



Introduction

“A number of seemingly small steps can make a big impact toward helping people face tough challenges or make a fresh start.”

– Professor Katherine Milkman, 2015

[Watch our foreword video \(https://vimeo.com/1049579132\)](https://vimeo.com/1049579132)

Welcome

[Watch our Introduction video \(https://vimeo.com/1049579164\)](https://vimeo.com/1049579164)

Equally Safe and Supported is a practical set of resources designed to make support and justice accessible to women with learning disabilities who have experienced gender-based violence.

Who is this toolkit for?

This self-assessment toolkit is designed for use by both frontline staff and service managers working across health, social care, education, justice, and third sector services.

Why use it?

The toolkit helps organisations to reflect on, assess, and improve how they support women with learning disabilities who have experienced gender-based violence. It supports a rights-based, inclusive approach to service development.

By completing the toolkit, your organisation can identify practical ways to:

- ▶ Remove barriers to support for women with learning disabilities.
- ▶ Build staff confidence and awareness.
- ▶ Take forward an improvement plan based on real needs and actions.

What is in it?

The toolkit contains the following resources:

- ▶ Evidence of best practice in removing the barrier's women with learning disabilities face when seeking support and justice for gender-based violence.
- ▶ A self-assessment tool.
- ▶ An improvement planning template, including suggested actions you can take to make improvements.
- ▶ Inclusive resources, and signposting.

Background

Equally Safe and Supported has been co-produced by the Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities (SCLD) and People First (Scotland)'s Equally Safe Group. The Equally Safe Group are a group of women with learning disabilities and expertise in gender-based violence.

The toolkit is based on the findings and recommendations of our co-produced research report: [Unequal, Unheard, Unjust: But Not Hidden Anymore. Women with Learning Disabilities' Experience of Gender-Based Violence in Scotland](http://www.sclد.org.uk/unheard-unequal-unjust-but-not-hidden-anymore-new-report-launched-at-scotlands-learning-disability-and-gender-based-violence-conference-2023/) (www.sclد.org.uk/unheard-unequal-unjust-but-not-hidden-anymore-new-report-launched-at-scotlands-learning-disability-and-gender-based-violence-conference-2023/) (SCLD, 2023).

This report tells us that, as well as being at greater risk of gender-based violence, women with learning disabilities experience pervasive barriers to accessing support and justice.

These barriers may be unintentional or unrecognised. Therefore, we hope this toolkit will be a practical resource for organisations to make their services accessible to women with learning disabilities who have experienced gender-based violence.

What is a learning disability?

In consultation with people with learning disabilities, the Scottish Government (2019, p.9) defines a learning disability as follows:

“A learning disability is significant and lifelong. It starts before adulthood and affects the person's development. This means that a person with a learning disability will be likely to need help to understand information, learn skills and live a fulfilling life. Some people with learning disabilities will also have healthcare needs and require support to communicate.”



SCLD also note on their website that:

“A learning disability is different for everyone. No two people are the same. Challenges faced by people with learning disabilities can vary widely. In all cases a learning disability is lifelong.

A learning disability affects the way a person learns new things throughout their life. Many people who have a learning disability can get qualifications, work, have loving relationships, and live independently. Some people with a learning disability might need more support throughout their life.”

How does a learning disability affect someone?

A person with a learning disability can experience stigma and poor outcomes across a wide range of issues including accessing their human rights, education, employment, relationships, and family life.

See the diagram below:



Common challenges faced by people with learning disabilities



About the law

The Equality Act (2010) requires changes to be made to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities; these are called reasonable adjustments. These adjustments level the playing field for people who would otherwise face an unfair uphill struggle to get the services that other people may take for granted.

Examples of reasonable adjustments include:

- ▶ Arranging support to understand information and communicate feelings and decisions;
- ▶ Allowing more time for appointments;
- ▶ Changing the places and times where appointments happen.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) also requires public organisations to take measures to ensure people with disabilities have:

- ▶ freedom from exploitation, violence, and abuse;
- ▶ equal access, to the physical environment, to information and communications, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public;
- ▶ support to make their own decisions;
- ▶ their family life respected;
- ▶ equality before the law without discrimination.

How to use this toolkit

Through our research and co-production work, we identified four priority areas for improvement. These are:

- ▶ **Priority 1:** Fairness informed practice
- ▶ **Priority 2:** Decision-making
- ▶ **Priority 3:** Peer support
- ▶ **Priority 4:** Collaboration and co-production

Each section is structured around these key areas of practice, using the Think-Ask-Act-Repeat model.

Managers may focus on strategic planning, policy alignment, and team processes.

Frontline staff may focus on direct support, practice, communication approaches, and accessibility.



Not every question or resource will be relevant to every role, please engage with the content most applicable to your work.

If a section or statement does not apply to your service (e.g., if you do not provide face-to-face support), you can note this in your improvement plan.

The toolkit invites you to follow our four-step model to reflect on and improve your practice. This four-step journey looks like this:

Think

To improve the accessibility of your service, it helps to know what works and what does not. The first step is therefore to be informed.

THINK describes the lived experiences of victim/survivors with learning disabilities and the services who support them, as well as including examples of good practice.

Ask

The second step is to ASK yourself what you are doing well and where you could improve.

This involves completing a self-assessment. Here you will be presented with a series of good practice statements. You will then have the option to say whether your organisation delivers this good practice ALWAYS, SOMETIMES or NEVER.

Act

The third step is to ACT.

Once you have completed the self-assessment, the next step is to plan what actions you need to take to improve your service.

All the statements you responded to will automatically be transferred to your improvement plan, along with suggested actions you can take to make improvements. You can find your improvement plan under [My account](https://equallysafe.scll.org.uk/account/) (<https://equallysafe.scll.org.uk/account/>) , or in the ACT section.



Repeat

The last step is to repeat THINK, ASK, ACT to ensure continuous improvement. Here are some tips on how to do this effectively:

- ▶ Give yourself time to implement your improvement plan before reviewing it. This might be 6-12 months.
- ▶ Make sure you have a monitoring system in place to measure your improvements so they don't go unrecognised.
- ▶ Celebrate your improvements.

THINK: Fairness Informed Practice

[Watch our video about Fairness informed practice \(https://vimeo.com/1094382056\)](https://vimeo.com/1094382056)

Purpose of this section: This section invites you to explore how your service embeds fairness, equity, and anti-discriminatory values into everyday practice.

Who should complete it:

- ▶ Frontline staff: Consider how you engage with women with learning disabilities, build trust, and communicate fairly.
- ▶ Managers: Reflect on how your policies, staff development, and service design promote fairness for all service users.

Tip: You may find that some statements apply at both practice and organisational levels. Use this section to identify where your service is already strong — and where small changes could make a big difference.

Fairness Informed Practice is a concept created by Dr Gavin Hutchison. You can find out more about how this concept was developed here: [Fairness Informed Practice \(www.sclد.org.uk/supporting-people-with-learning-disabilities-who-have-experienced-domestic-violence-and-abuse-through-fairness-informed-practice/\)](http://www.sclد.org.uk/supporting-people-with-learning-disabilities-who-have-experienced-domestic-violence-and-abuse-through-fairness-informed-practice/)

What does being treated unfairly mean?

Unfairness is a form of discrimination where people are:



- ▶ treated less favourably than others in a similar situation
- ▶ disadvantaged by being treated the same as others when their circumstances are different.

For example, someone with a learning disability being given the same information as everyone else about a service and not being able to understand it. This disadvantages them because they might miss out on the service.

Treating people differently by giving them accessible information, levels the playing field, and gives them the same access to that service. This is called equity.



Equality

Equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities.



Equity

Equity recognises that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

Women with learning disabilities frequently experience multiple forms of discrimination, or unfairness, throughout their lives. This includes being treated unfairly when accessing support for gender-based violence, resulting in prolonged complex trauma, and harm, that is unnecessary, unjust and avoidable.

People with learning disabilities describe unfairness in relation to gender-based violence as:



Being treated differently:

“We definitely get treated differently, they don’t take us as seriously and we don’t get as much help. People look upon us as vulnerable, so they think we need to get treated differently.”

