

# People with intellectual disabilities' perspectives on interventions for sleep problems

## SLEEP PROBLEMS

People with intellectual disabilities are more likely to have behavioural sleep problems and sleep disordered breathing (Browne et al., 2024; Shanahan et al., 2023). This can negatively impact their quality of life as well as that of their families and carers.



## Sleep interventions

Interventions to support quality and quantity of sleep include pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical. The latter includes sleep hygiene, lifestyle changes and ad hoc interventions that do not have a robust evidence base.

## People with intellectual disabilities perspectives

Research on sleep typically excludes the voice of people with intellectual disabilities, relying on proxy reports and objective measures of sleep such as actigraphy and polysomnography.

## METHOD

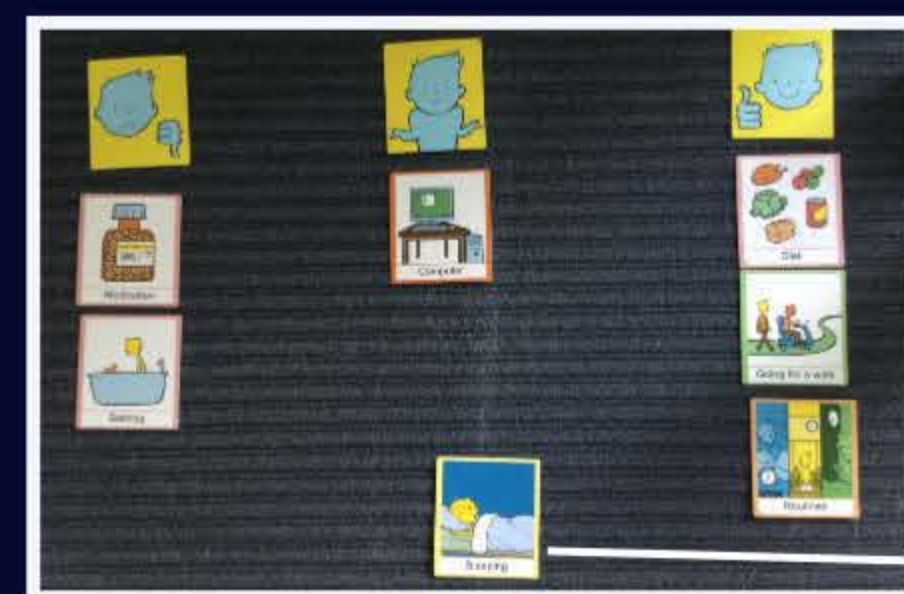
Six participants were interviewed about their sleep and strategies that they would be willing to try to improve their sleep. Talking Mats were used as an aid to support communication, participants thinking and decision making.

### Ethics

Ethical approval was granted from the HRA and University online ethics system. All participants were provided with an easy read version and a video explaining the participant information sheets to ensure they understood what would happen in the study and their rights as a participant.

## Talking Mats

Talking Mats are a visual communication tool to support people with barriers to communicating their feelings, views and preferences, through supporting comprehension, attention and power imbalances while providing a structure for open ended questions. Data sets from Talking Mats include pictorial visual data, verbal, paraverbal and nonverbal data.



Top line: not willing to try; so-so and willing to try

Option cards

Topic card

## RESULTS

There was a wide variation on the preferences participants had towards interventions. However, taking sleeping tablets appeared to be the least preferred method. Participants gave more positive comments about trying or currently using relaxing music, aromatherapy, going for a walk in daylight, dietary interventions and having a structured bedtime routine. Participants used the spare card to talk about interventions that were not represented but they had tried or would like to try including ASMR, blackout blinds and computer assisted relaxation apps.

## RECOMMENDATIONS



Individuals preferences need to be sought prior to designing care plans aimed at improving sleep. Talking Mats offer a structured communication tool to gather people with intellectual disabilities feelings and views in order to support person-centred care plans.

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