



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*

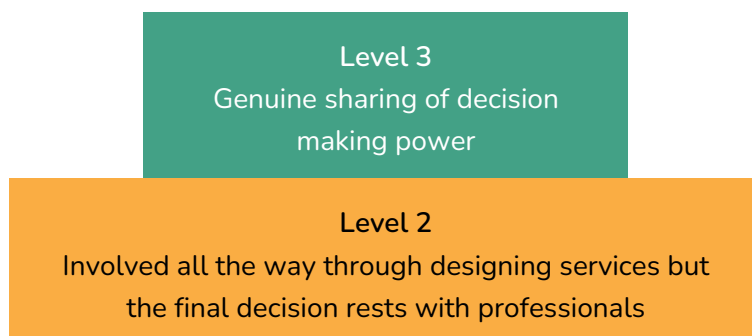
“It was a campaign, and it was a photographer that came to my local women’s group... They are quite powerful [the pictures]...It was a good campaign. It could go on billboards and things like that...it was good doing that.”

– *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:





Level 1

Not involved in the design of services, but asked to provide feedback and comments, for example, through consultations, feedback and questionnaires

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.sclld.org.uk/toolkit/think-decision-making-6/) (<https://equallysafe.sclld.org.uk/toolkit/think-decision-making-6/>) .



[You can find out more about co-production here \(www.coproductionscotland.org.uk/what-is-copro\)](http://www.coproductionscotland.org.uk/what-is-copro).