– Member of People First (Scotland)’s Equally Safe Group, 2024

Being treated with disrespect:

“To be so quickly invalidated ... and dismissed ... that hit me very hard ... that triggered a lot of stuff for me, and I did start to become more mentally ill, after that I went massively downhill.”

– Person with a learning disability, Hutchison, 2024a

The presence of discrimination and prejudice:

“That’s a bit upsetting to me when I’ve already explained I can’t do these phone calls. And they’re just like ‘just call them’, that’s basically like telling someone in the wheelchair ‘just walk’ to me. Well, you wouldn’t say that would you? It’s just frustrating and upsetting.”

– Person with a learning disability, Hutchison, 2024a

Why are women with learning disabilities treated unfairly?

People trying to help may have false ideas about who women with learning disabilities are. This, in turn, affects how they are treated and supported, leading to a focus on meeting basic needs rather than support to lead fulfilling lives.

Examples of common false beliefs about women with learning disabilities who experience gender-based violence include:



- ▶ They don't experience the same forms of gender-based violence as other women do
- ▶ They get support for gender-based violence from their carers
- ▶ They don't have the same social or emotional needs as other women do
- ▶ They are unreliable witnesses
- ▶ They are not credible

What does being treated fairly mean?

Fairness means treating everybody with dignity and respect, while ensuring they get the support they need to make choices and achieve their goals.

People with learning disabilities describe fairness in relation to gender-based violence as:

Being treated with respect:

"When they listen to you and that they understand what you're going through. And ... give you good advice."

– Person with a learning disability, Hutchison, 2024a

Being treated the same as others:

"Fairness means treating people equally ... Being treated like everybody else"

– Person with a learning disability, Hutchison, 2024a

Being treated differently to others in certain circumstances:

"Like everyone doesn't get treated the same but everyone gets as much help as they need. Because obviously we're different people with different abilities and stuff."

– Person with a learning disability, Hutchison, 2024a



Here are examples of how this can help:

- ▶ being offered longer appointments
- ▶ being able to get appointments at different times and places
- ▶ being able to see the same person all of the time
- ▶ being supported to understand information, communicate and make decisions
- ▶ being given information in formats that are accessible to the person
- ▶ being able to bring a supporter to appointments.

These are called reasonable adjustments.

You can get more information about reasonable adjustments by watching this video:

[Watch the Reasonable Adjustments video on YouTube here. \(www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbeeyAPFAok\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbeeyAPFAok)

Although the video focuses on healthcare, the principles remain the same for any service provider.

A lack of prejudice and discrimination:

Organisations can discriminate against women with learning disabilities without meaning to, for example, when some people can read their website but others can't.

“They make sure that I’m okay, that I understand everything that’s going on, that I ain’t stressed, erm they’ve said that if the police need to speak to them and then she can explain it to me. It makes it easier.”

– Person with a learning disability, Hutchison, 2024aa

What is Fairness Informed Practice?

Fairness Informed Practice means applying all of the things that you have just read to practice.

[You can find out more about Fairness Informed Practice here \(https://equallysafe.sclld.org.uk/file-download/5/fip-infographic.pdf\)](https://equallysafe.sclld.org.uk/file-download/5/fip-infographic.pdf) .

Here are some quotes from people with learning disabilities and service providers about what this means in practice:



“Someone who actually gives a damn. Who cares at all. Who actually helps with a single practical thing in my life.”

– Person with a learning disability, Hutchison, 2024a

“They actually cared about me, and they actually got to know me, and they didn’t judge me. They just acted like my friend. And I’ve never had anything like that you know.”

– Person with a learning disability, Hutchison, 2024a

“Often people get hung up about somebody’s disability, rather than thinking that, you know, it’s a person that is in front of them.”

– Service provider, SCLD, 2023

“Women with learning disabilities are often stigmatised with discriminatory attitudes making them less visible and more isolated.”

– Service provider, SCLD, 2023

“All our workers go on a lot of training ... because people are coming to us talking about some of the worst experiences that they’ve went through. We don’t want to make it harder. We want to make it easier, and we want to make it as supportive as possible.”

– Service provider, SCLD, 2023

THINK: Decision-making

[Watch our video about Decision-making \(https://vimeo.com/1049579151\)](https://vimeo.com/1049579151)

Purpose of this section: This section focuses on how women with learning disabilities are supported to make informed choices, express their views, and have those views respected.

Who should complete it:



- ▶ Frontline staff: Reflect on how you support understanding, offer choices, and avoid assumptions about capacity.
- ▶ Managers: Consider how systems, forms, and staff training enable or hinder supported decision-making.

Tip: Use this section to review how decisions are explained, recorded, and followed through, particularly where there may be legal guardianship or support needs.

Autonomy

Autonomy means being able to make your own decisions instead of being coerced by others. It is a fundamental human need that is essential to our well-being.

As human beings we are all used to making choices. When women are subjected to gender-based violence it is important that they are supported to regain control of what they do and what happens to them. This does not always happen for women with learning disabilities, who are particularly at risk of having decisions made for them.

“Traditional service and support models often perpetuate dependency and lack of agency by focusing on impairments and considering persons with disabilities as passive recipients of care. This approach is at odds with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is grounded in personhood, autonomy and community inclusion.”

– United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, 2023

Women with learning disabilities’ experiences of decision-making

Think about the last ‘big’ decision you made. Not the types of decisions you make every day like what to eat for lunch, but the sorts of decisions you need to consider more carefully, such as buying a house.

Like most people, it is likely that you gathered information about your options and spoke to other people before making your decision. As a society we can take it for granted that everyone is able to make decisions in this way.

However for women with learning disabilities, making decisions about their lives may not be so clear-cut, for a number of reasons.

Without tailored support, people with learning disabilities can find decision-making difficult and abstract, causing fear about not knowing ‘how’ to make decisions or making the wrong one, and confusion when a quick decision is called for.

“They need to understand that being able to communicate with one person with a learning disability doesn’t mean you can communicate with us all – there needs to be an awareness that the service needs to be flexible to suit different communication styles and needs.”

– A member of People First (Scotland)’s Equally Safe Group, 2024

Women with learning disabilities frequently have their opinions undervalued or ignored. Because this is such a common experience it can be difficult for them to trust professionals and share their experiences in the first place.

“They need to know we’ve lived a life not being listened to and that we see that! Every new person is starting again, to build the trust, to see if they’re decent with us, to see if it’s worth sharing our stories with them or whether they’ll just take no notice of what we say. You just shut down when you get the sense they’re not listening.”

– A member of People First (Scotland)’s Equally Safe Group, 2024

“It’s really bad when people don’t believe what you’re saying to them and often they’ll tell the social worker what you’ve said and you didn’t want the social worker to know. It’s really worrying to think that the police or NHS staff are talking to social workers behind your back. It means you can’t trust them and it’s especially worrying when you’ve got children that the social workers will just come in and say ‘oh you obviously can’t look after yourself or them’ and just take them away.”

– A member of People First (Scotland)’s Equally Safe Group, 2024



“It’s also really bad when the people there to help you don’t even talk to you – they speak to whoever you’re with, ask them all the questions. So services need to communicate directly with the person and be honest with them, take the time necessary to listen to them.”

– A member of People First (Scotland)’s Equally Safe Group, 2024

Such assumptions can lead to professionals making decisions for women with learning disabilities, instead of with them. Examples include sharing sensitive information and making referrals to other agencies without their involvement or consent, and even making decisions about how they live their lives, where they live, who they have relationships with and the support they receive.

“I went to the police and social work to get help and I was pregnant at the time. Social work lied to me and told me they were worried about me and the baby and they were going to take me to a doctor’s appointment.

I didn’t go to the doctor, there was no appointment. When I was in the car, they told me they’d got a court warrant behind my back the night before and I was flung into a locked care home miles from home for eight years. I got put on a guardianship too. I spent four years fighting tooth and nail with the help of a lawyer to get out. So that’s what you get for asking for help!”

– A member of People First (Scotland)’s Equally Safe Group, 2024

When people are unable to seek out, understand, weigh-up, and/or retain information fully, their decision-making ability is also affected. This is often referred to as a person’s ‘capacity/incapacity’ to make a decision.

