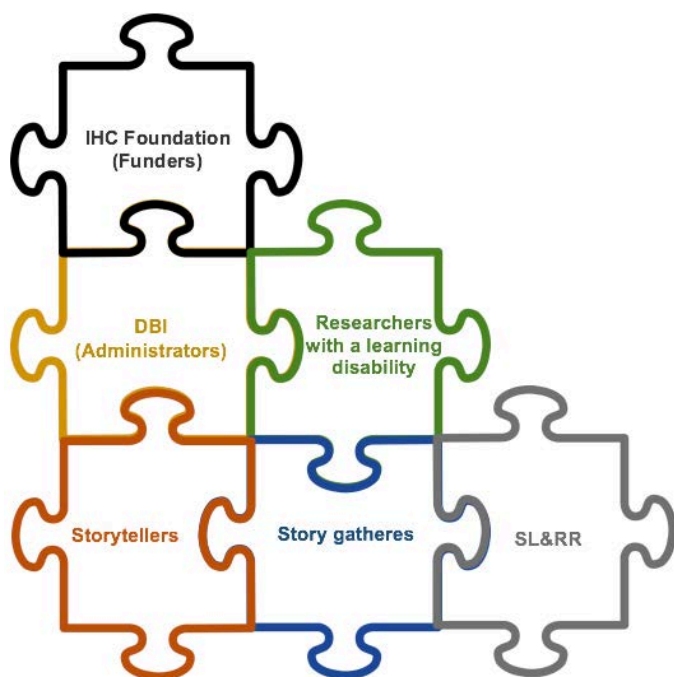


Figure 7: An image of interconnected jigsaw pieces with the titles of organisations and groups who partnered to create the “Mean As!” Online Library. Included as pieces are: IHC Foundation (funders), DBI (Administrators), Researchers with a learning disability, Sexual Lives and Respectful Relationships Program

Everyone involved brought value to the project by reading and listening to the stories because we all saw people as equal to us – nobody is higher or lower.

## What the “Mean As!” Project set out to do

The “Mean As!” Project had three main goals:

- To develop a library of 12 stories told by people with a learning disability that self-advocates and community and disability services can use to think about our human rights.
- To build connections with and educate community health and disability support providers about how best to meet our relational and sexual support needs.
- To do our own research and to add our voices to research trying to better understand how people with a learning disability experience their own relationships and sexuality. We wanted to do research that was “by” people with a learning disability “for” people with a learning disability.

To do this, we needed a library of stories to listen to.



## Storytelling and story gathering

The stories were gathered by the researchers (story gatherers) who met with Storytellers and recorded what they had talked about so that people's stories could be brought out into the open.

The Storytellers chose who they wanted to work with them on their story. They chose their own story gatherer by watching Youtube clips of each story gatherer introducing themselves.



Figure 8. A sequence of screenshots taken from the Youtube clips the five story gatherers made to introduce themselves to people thinking about becoming a storyteller. The story gatherers are (in order) Brigit Mirfin-Veitch, Hahna Briggs, Paul Milner, Niha Jalota, Kelly Tikao

The Storytellers were also able to choose how they wanted their story to be. They could tell their own story their own way and the story gathers and Storytellers worked together until each Storyteller was happy with their story.

Each person's story is different. The Storytellers present their stories to us the way they wanted to. Thumbs up to that! This way they come off the page. One is like a letter and one is like a song.



Figure 9. An image that lines of the covers of all seven stories in the "Mean As!" library

We are not allowed to tell you who the Storytellers are. You are not allowed to identify people in a research project, even if they want you to. Because Storytellers have to change their names and parts of their story, we think it is important that they got to choose their pictures and the way they wanted their story to be. This way they have told their own story. They have left themselves in it. Using art and telling stories in different ways also reminds people reading them that these are real people with real stories to tell.

A recording was also made of each story, so we could listen to the story. We think we got to know the Storyteller better this way. We listened to them as if they were there with us.

