



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