Under these circumstances, the law can grant other person(s) or organisations legal power to make decisions on someone’s behalf. This is called substitute decision-making. In Scotland, there are various forms of formal substitute decision-making. These include Power of Attorney, where an attorney or attorneys are appointed by the person before they lose capacity, and Guardianship, where a guardian or guardians are appointed by the court when the person has been assessed as lacking capacity. These forms of decision making require court authority and cannot be decided by individuals or organisations alone.

Women with learning disabilities are frequently subjected to formal substitute decision-making processes when they report gender-based violence. These types of decision-making remove people’s human rights to make autonomous and voluntary decisions about their lives. This can lead to a form of safeguarding that is as bad as, if not more damaging, than the abuse it tries to prevent and perpetuates women with learning disabilities’ risk of harm by not supporting them to make their own fully informed decisions.



“We need support from people with decision making, not them just flying in and pushing us into corners with no choice. Why couldn’t they just involve me in the decision making about how to protect me? This is why women with learning disabilities don’t report. It stole so many years of my life.”

– A member of People First (Scotland)’s Equally Safe Group, 2024

What does good support to make decisions look like?

Everyone involved in supporting women with learning disabilities when they are at risk of harm has a duty to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between ‘protection from harm’, and promoting their autonomy, wellbeing and human rights.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities says that persons with disabilities have the same rights to make their own decisions as everyone else, and that appropriate measures must be taken to support them to exercise their legal capacity.

Part of an informed and effective support service is to help people to re-gain control of their lives by offering tailored support to make informed decisions. This is sometimes called *supported decision-making*. By offering practical advice and support you can empower women with learning disabilities to do this. Here are some examples of how:

- ▶ Make time to listen, hear and get to know about people’s lives and how they want to live, as well as their strengths and goals
- ▶ Take time to build effective relationships based on trust
- ▶ Be open and honest
- ▶ Communicate and share information in ways that people like and understand
- ▶ Provide people with information about their rights to make their own decisions about their lives
- ▶ Provide people with support to weigh up pros, cons and risks and to access emotional support
- ▶ Give people information about independent advocacy and help them to access it if they want
- ▶ Avoid influencing decisions by asking yes and no questions
- ▶ Allow people time to understand and make informed decisions



By supporting women with learning disabilities in this way you can shift safeguarding activity from a focus on people's disabilities, risk and behaviours to building genuine, equal, trusting relationships with women with learning disabilities. This in turn allows for a better understanding of their lives, thereby enhancing their safety and resilience.

There are accessible supported decision-making resources available to help increase participation and engagement at what can be a very scary and distressing time. See the [Inclusive Resources and Signposting \(https://equallysafe.sclcd.org.uk/toolkit/inclusive-resources-and-signposting-9/\)](https://equallysafe.sclcd.org.uk/toolkit/inclusive-resources-and-signposting-9/) section.

By routinely providing opportunities and support to make informed decisions about their lives, service providers can empower women with learning disabilities to gain the confidence and skills to live safe, loving and equal lives.

“Making our own decisions is good for our wellbeing, confidence, and learning. It allows us to practice making our own decisions, take responsibility and learn from our mistakes.”

– A member of People First (Scotland)'s Equally Safe Group, 2024

THINK: Peer support

[Watch our video about Peer support \(https://vimeo.com/1086710679\)](https://vimeo.com/1086710679)

Purpose of this section: This section explores whether your service provides, or connects women to, peer support opportunities that reduce isolation and build confidence.

Who should complete it:

- ▶ Frontline staff: Think about how you signpost to peer networks or help create informal support links.
- ▶ Managers: Review whether peer involvement is embedded in service design or evaluation processes.

Tip: If your organisation doesn't currently offer peer support or feels it's not relevant to your delivery model, you can signpost women to organisations who provide opportunities for peer support (see [inclusive resources and signposting \(https://equallysafe.sclcd.org.uk/toolkit/inclusive-resources-and-signposting-9/\)](https://equallysafe.sclcd.org.uk/toolkit/inclusive-resources-and-signposting-9/) for details), record this and reflect on possible future developments or partnerships.



Women with learning disabilities' experiences of peer support

The trauma experienced by victim/survivors with learning disabilities cannot be overstated. Gender-based violence can be an extremely isolating experience for women with learning disabilities. The feeling of being misunderstood can worsen those struggles.

This is why they often find support in addressing their trauma by meeting with other women who have shared similar experiences to them in peer support groups.

By offering opportunities for connection, understanding and hope, peer support can bridge the gap and become a lifeline for women with learning disabilities.

Peer support can help women with learning disabilities who have experienced gender-based violence in several ways. It can:

- ▶ reduce isolation
- ▶ encourage friendships
- ▶ dispel myths perpetrated by violent partners
- ▶ provide ongoing support and social contact
- ▶ validate lived experience
- ▶ provide opportunities for self-determination
- ▶ develop daily living skills
- ▶ provide a safe and confidential space to share experiences and learn from each other
- ▶ support managing challenges and adversity
- ▶ empower women with learning disabilities to recognise their own expertise and improve self-confidence, through the opportunity to provide support to others in similar situations to their own

This is what some women with learning disabilities have said about peer support:

"It's good to have a group(s) of women, friends who are safe and you can talk to them."

– Member of People First (Scotland)'s Equally Safe Group, 2024



“I feel better when I am busy with my wee groups. I feel better when I have my groups to go on, on Zoom. I’m not thinking about it all. There was a week there when I didnae have any groups on, and I felt I was going back the way.”

– Woman with a learning disability, SCLD, 2023

What does good peer support look like?

Peer support is a values-based approach to supporting people with similar lived experiences to come together and offer each other mutual help and support. It is often informal and based on shared understanding but can also be offered as structured peer support groups or initiatives.

“Ideal peer support for me would just be folk to talk to and links or suggestions of where we could go for support – just to be given an idea of who we can turn to confidentially.”

– Member of People First (Scotland)’s Equally Safe Group, 2024

What makes peer support unique?



The Scottish Recovery Network advises that good peer support has these [four essential components](https://scottishrecovery.net/peer-support/what-is-peer-support/) (<https://scottishrecovery.net/peer-support/what-is-peer-support/>) :



- ▶ Shared lived experience which builds trust and empathy
- ▶ A mutual relationship of equals where people walk alongside rather than 'fix'
- ▶ A supportive relationship based on hope and belief
- ▶ An intentional space where people explore together and work towards recovery



Done well, peer support creates an environment where people can feel safe, understood and accepted by nurturing an atmosphere of non-judgmental support, openness and personal growth.

Whether through one-on-one support or in a group setting, peer support provides a unique opportunity for people to speak openly about their struggles with others who truly understand.

Peer support also plays a crucial role in fostering recovery and wellbeing. By sharing experiences, peers can break down feelings of isolation and stigma which are often barriers to seeking help.

By offering practical advice, support and reminding individuals they are not alone in their journey, peer support can be an empowering part of their recovery.

It may be that your organisation only supports a small number of women with learning disabilities. In these situations, it might be helpful to invite women with learning disabilities to join your own mainstream support groups. The benefit of this is that they can share their experiences and get support from other women who have experienced gender-based violence. The challenge is to ensure that these groups have the capacity to include women with learning disabilities.

Another option would be to signpost them to organisations who offer peer support to women with learning disabilities.



[You can find out more about peer support here. \(https://scottishrecovery.net/peer-support/what-is-peer-support/\)](https://scottishrecovery.net/peer-support/what-is-peer-support/)

Graphics on this page courtesy of the [Scottish Recovery Network \(https://scottishrecovery.net/\)](https://scottishrecovery.net/)

THINK: Collaboration and Co-production

[Watch our video about collaboration and co-production \(https://vimeo.com/1049579115\)](https://vimeo.com/1049579115)

Purpose of this section: This section supports reflection on how your organisation works *with* women with learning disabilities, not just *for* them, in shaping services, materials, and environments.

Who should complete it:

- ▶ Frontline staff: Consider how you gather feedback, act on suggestions, and support participation.
- ▶ Managers: Look at how co-production is resourced, documented, and championed at a strategic level.