We felt we knew what was important to Tipa, because he chose to tell his story as a Māori myth (pūrākau) and because he chose to use te reo Māori (Māori language). He couldn't tell his story properly without these words. And we felt like we knew the man who wrote "I am a good man" a little better, because he chose to use the picture of the pool balls as part of his story. Stories presented this way tell a lot.

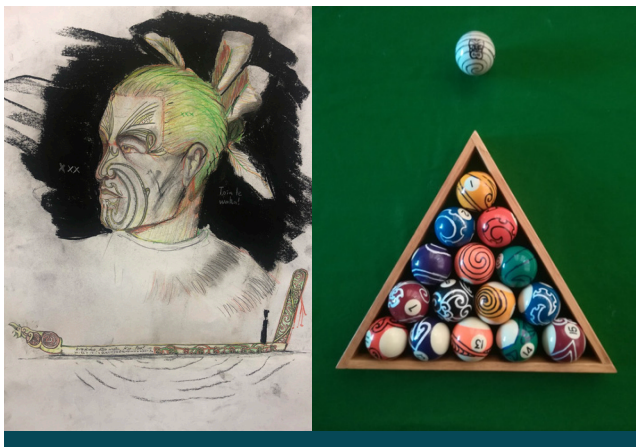


Figure 10. Photographs of the cover art used for the pūrākau (story) **Ko te Pūrākau o Tipa** and of the carved tapatoru (triangle) pool rack used in the story **I am a good man**

We think the Storytellers chose to give their stories to the library as a gift. We think they were really generous to tell their stories. We think they did it to help others because they had something to offer. It was their gift to give.

The way to respect their gift would be to use their story to change things for people with a learning disability.

## **Working with the stories**

The research group would come together at the DBI every two weeks. We'd warm up to listen to the story by going over what we had said and did last time. That way we could see if we still thought the same way or bring ideas that had been on our minds during the week. The stories would stay with you! We would always begin with a cup of tea and a catch-up though! And we would always end by talking about something other than the stories. This was important because sometimes we felt sad or upset after listening to them.

Each story had been recorded, so we could listen. This was really good. When we were listening, we could take the story in. Really listen to what the Storyteller was saying. And it gave us time to think about what we wanted to say too.

Most times there was a silence at the end of a story while we gathered our thoughts. It was like the person was really talking to you.



Figure 11. A photograph of the research group working together. In the picture Vanessa is sharing her reflections about the story the research group have just listened to. Other members of the research group sit listening and Paul is recording Vanessa's idea by writing them into a WORD document on a laptop. Pictured sitting about the table (clockwise) are; William, Vanessa, Darryl, Brigit, Cheryl and Paul

It was our job to find out what the story really said to us. We reacted to the stories – tuned into them. We were hyper-tuned!

We thought hard about the stories. Our heads and our ears were listening. We had our thinking caps on. We were all trying to figure them out and most of the time we didn't want to hear the last word. We wanted them to roll over and over .....

Story by story we would talk about each one, including how listening to the story felt for each person in the research group. We would go around the room, hear how it felt for each of us and talk about what it was like for the Storyteller too. We would think about why things happened the way they did and why the Storyteller might have made the decisions they did.

The kinds of questions we would ask ourselves after listening to the stories were:

- How the story made us feel.
- What we thought the Storyteller was trying to tell us.

- Why their story was important to them and why it was important for others to hear.
- Why they might have told their story that way and why they might have made the decisions they did.
- And what needed to change if people with a learning disability were going to tell better stories in the future.

Paul or Brigit would write down what we said and some of the big ideas were written out on the board. We learned big ideas are called “themes” in research. What we had to say was then grouped together. They are our Key Messages and in this report, we have presented them after each story.

