



## 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