Tip: Use this section to identify opportunities to involve women with learning disabilities more meaningfully - including in working groups, materials testing, or service reviews.

Women with learning disabilities' experiences of collaboration and co-production

Too often services are designed by people who don't have direct experience of what it's like to need or use them.

Rarely are services designed by, or with women with lived experience of learning disabilities and gender-based violence. Instead, decisions are frequently made *for* them, not *with* them.

By using a collaborative approach to designing services, you can make positive change happen *with* women with learning disabilities, instead of *to* them.

By having a say in what is needed, women with learning disabilities can truly play a part in how decisions are made. This type of collaboration can support you to design services that effectively meet the needs of all women.

Despite the abuses and challenges they face, victims/survivors with learning disabilities exemplify resilience every day. They do this by:



- ▶ welcoming opportunities for collaborative work that champions and defends their human rights and creates change
- ▶ taking their experiences of abuse and using them to stand up for not only their own human rights but those of all women with learning disabilities.

Examples of human right activism by women with learning disabilities include:

- ▶ sharing their experiences in public forums
- ▶ taking part in campaigns
- ▶ raising issues independently, and collectively with complaints bodies and the Scottish Government.

“I’ve sent ones [emails] to child protection telling them what I think, I’ve sent one to the Government, I have sent one to Nicola Sturgeon. Basically, voicing my opinion about it all.”

– Woman with a learning disability, SCLD, 2023

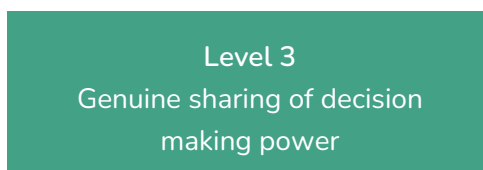
“It was a campaign, and it was a photographer that came to my local women’s group... They are quite powerful [the pictures]...It was a good campaign. It could go on billboards and things like that...it was good doing that.”

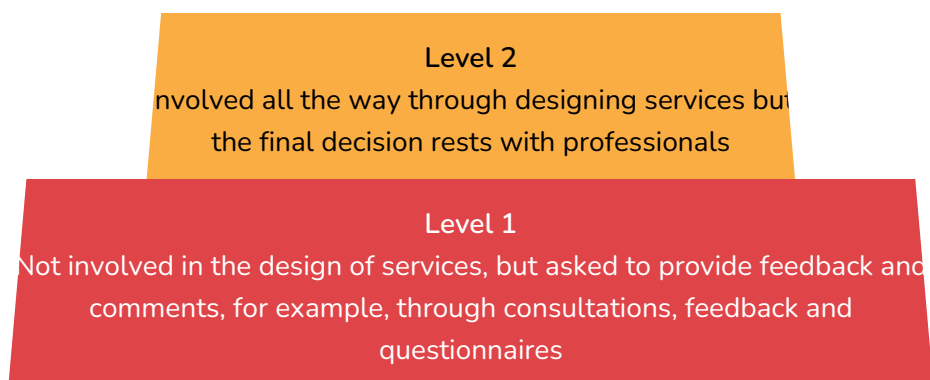
– Woman with a learning disability, SCLD, 2023

What does good collaboration and co-production look like?

It is important to collaborate with people who use your service and ensure that their views and experiences are used to shape your service.

This can be achieved in different ways and involves different levels of commitment. The diagram below provides some examples of ways of collaborating with people with learning disabilities to design services:





At each stage you will require to:

- ▶ listen to what people tell you about your services and respond to their feedback
- ▶ invest time to involve people in open and inclusive discussions
- ▶ share decision-making power equally with the people who use your services. This is sometimes called co-production.

In the simplest of terms, co-production means professionals working with people with lived experience to do or change something.

Co-production can be achieved by acting together on an equal basis where everyone can contribute their lived experience, skills and ideas about what works to create positive change.

By working together to make decisions about the way services are designed, commissioned and delivered, co-production can support your organisation to make improvements at individual and system-wide levels.

The difference between collaboration and co-production is that co-production involves sharing decision-making power with service users. By shifting this balance of power you can achieve better outcomes for the people you support, as well as the services that support them.

It may be that your organisation only supports a small number of women with learning disabilities sporadically and over a limited period of time. In these situations full co-production may be difficult for a number of reasons. Here are some things that might help:

- ▶ collaborating with women with learning disabilities who have used your service in the last year or more
- ▶ collaborating with advocacy organisations that are led by, or support, victim/survivors with learning disabilities
- ▶ collaborating with similar organisations to your own, to invite women with learning disabilities to evaluate and advise on the accessibility of your services. In these situations, it will be important to co-ordinate this well to avoid causing any additional trauma from repeatedly re-telling, and re-living their experiences.

The challenge is to ensure that any collaborative or co-produced work is inclusive, accessible and that decisions are shared equally. For information and advice about communicating and supporting women with learning disabilities to make decisions, see [Priority 2: Decision-making](https://equallysafe.sclcd.org.uk/toolkit/think-decision-making-6/) (<https://equallysafe.sclcd.org.uk/toolkit/think-decision-making-6/>) .

You can find out more about co-production here (www.coproductionsotland.org.uk/what-is-copro) .

ASK

Fairness Informed Practice

Question	Always	Never	Sometimes
<p>1 All our staff are aware of the barriers that women with learning disabilities face when accessing support for gender-based violence, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ not being believed or taken seriously ▶ support that isn't tailored to their needs ▶ not having access to accessible information, about gender-based violence and where to get support for gender-based violence ▶ false ideas about who women with learning disabilities are, as described in the THINK section of Fairness Informed Practice. 			
<p>2 We validate the experiences of gender-based violence that women with learning disabilities tell us about.</p>			
<p>3 We work with women with learning disabilities to make any reasonable adjustments required.</p>			
<p>4 We have an Equality Strategy that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ complies with the Equality Act (2010) (www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/your-rights-under-equality-act-2010/disability-discrimination) ▶ is informed by the results of our Equally Safe and Supported self-assessment, and improvement plan ▶ takes account of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities) , sometimes called the UNCRPD ▶ is publicly available in a variety of formats 			
<p>5 New practices, policies, and changes to existing ones, are reviewed prior to implementation to ensure consistency with our Equality Strategy.</p>			



Question	Always	Never	Sometimes
<p>6 We make our website, communications and marketing as accessible as possible in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ they meet minimum accessibility standards (www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/accessible-information-standard) ▶ they are WCAG2.0 (www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/) compliant ▶ they contain accessible information about the reasonable adjustments our service can provide, for example providing information in accessible formats like easy read and video formats ▶ they are reviewed annually to ensure that any information we share is accessible to women with learning disabilities and updated as part of our Equality Strategy 			
<p>7 Women with learning disabilities are routinely asked to provide feedback on the accessibility and performance of our services. Feedback is then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ used to inform our Equality Strategy ▶ included in our annual performance report which is publicly available in a variety of formats, including easy read 			
<p>8 We have an accessible complaints procedure that is publicly available.</p>			
<p>9 As part of their annual professional development review, all staff are assessed on their understanding and delivery of fairness informed practice (https://equallysafe.sclld.org.uk/file-download/5/fip-infographic.pdf) .</p>			



Decision-making

Question	Always	Never	Sometimes
1 We ask women with learning disabilities about their communication needs and preferences and offer support to communicate their decisions in a way that they understand.			
2 Our staff are encouraged to take the time they need to support women with learning disabilities to make fully informed decisions.			
3 We ask women with learning disabilities if they have a legal guardian, power of attorney or appointee.			
4 We respect women with learning disabilities' decisions and where possible, support them to achieve their goals.			
5 We support women with learning disabilities to review their decisions where required.			
6 We conduct an accessible risk assessment (https://equallysafe.sclld.org.uk/file-download/8/dash-accessible-cards.pdf) with women with learning disabilities and refer them to their local MARAC (https://safelives.org.uk/resources-for-professionals/marac-resources/find-a-marac/find-a-marac-scotland/) when there is a high risk of serious harm or murder because of domestic abuse.			
7 We are open and honest with women with learning disabilities, gain their consent for sharing information about them, and involve others to the level that they want. Any information we share is relevant and proportionate to the risk identified, and to those who have a need to know.			
8 We provide women with learning disabilities with accessible information about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Learning disability advocacy services, for support to access their rights ▶ The appropriate adult service, for support to communicate with the Police ▶ The Scottish Women's Rights Centre, for legal advice ▶ Victim Support Scotland, for practical advice and support about the justice system ▶ NHS SARCS, when a sexual assault or rape has taken place ▶ Women's support services i.e. Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland, for emotional support 			



Peer support

Question	Always	Never	Sometimes
1 We provide women with learning disabilities with opportunities for peer support, as described in the 'what does good peer support look like' section of THINK.			
2 We build the capacity of women who offer peer support to other women. We do this by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Facilitating peer support relationships to begin ▶ Providing information and support around self-care ▶ Ensuring that peer support is mutually empowering 			
3 Our staff understand peer support well and get the training and support they need to enable it to work well.			