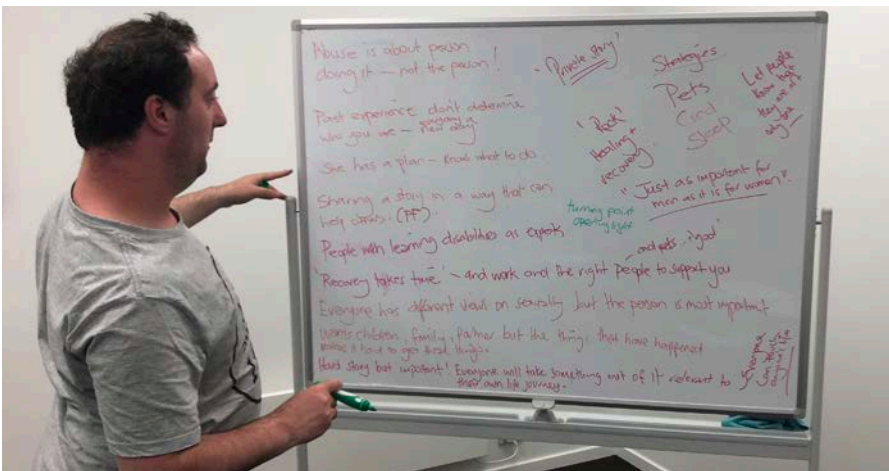


Figure 12. a photograph of William writing and checking some of the research groups big ideas on a whiteboard



Figure 13. A photograph of the cover of the research group's Key messages for the story Love yourself pretty much

When we listened across the stories some themes and concepts kept coming up. We think these give everyone a clue about some of the more important things people with a learning disability are telling us they want addressed.

Everyone will hear different things in the stories. When you listen, or read a story, we would like you to think about what the key messages are for you. You could start by asking the same set of questions we did.

Each Key Messages section ends with the same question.

## What do you think?

### Reading and listening to the stories yourself

The eight Storytellers have all shared very personal things about their lives because they wanted the library to be a place where people could come to learn more about relationships and sexuality in the lives of people with a learning disability in Aotearoa / New Zealand.

Some of the things people talk about in the stories are not easy to hear. Almost all of the Storytellers thought that it was important to talk about some of the bad things that had happened in their lives, as well some of the good things. As we listened and shared our ideas, we realised that similar things had happened in our lives and we worried that they may have happened to you too.

### Taking care of yourself as you read

If the stories are upsetting or bring up issues for you, there are people you can talk to. Some of the people or organisations that you might want to contact in Aotearoa / New Zealand are:



If you would like to talk to someone about a problem you are having or to know more about support services in your community, you can contact

- **Citizens Advice Bureau**



If you would like to talk about sex, contraception, family planning or sexually transmitted infection testing you can contact:



- **NZ Family Planning**
- **Sexual Health Clinics funded by your District Health Board**



If you would like talk to or get advice if you are or think you may be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, takatāpu, you can contact;

- **OUTLine**
- **Tawhanawhana Trust**
- **Rainbow Youth**



If you want to talk to someone because you are a woman living in fear or in a violent relationship or because you worry about someone else's safety, you can contact

- **Women's refuge**
- **Shakti**
- **Rape Crisis**



If you want to talk to someone because you are are violent towards your partner or others in your family and want to stop you can contact

- **Te Kupenga Whakaoti Mahi Patunga (National Network of Stopping Violence Services)**



If you want to talk to someone because you are are thinking about harming yourself or worried that someone may be suicidal you should contact

- **Lifeline Aotearoa**

### **Using the "Mean As!" Report and Library**

In writing this report, we wanted to share some of our experiences and ideas too. The people we thought about first were other people with a learning disability. We want to say to you that you are not alone. Others have felt and lived through the same things you have.

We also think that telling stories like those that have been collected in this research project can help people with a learning disability to know they have the same rights other New Zealanders do, to meet someone special, fall in love and to have intimate relationships. Those of us who are involved in self-advocacy groups know that telling

stories and talking to each other is a way that people with a learning disability have used to challenge discrimination and abuse. We hope the library will help to get people with a learning disability thinking and talking about relationships and sexuality.