Collaboration and Co-production

Question	Always	Never	Sometimes
1 We collaborate with women with learning disabilities to identify barriers to accessing our services.			
2 We collaborate with women with learning disabilities to remove barriers to accessing our services and make them more inclusive.			
<p>3 We have policies and procedures in place to ensure that women with learning disabilities are fully included in making decisions about the accessibility of our services.</p> <p>Our policies and procedures state that women with learning disabilities who are involved in making decisions about our services should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ have all their communication needs recognised and met ▶ be supported to develop and express their views ▶ have their views given due weight in decision-making. 			

ACT

Collaborate with partners, women with learning disabilities and colleagues about:

- ▶ How you can improve.
- ▶ The impact of any changes you make.

Next Steps

- ▶ Get started on your improvement plan by going to [My account](https://equallysafe.sclld.org.uk/account/) (<https://equallysafe.sclld.org.uk/account/>) .
- ▶ All the statements you responded to in the self-assessment will automatically be added to your improvement plan.
- ▶ Where rows are highlighted in green: continue using the toolkit to reflect on your policies and practices, and share good practice with your colleagues and stakeholders. For example, by using the toolkit for training, induction of new staff and personal development reviews.
- ▶ Where rows are highlighted in amber or red: consider what actions need to be taken to improve. We have auto-filled some suggestions in the action plan column. Please add your own plan with actions that are applicable to your organisation.
- ▶ Use the inclusive resources and signposting section to help put your improvement plan into action.



REPEAT

Repeat ASK to check whether the changes you made worked.

If the changes have been successful:

- ▶ Take a step back and reflect on what you have achieved.
- ▶ Take time to talk about what has improved and why it has improved, with everyone involved.
- ▶ Celebrate good practice and improvements.
- ▶ Share your improvements and successes widely.
- ▶ Standardise and integrate them into your policies, procedures and working practices.
- ▶ After you have spent some time implementing your improvement plan, review your plan and compare it with previous improvement plans. You can access all your improvement plans in the [My account](https://equallysafe.sclld.org.uk/account/) (<https://equallysafe.sclld.org.uk/account/>) section of the toolkit.

If the changes have not been successful, re-do THINK, ACT, REPEAT.

Inclusive resources and signposting

The toolkit also contains practical information and resources to help you address any areas you have identified for improvement.

You can browse these resources below.



Fairness informed practice

[Helen Sanderson Associates: Person-Centered Thinking Tools](https://www.helensandersonassociates.com/person-centered-thinking-tools/)

[\(www.helensandersonassociates.com/person-centered-thinking-tools/\)](https://www.helensandersonassociates.com/person-centered-thinking-tools/)

Person-centred thinking tools are a set of easy-to-use templates that are used to give structure to conversations. Using them is a practical way to capture information that feeds into person-centred planning, as well as to improve understanding, communication and relationships.

[National Disability Practitioners](https://www.ndp.org.au/images/factsheets/346/2016-10-person-centred-approach.pdf) [\(www.ndp.org.au/images/factsheets/346/2016-10-person-centred-approach.pdf\)](https://www.ndp.org.au/images/factsheets/346/2016-10-person-centred-approach.pdf)

What is a person-centred approach leaflet.

[Dr Gavin Hutchison, 2024: Supporting people with learning disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and abuse through Fairness Informed Practice](https://www.scll.org.uk/supporting-people-with-learning-disabilities-who-have-experienced-domestic-violence-and-abuse-through-fairness-informed-practice/) [\(www.scll.org.uk/supporting-people-with-learning-disabilities-who-have-experienced-domestic-violence-and-abuse-through-fairness-informed-practice/\)](https://www.scll.org.uk/supporting-people-with-learning-disabilities-who-have-experienced-domestic-violence-and-abuse-through-fairness-informed-practice/)

Includes access to an easy read version.

[Reasonable Adjustments](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbeeyAPFAok) [\(www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbeeyAPFAok\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbeeyAPFAok)

A video about what reasonable adjustments are and how you can make adjustments to support people with learning disabilities more effectively.

[Equality and Human Rights Commission: Information on the duty to make reasonable adjustments](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wb5tM6Crkls) [\(www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wb5tM6Crkls\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wb5tM6Crkls)

[Equality and Human Rights Commission: Disability Discrimination](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/your-rights-under-equality-act-2010/disability-discrimination) [\(www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/your-rights-under-equality-act-2010/disability-discrimination\)](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/your-rights-under-equality-act-2010/disability-discrimination)

Information on the Equality Act (2010), disability discrimination, and reasonable adjustments.

[Equality and Human Rights Commission: Disability Discrimination](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDpnXuLcBVw) [\(www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDpnXuLcBVw\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDpnXuLcBVw)

A video about disability discrimination.



Decision-making

[Supported Decision Making](http://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/insights/supported-decision-making) (www.iriss.org.uk/resources/insights/supported-decision-making)

Overview of supported decision making.

[Support My Decision Toolkit](https://support-my-decision.org.au/) (<https://support-my-decision.org.au/>)

Accessible information and resources to assist you in supporting people with learning disabilities to make decisions.

[Supported Decision Making Guide](https://supporteddecisionmaking.com.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2021/04/SUPPORTED-DECISION-MAKING-PL.pdf) (<https://supporteddecisionmaking.com.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2021/04/SUPPORTED-DECISION-MAKING-PL.pdf>)

Practical information and resources to assist you in supporting people with learning disabilities to make decisions.

[People First \(Scotland\): Supported Decision Making: A Framework](https://peoplefirstscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Framework-Final.compressed.pdf) (<https://peoplefirstscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Framework-Final.compressed.pdf>) Framework

[Support for Decision Making Practice Framework Learning Resource](https://supporteddecisionmaking.com.au/resource/the-la-trobe-support-for-decision-making-practice-framework-learning-resource/) (<https://supporteddecisionmaking.com.au/resource/the-la-trobe-support-for-decision-making-practice-framework-learning-resource/>)

[Helen Sanderson Associates: Person-Centered Thinking Tools](http://www.helensandersonassociates.com/person-centered-thinking-tools/) (www.helensandersonassociates.com/person-centered-thinking-tools/)

Person-centred thinking tools are a set of easy-to-use templates that are used to give structure to conversations. Using them is a practical way to capture information that feeds into person-centred planning, as well as to improve understanding, communication and relationships.

[Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland \(DSDAS\)](http://www.scotland.police.uk/advice-and-information/domestic-abuse/disclosure-scheme-for-domestic-abuse-scotland/) (www.scotland.police.uk/advice-and-information/domestic-abuse/disclosure-scheme-for-domestic-abuse-scotland/)

[DASH Accessible Checklist](https://equallysafe.sclد.org.uk/file-download/8/dash-accessible-cards.pdf) (<https://equallysafe.sclد.org.uk/file-download/8/dash-accessible-cards.pdf>)

[Multi-agency risk assessment conference \(Marac\)](https://safelives.org.uk/about-domestic-abuse/domestic-abuse-response-in-the-uk/what-is-a-marac/) (<https://safelives.org.uk/about-domestic-abuse/domestic-abuse-response-in-the-uk/what-is-a-marac/>)

Maracs are multi-agency meetings where information is shared about people who are at high risk of serious harm or murder because of domestic abuse with the aim of safeguarding them. [You can find contact details for your local Marac here](https://safelives.org.uk/resources-for-professionals/marac-resources/find-a-marac/find-a-marac-scotland/) (<https://safelives.org.uk/resources-for-professionals/marac-resources/find-a-marac/find-a-marac-scotland/>) or access [Marac referral criteria and form here](https://safelives.org.uk/resources-library/marac-referral-criteria-and-form/) (<https://safelives.org.uk/resources-library/marac-referral-criteria-and-form/>) .



[Office of the Public Guardian \(www.publicguardian-scotland.gov.uk/\)](http://www.publicguardian-scotland.gov.uk/)

Information about Power of Attorney, Guardianship and intervention orders.

[Enable Communities \(www.enable.org.uk/enable-communities/what-we-do/trustee-service\)](http://www.enable.org.uk/enable-communities/what-we-do/trustee-service)

Enable Communities provide information, advice and guidance about what to do when someone has a legal guardian, power of attorney or appointee.

[Information Commissioners Office \(ICO\) \(https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/who-we-are/scotland-office/\)](https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/who-we-are/scotland-office/)

As well as operating an advice service to address general enquiries, the ICO promotes good practice in data protection by raising awareness of organisational responsibilities across all sectors.



Peer support

[Scottish Recovery Network Peer Support Hub](https://scottishrecovery.net/peer-support/) (<https://scottishrecovery.net/peer-support/>)

Contains information and resources about facilitating peer support.

[MIND - Developing peer support in the community: a toolkit](http://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4247/peer-support-toolkit-final.pdf) (www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4247/peer-support-toolkit-final.pdf)

This toolkit:

- ▶ highlights several key decisions about how peer support might be organised
- ▶ suggests interactive activities to help you discuss issues as a group
- ▶ provides guidance on how to better understand and communicate your impact
- ▶ offers troubleshooting tips to help you overcome challenging situations.

[Central Advocacy Partners \(CAP\) Survivors Project](https://cap.scot/) (<https://cap.scot/>)

This project supports learning disabled and autistic woman and girls who live in Forth Valley, who have or are experiencing domestic abuse, to have their voice heard. They offer 1-1 advocacy and group support.

Learning disability advocacy services and support

Central Advocacy Partners are an experienced organisation offering independent advocacy to learning disabled and autistic individuals including 1-1 advocacy and group support. They lead various project including the Survivors Project.

Justice services and support

Central Advocacy Partners also offer support through their Victim Support Project and 1-1 independent advocacy .

[People First \(Scotland\)](https://peoplefirstscotland.org/people-first-scotland/what-we-do/) (<https://peoplefirstscotland.org/people-first-scotland/what-we-do/>)

Members come together in their local area to support each other, gain skills and confidence and campaign on issues that affect them. Local People First groups meet throughout Scotland.

[Values Into Action Scotland \(VIAS\)](https://viascotland.org.uk/projects/) (<https://viascotland.org.uk/projects/>)

VIAS offer a range of projects to empower women with learning disabilities.

Through their projects, VIAS supports women with learning disabilities sexual health, relationships, employment, finances, focused education and job coaching, as well as supporting political engagement.



Collaboration and co-production

[Helen Sanderson Associates: Person-Centered Thinking Tools](http://www.helensandersonassociates.com/person-centered-thinking-tools/)

[\(www.helensandersonassociates.com/person-centered-thinking-tools/\)](http://www.helensandersonassociates.com/person-centered-thinking-tools/)

Person-centred thinking tools are a set of easy-to-use templates that are used to give structure to conversations. Using them is a practical way to capture information that feeds into person-centred planning, as well as to improve understanding, communication and relationships.

[Scottish Co-production Network Co-production Guide](http://www.coproductionscotland.org.uk/guide) [\(www.coproductionscotland.org.uk/guide\)](http://www.coproductionscotland.org.uk/guide)

Information and resources about co-production.

[Scottish Co-production Network](http://www.coproductionscotland.org.uk/about-the-network) [\(www.coproductionscotland.org.uk/about-the-network\)](http://www.coproductionscotland.org.uk/about-the-network)

The network run events, share resources and bring together people for the annual Co-production Week Scotland.

What is a learning disability?

[SCLD: What is a learning disability?](http://www.sclld.org.uk/what-is-a-learning-disability/) [\(www.sclld.org.uk/what-is-a-learning-disability/\)](http://www.sclld.org.uk/what-is-a-learning-disability/)

[Meet the Mencap Myth Busters](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NaM7c0iMess) [\(www.youtube.com/watch?v=NaM7c0iMess\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NaM7c0iMess)

A video by people with learning disabilities who are challenging misconceptions about what living with a learning disability looks like.

[Do You See Me?](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JMkvfrL5vs) [\(www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JMkvfrL5vs\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JMkvfrL5vs)

A video by people with learning disabilities about how to create communities where people with a learning disability are included, valued, and empowered to achieve their full potential.

[Treat me well - asking for reasonable adjustments](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMV06K1oanA) [\(www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMV06K1oanA\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMV06K1oanA)

Video containing examples of reasonable adjustments you can make to ensure women with learning disabilities can get the support they need.

Evidence on gender-based violence and learning disability

[SCLD, 2023: Unequal, Unheard, Unjust: But Not Hidden Anymore. Women with Learning Disabilities' Experience of Gender-Based Violence in Scotland \(www.sclld.org.uk/unheard-unequal-unjust-but-not-hidden-anymore-new-report-launched-at-scotlands-learning-disability-and-gender-based-violence-conference-2023/\)](https://www.sclld.org.uk/unheard-unequal-unjust-but-not-hidden-anymore-new-report-launched-at-scotlands-learning-disability-and-gender-based-violence-conference-2023/)

Includes an easy read version.

[SCLD, 2018: Safe and Healthy Relationships: Empowering and Supporting People with Learning Disabilities through Education \(www.sclld.org.uk/resources-publications/\)](https://www.sclld.org.uk/resources-publications/)

[Scottish Human Rights Commission, 2023: "It's Not a Story, It's What Happened". Victim-Survivors of Gender-Based Violence: In Our Words \(www.scottishhumanrights.com/media/2599/istanbul-convention-lived-experience-report.pdf\)](https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/media/2599/istanbul-convention-lived-experience-report.pdf)

The Baseline Evaluation of the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. [Easy read version \(https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.scottishhumanrights.com%2Fmedia%2F2609%2Feasy-read-istanbul-convention-report-summary.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK\)](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.scottishhumanrights.com%2Fmedia%2F2609%2Feasy-read-istanbul-convention-report-summary.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

[Scottish Human Rights Commission, 2023: Submission to the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence \(GREVIO\) Parallel Report for the Baseline Report in Monitoring the United Kingdom December 2023. \(www.scottishhumanrights.com/media/2595/istanbul-convention-report.pdf\)](https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/media/2595/istanbul-convention-report.pdf) [Easy read version \(https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.scottishhumanrights.com%2Fmedia%2F2609%2Feasy-read-istanbul-convention-report-summary.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK\)](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.scottishhumanrights.com%2Fmedia%2F2609%2Feasy-read-istanbul-convention-report-summary.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

[Dr Gavin Hutchison, 2024: Supporting people with learning disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and abuse through Fairness Informed Practice. \(www.sclld.org.uk/supporting-people-with-learning-disabilities-who-have-experienced-domestic-violence-and-abuse-through-fairness-informed-practice/\)](https://www.sclld.org.uk/supporting-people-with-learning-disabilities-who-have-experienced-domestic-violence-and-abuse-through-fairness-informed-practice/)

Includes access to an easy read version.