This research project is called the “Mean As!” Project because it was what Storyteller Tipa said about his pūrākau (story) after listening to it for the very first time. He wanted his story to be different and to make a difference. In Aotearoa New Zealand, when someone says “Mean As!” they are saying something is really awesome. Tipa thought his story was “Mean As!”

Our hope is that the “Mean As!” Library and our Key Messages will become a resource for the community of sexual health educators, schools, disability and all other community support services that can help us to live and love in all of the ways that other New Zealanders do.

Now that the project has finished, we would like to find ways to work with the community to develop the tools and resources we need to carry on the conversation and to educate people about our relationship rights and needs. We have lots of ideas!

This was the first chance whaikaha (disabled) Māori and New Zealanders with a learning disability have had to tell stories about their own sexuality. While lots has been written about people with a learning disability, it hasn't been written by us. We think the library is important for this reason. It is our history! We also think the Storytellers have shown everyone new and more interesting ways to tell our stories.

This project was also the first time many of us in the research group had the chance to become a researcher. Although it took a little time for some of us to find our voices, we think what we have to say about the stories is important, because we have a learning disability. We think the “Mean As!” Project shows why it is important to do “nothing about us, without us.” We think including people with a learning disability is really important if research is going to speak for us.

### **What's in the “Mean As!” Report and Online Library**

In the second part of this report, we have included all seven stories, followed by what we thought the story's key messages were.

The other way you can see (and hear) the stories is by visiting the “Mean As!” Online Library.



Figure 14. Photographs of the process of recording the stories. In one photograph, actor Brittany Sillifant is pictured speaking the story into a microphone. In the other photograph, music producer and University of Otago lecturer, Dr. Mike Holland is recording the story at the Albany Street recording studio

Actors read and recorded each story<sup>2</sup>. You will find these recordings in the “Mean As!” Library too. If you “click on,” to them, you can listen to each story. You might want to listen by yourself or you might want to listen to the stories in a group – just like we did.

You will also find two reports in the library – this report and another one written by the academic members of the research team. The second report tells the story of creating the “Mean As!” Library and in it, academic members of the project team describe why they thought the research was so important, how we went about doing the research and why it was so important for people with a learning disability to lead the project.

The web address for the Mean As! Library is [donaldbeasley.org.nz/projects/mean-as](https://donaldbeasley.org.nz/projects/mean-as)

<sup>2</sup> The actors who volunteered to give voice to the stories came from the University of Otago School of Performing Arts, Arcade Theatre Company, personal connections and the Otago Actors Agency