[Zero Tolerance, 2024: It's all about control. Men's violence against disabled women. \(www.zerotolerance.org.uk/news/news-events/new-research-on-violence-against-disabled-women-its-all-about-control/\)](https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/news/news-events/new-research-on-violence-against-disabled-women-its-all-about-control/)

[Barnardos, Cymru, 2015: Unprotected, Overprotected: Meeting the needs of young people with learning disabilities who experience, or are at risk of, sexual exploitation](#)



www.barnardos.org.uk/research/unprotected-overprotected-meeting-needs-young-people-learning-disabilities-who-experience)

[Human Trafficking Foundation/ Snowdrop Project, 2022: Learning Disabilities and Modern Slavery: A post event report summary of the underexplored correlation between cognitive impairment and exploitation](http://www.snowdropproject.co.uk/article/learning-disabilities-and-modern-slavery) (www.snowdropproject.co.uk/article/learning-disabilities-and-modern-slavery)

[Human Trafficking Foundation/ Snowdrop Project, 2023: Learning Disabilities and Modern Slavery: Addendum](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599abfb4e6f2e19ff048494f/t/6580337d4581d60d1b411ba4/1702900605761/HTF+Learning+Disabilities+%26+Modern+Slavery+Addendum.pdf)

(<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599abfb4e6f2e19ff048494f/t/6580337d4581d60d1b411ba4/1702900605761/HTF+Learning+Disabilities+%26+Modern+Slavery+Addendum.pdf>)

[University of Nottingham Rights Lab, 2023: Intersections between exploitation and cognitive impairment](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/beacons-of-excellence/rights-lab/resources/reports-and-briefings/2022/march/intersections-between-exploitation-and-cognitive-impairment.pdf) (www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/beacons-of-excellence/rights-lab/resources/reports-and-briefings/2022/march/intersections-between-exploitation-and-cognitive-impairment.pdf)

[Publications by Professor Michelle McCarthy, University of Kent](http://www.kent.ac.uk/social-policy-sociology-social-research/people/1447/mccarthy-michelle) (www.kent.ac.uk/social-policy-sociology-social-research/people/1447/mccarthy-michelle)

[Publications by Dr Gillian MacIntyre, University of Strathclyde](https://pureportal.strath.ac.uk/en/persons/gillian-macintyre/publications/) (<https://pureportal.strath.ac.uk/en/persons/gillian-macintyre/publications/>)

[Publications by Dr Ailsa Stewart, University of Strathclyde](https://pureportal.strath.ac.uk/en/persons/ailsa-stewart/publications/) (<https://pureportal.strath.ac.uk/en/persons/ailsa-stewart/publications/>)



Policy and legislation

[Scottish Government, 2023: Equally Safe: Scotland's Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls.](https://www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe-scotlands-strategy-preventing-eradicating-violence-against-women-girls/documents/) (www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe-scotlands-strategy-preventing-eradicating-violence-against-women-girls/documents/) [Easy read version](https://www.gov.scot/publications/easy-read-equally-safe-strategy/) (www.gov.scot/publications/easy-read-equally-safe-strategy/)

[Scottish Government, 2024: Equally Safe Delivery Plan: Summer 2024 – Spring 2026.](https://www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe-delivery-plan/documents/) (www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe-delivery-plan/documents/) [Easy read version](https://www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe-delivery-plan-easy-read-version/) (www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe-delivery-plan-easy-read-version/)

[Scottish Government, 2023: The Independent Strategic Review of Funding and Commissioning of Violence Against Women and Girls Services.](https://www.gov.scot/publications/violence-against-women-girls-independent-strategic-review-funding-commissioning-services-report/documents/) (www.gov.scot/publications/violence-against-women-girls-independent-strategic-review-funding-commissioning-services-report/documents/) [Easy read version](https://www.gov.scot/publications/easy-read-violence-against-women-girls-independent-strategic-review-funding-commissioning-services-report/) (www.gov.scot/publications/easy-read-violence-against-women-girls-independent-strategic-review-funding-commissioning-services-report/)

[SCLD: Guest blog by Lesley Irving, Chair of The Independent Strategic Review of Funding and Commissioning of Violence Against Women and Girls Services](https://www.sclld.org.uk/a-call-for-standards-on-accessible-services-for-women-with-learning-disabilities-who-experience-gender-based-violence-guest-blog/) (www.sclld.org.uk/a-call-for-standards-on-accessible-services-for-women-with-learning-disabilities-who-experience-gender-based-violence-guest-blog/)

[United Nations, 2006: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\).](https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities) (www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities)
Easy read versions: [IS164 07 Easyread UN Convention on Human Rights](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/345108/easy-read-un-convention.pdf) (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/345108/easy-read-un-convention.pdf) ; [Documents in plain language and Easy Read versions | OHCHR](https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crpd/documents-plain-language-and-easy-read-versions) (www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crpd/documents-plain-language-and-easy-read-versions)

[The Equality Act \(2010\)](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/your-rights-under-equality-act-2010/disability-discrimination) (www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/your-rights-under-equality-act-2010/disability-discrimination)

[Accessible Information Standard](https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/accessible-information-standard) (www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/accessible-information-standard)

This piece of legislation aims to ensure that people with a disability are given information they can understand, and the support they need to communicate.



Gender-based violence and learning disability resources

[SCLD's Gender-Based Violence and Learning Disability Resources Hub](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vtkJi703KDL6WjACy-UhvLz11pZdHQA7)

(<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vtkJi703KDL6WjACy-UhvLz11pZdHQA7>)

Contains a range of prevention and support resources for anyone supporting women and girls with learning disabilities who have experienced, or may be at risk of, gender-based violence.

[Public Health Scotland: Gender-based violence and learning disability: Guidance for practitioners](https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/gender-based-violence-and-learning-disability-guidance-for-practitioners/)

(<https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/gender-based-violence-and-learning-disability-guidance-for-practitioners/>)

The guide aims to help people working with adults with learning disabilities who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing, gender-based violence.

It explains how to recognise gender-based violence, and how to respond in a sensitive and effective way.

[Carmarthenshire County Council: Improving Support for people with Learning's Disabilities](http://www.anncrafttrust.org/the-transform-toolkit-improving-support-for-people-with-learning-difficulties-experiencing-abuse/)

[Experiencing Domestic abuse: Transform Toolkit \(www.anncrafttrust.org/the-transform-toolkit-improving-support-for-people-with-learning-difficulties-experiencing-abuse/\)](http://www.anncrafttrust.org/the-transform-toolkit-improving-support-for-people-with-learning-difficulties-experiencing-abuse/)

A toolkit to support people with learning disabilities experiencing domestic abuse.

The toolkit features accessible information to help people with a learning disability identify and escape abusive relationships.

[NHS Education for Scotland \(NES\): Essentials of Learning Disability](https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/75162)

(<https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/75162>)

A series of e-learning modules aimed at enhancing the quality of life of people with learning disabilities by improving understanding of their needs and experiences. The modules focus on person-centred and strength-based approaches to supporting people with learning disabilities who are facing challenges.

[NHS Education for Scotland \(NES\): Trauma](https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/61370) (<https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/61370>)

A range of resources and webinars to support trauma informed working with people with learning disabilities.

[Healthy Respect: Supporting young people's sexual health](http://www.healthyrespect.co.uk/) (www.healthyrespect.co.uk/)

This website contains a range of accessible resources about sexual health, relationships and abuse.

When you enter the site click 'turn easier to understand on' at the top of the page.



[Revenge Porn Helpline](https://revengepornhelpline.org.uk/how-can-we-help/who-can-we-help/easy-reads/) (<https://revengepornhelpline.org.uk/how-can-we-help/who-can-we-help/easy-reads/>)

Easy read intimate Image Abuse factsheets.

[Choice Support: Supported Loving](http://www.choicesupport.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/supported-loving) (www.choicesupport.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/supported-loving)

A range of guides, resources and organisations to help individuals, families and professionals support people with learning disabilities and/or autism to develop and maintain loving relationships.

[Somerset and Avon Rape and Sexual Abuse Support \(SARSAS\) Learning Disabilities and Autism Toolkit](http://www.sarsas.org.uk/new-learning-disabilities-autism-lda-toolkit/) (www.sarsas.org.uk/new-learning-disabilities-autism-lda-toolkit/)

A free resource designed to help professionals provide trauma-informed, accessible support tailored to the needs of women with learning disabilities and/or autism.

[SARSAS self-help guides](http://www.sarsas.org.uk/support-and-information/sarsas-self-help-guides/) (www.sarsas.org.uk/support-and-information/sarsas-self-help-guides/)

A range of self-help guides for victim-survivors and friends and families, available in different languages and easy-read.

Learning disability advocacy services and support

[Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance](http://www.siaa.org.uk/find-an-advocate/) (www.siaa.org.uk/find-an-advocate/)

A national directory of independent advocacy services in Scotland.

[People First \(Scotland\)](https://peoplefirstscotland.org/) (<https://peoplefirstscotland.org/>)

National disabled people's organisation of adults with a learning disability in Scotland.

[Central Advocacy Partners Survivors Project](https://cap.scot/) (<https://cap.scot/>)

Independent advocacy for women and girls with learning disabilities and/ or autism who live in Forth Valley and have, or are, experiencing domestic abuse to have their voice heard.

[SCLD's Active, Connected, Included](http://www.sclld.org.uk/lets-get-active-connected-and-included/) (www.sclld.org.uk/lets-get-active-connected-and-included/)

A set of resources to help people with learning disabilities, those who support them and people who run community activities and groups to work together and become more included in their local communities.



Specialist learning disability teams

[Health and Social Care Scotland \(https://hscscotland.scot/hscps/\)](https://hscscotland.scot/hscps/)

Multi-disciplinary learning disability teams are located within health and social care partnerships in Scotland.

These teams are made up of a range of practitioners with specialist knowledge and skills in learning disability such as nurses, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, social workers, and psychologists.

This website contains a directory of local health and social care partnerships in Scotland.



Accessibility training, consultancy and resources

[Accessible Information Standard](http://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/accessible-information-standard) (www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/accessible-information-standard)

This piece of legislation aims to ensure that people with a disability are given information they can understand, and the support they need to communicate.

[Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](http://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/) (www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/)

A range of resources to help you make your website accessible to people with disabilities.

[Disability Equality Scotland \(DES\)](https://disabilityequality.scot/) (<https://disabilityequality.scot/>)

DES offers an easy read translation service, easy read training and inclusive communication workshops.

[Values Into Action Scotland \(VIAS\)](https://viascotland.org.uk/easy-read-translation-service/) (<https://viascotland.org.uk/easy-read-translation-service/>)

VIAS supports organisations to make their services more accessible. They do this by offering consultancy work and an easy read transcription service.

[People First \(Scotland\)](https://peoplefirstscotland.org/) (<https://peoplefirstscotland.org/>)

People First (Scotland) are a national organisation of adults with a learning disability who offer lived experience training and consultancy.

[Association for Real Change \(ARC\) Scotland](https://arcscotland.org.uk/training/) (<https://arcscotland.org.uk/training/>)

ARC Scotland provide a range of training including SVQs, lived experience, specialist and bespoke training.

[Passion 4 Social](https://accessibilityforall.scot/) (<https://accessibilityforall.scot/>)

Passion 4 social supports organisations to make their website and apps more accessible. They do this by carrying out accessibility audits and offering free webinars on accessibility.

[Disability Information Scotland](http://www.disabilityscot.org.uk/) (www.disabilityscot.org.uk/)

Disability Information Scotland provides a range of training to help ensure your online content is accessible to everyone.



Justice services and support

[Victim's rights in Scotland: easy read leaflet \(www.gov.scot/publications/victims-rights-scotland/pages/7/\)](http://www.gov.scot/publications/victims-rights-scotland/pages/7/)

Publication for people with learning difficulties describes how victims of crime should be treated within the criminal justice system, and what information, help and support they should receive.

[Appropriate Adult Services \(www.cosla.gov.uk/about-cosla/our-teams/communities/appropriate-adult-services\)](http://www.cosla.gov.uk/about-cosla/our-teams/communities/appropriate-adult-services)

An appropriate adult can help victims to understand what is happening and to communicate with the Police. They cannot give legal advice.

The Police can contact an appropriate adult to help and be in the room during Police interviews.

[Victim Support Scotland](https://victimsupport.scot/?_gl=1%2Aaoig3f%2A_up%2AMQ..%2A_ga%2ANjMzOTIxOS4xNzM3MTA5MjMz%2A_ga_B46DP52459%2AMTczNzEwOTIzMi4xLjEuMTczNzEwOTMwMS4wLjAuMA..)

[\(https://victimsupport.scot/?_gl=1%2Aaoig3f%2A_up%2AMQ..%2A_ga%2ANjMzOTIxOS4xNzM3MTA5MjMz%2A_ga_B46DP52459%2AMTczNzEwOTIzMi4xLjEuMTczNzEwOTMwMS4wLjAuMA..\)](https://victimsupport.scot/?_gl=1%2Aaoig3f%2A_up%2AMQ..%2A_ga%2ANjMzOTIxOS4xNzM3MTA5MjMz%2A_ga_B46DP52459%2AMTczNzEwOTIzMi4xLjEuMTczNzEwOTMwMS4wLjAuMA..)

Victim Support Scotland provides support and information to people affected by crime.

[Scottish Women's Rights Centre \(www.scottishwomensrightscentre.org.uk/\)](http://www.scottishwomensrightscentre.org.uk/)

SWRC provides free legal information, advice, representation and advocacy support to self-identifying women in Scotland affected by violence and abuse. Services include legal and advocacy helplines, legal advice surgeries, advocacy support and legal representation.

[NHS SARCS \(www.gov.scot/publications/easy-read-self-referral-sexual-assault-response-coordination-service-sarcs/\)](http://www.gov.scot/publications/easy-read-self-referral-sexual-assault-response-coordination-service-sarcs/)

This leaflet provides information on how to self-refer to a Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS) in an easy read format. It provides information on accessing healthcare through NHS Scotland for anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted.

[Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service \(COPFS\): Easy read publications](http://www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/?db=&&mb=&&yb=&&da=&&ma=&&ya=&&publication=3160&&keyword=)

[\(www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/?db=&&mb=&&yb=&&da=&&ma=&&ya=&&publication=3160&&keyword=\)](http://www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/?db=&&mb=&&yb=&&da=&&ma=&&ya=&&publication=3160&&keyword=)

When you access the page filter publication type to 'easy read'.



Gender-based violence support services

NHS SARCS (www.gov.scot/publications/easy-read-self-referral-sexual-assault-response-coordination-service-sarcs/)

This leaflet provides information on how to self-refer to a Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS) in an easy read format. It provides information on accessing healthcare through NHS Scotland for anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted.

Scottish Women's Aid (<https://womensaid.scot/>)

Rape Crisis Scotland (www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/)



Communication

[Helen Sanderson Associates: Person-Centered Thinking Tools](https://www.helensandersonassociates.com/person-centered-thinking-tools/)

[\(www.helensandersonassociates.com/person-centered-thinking-tools/\)](https://www.helensandersonassociates.com/person-centered-thinking-tools/)

Person-centred thinking tools are a set of easy-to-use templates that are used to give structure to conversations. Using them is a practical way to capture information that feeds into person-centred planning, as well as to improve understanding, communication and relationships.

[Accessible Information Standard](https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/accessible-information-standard) [\(www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/accessible-information-standard\)](https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/accessible-information-standard)

This piece of legislation aims to ensure that people with a disability are given information they can understand, and the support they need to communicate.

[Communication: speaking to people with a learning disability](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyV1v-nib38) [\(www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyV1v-nib38\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyV1v-nib38)

A video about communicating with people with learning disabilities.

[Communicating with people with a learning disabilities](https://www.mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained/communicating-people-learning-disability) [\(www.mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained/communicating-people-learning-disability\)](https://www.mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained/communicating-people-learning-disability)

A guide about how to communicate with people with learning disabilities.

[Scotland's Inclusive Communication Hub](https://inclusivecommunication.scot/) [\(https://inclusivecommunication.scot/\)](https://inclusivecommunication.scot/)

Tools and guidance on how to make your communications accessible to people with disabilities.

[Talking Mats](https://www.talkingmats.com/) [\(www.talkingmats.com/\)](https://www.talkingmats.com/)

Talking Mats are a communication system that uses symbols and other images to communicate with people with learning disabilities.