## The “Mean As!” Library contains these resources

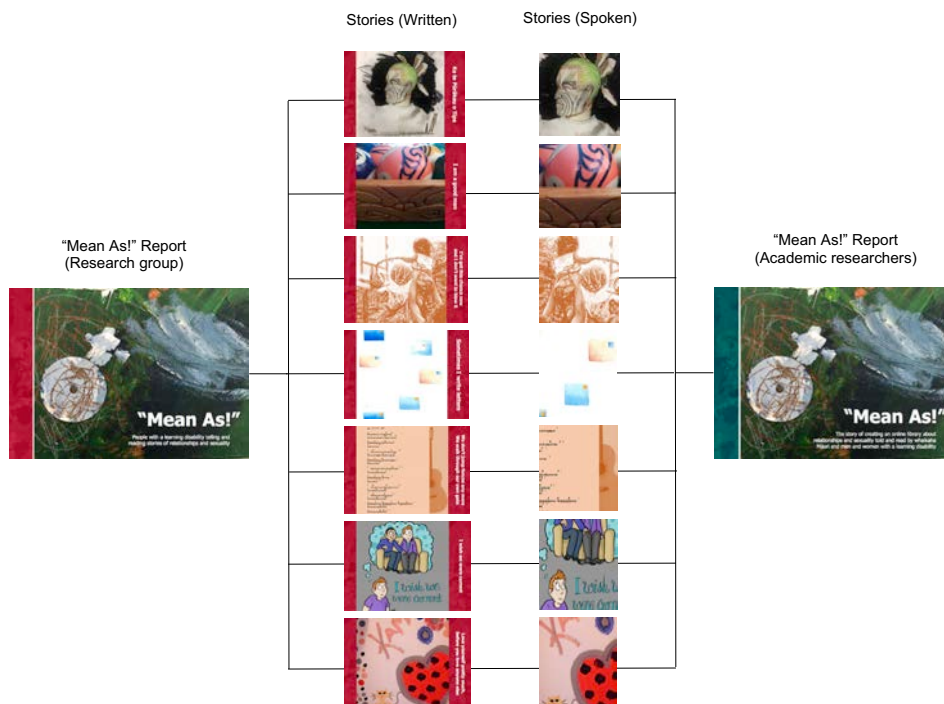


Figure 15. A flowchart that describes how the “Mean As!” Library is organised online. Included in the picture (as vertically organised images) are; the front covers of four (written) stories, radio buttons of spoken versions of the same four stories, the front covers of the research group’s (written) Key Messages for the same four stories, the front cover of the “Mean As!” Research Group’s Project Report, the front cover of a project report written by academic members of the research group.

### Why we think the research is so important

A lot has been written about the lives and sexuality of people with a learning disability – but not by us. The seven stories in the “Mean As!” Library are the first in New Zealand to be written by whaikaha (disabled) Māori and men and women with a learning disability living in New Zealand communities. There is a little bit of every person with a learning disability’s life in every story.

The stories are about people’s lives and experiences, told by them. They are familiar to people with a learning disability. This research is leaving something behind too. A “legacy,” or “a tattoo.” Something that is personal and near to us, not far from the lives of people with a learning disability. The “Mean As!” project and its stories are ours. They belong to us and our community and together tell our history. You can put yourself in the picture too. They give you ideas.

People with a learning disability find it hard to talk about relationships or to get answers to the questions we have about sex. It’s especially hard for people living in a disability support service. They worry that everything they ask or do gets written down in a D.I.A.R.Y. (whispered by a research group member). People don’t talk to us about it. And people with a learning disability don’t talk to each other about it either. We don’t know why that is!

After listening to one of the stories, we decided that for lots of people with a learning disability, finding sex was as hard as finding a needle in a haystack. When we talked more about why this might be, we thought that other people not talking to us about sex or expecting us to sexual was part of “hay” that made it so hard to reach the “needle” of a loving and intimate relationship.

Because no-one talks about sex and relationships, it's not always easy to know what life can be like. When we hear stories about people with a learning disability doing things like living together and getting married – well that was something we thought could change everything. Some of us were so shocked (in a good way) when we heard people with a learning disability were married!

The stories in the “Mean As! Library are real. They are on the page and we need to lift them off the page. We hope the stories get other New Zealanders talking about and understanding more about the real lives of people who live in their community.

We hope this project helps them to change what they do so that the next stories in the library will be no different from the stories other people in the community might write about themselves.

### **What needs to happen with the stories and the research.**

We say that; *“these stories have heart-value - not dust-value”*. They must not sit in a report – they must come to life and be used.

We want the stories in the “Mean As!” Library to become known and familiar to all people with a learning disability. We would like people with a learning disability to know where the stories are and how to access them.

We would also like to take the stories to people with a learning disability, by using the People First self-advocacy networks or by presenting at conferences or in other places that people with a learning disability are talking about how their stories can change each other's lives.

We like that each story has been recorded separately. You can listen to each one by itself in the library. We think the stories come to life this way and they are much more accessible to people with a learning disability. You just need to “click on” and listen. We would also like to record our key messages, so they are more accessible to people with a learning disability too.

We think that pamphlets could be developed from our key messages too, or we could make some short film clips that could be used in discussion groups that pick up on some of the main ideas that kept coming up in the stories. We think this would help people with a learning disability to talk more about their lives and what they wanted to change. We have seen it work when people with a learning disability role play real life events to each

other and it would help people with a learning disability know what to do if they found themselves in the same situation as the Storytellers.

We have also seen non-disabled people woken-up by disability theatre. There are lots of possibilities. We think that working with other community organisations to create some of these resources would find useful is a good idea.

When we thought about what we wanted the words in the project to turn into, we thought we had created an opportunity for people to talk to each other about the stories and whether what happened to the Storytellers was fair. That is why we have libraries after all!

But we didn't just think the stories would be used by people with a learning disability talking to each other. We think the project gives us the chance to start talking to community organisations about how we can help each other. People talking to people as equals – nobody is higher or lower.

Just like the jigsaw puzzle we put at the start of this report, we think we can all be of value to one another if we work on projects that needed us to fit together to change the picture for people with a learning disability. The jigsaw puzzle can grow to include communities of people and organisations who come together to get this work done.

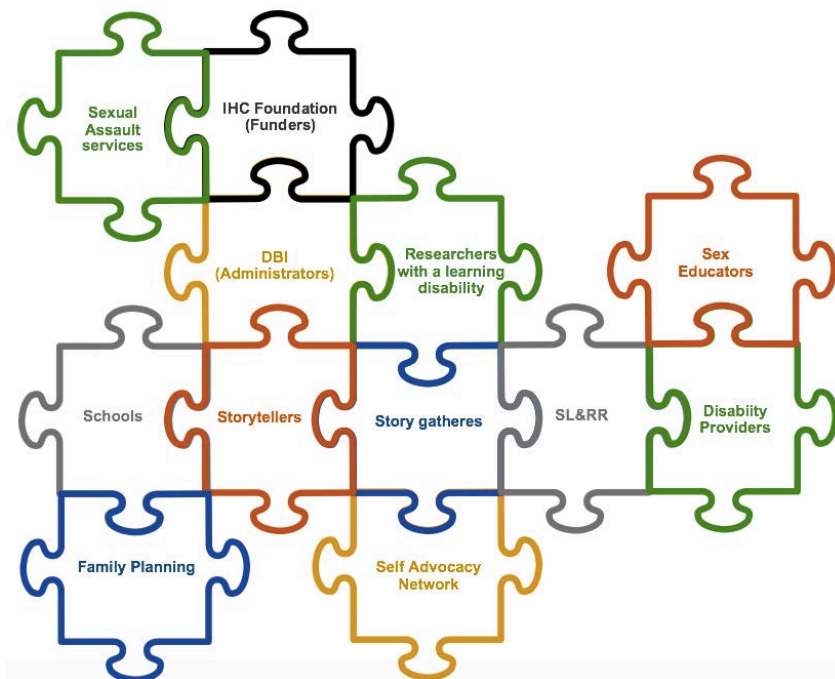


Figure 16. An image of some interconnected jigsaw pieces used in Figure 7, expanded to include the titles of other community organisations and groups (as jigsaw pieces) who could come together to change the lives of people with a learning disability. Additional pieces added to the jigsaw include; Sexual Assault services, Sex educators, Disability Providers, Self-Advocacy networks, Family Planning, Schools

The “Mean As! Library can become a tool for us all to think about what needs to be known and understood to support the relationship rights and sexuality of people with a learning disability.

- Schools could work with disabled students by using the stories and key messages to design projects to address bullying.
- The LGBTIQ+ community could work with gay, lesbian, bi and trans-sexual men and women with a learning disability by using the stories and key messages to design projects that help them find their way to their community.
- Disability service providers could work with people with a learning disability by using the stories and key messages to design projects that help people live and love the way they want to.
- Sexual violence services could work with men and women with a learning disability by using the stories and key messages to design projects that help them educate and provide support to those most likely to experience sexual assault.

By working together, the project's words will come to life. We think doing this will show the people who shared their stories just how important they are.



# **“Mean As!”**

People with a learning disability telling and reading stories of relationships and sexuality