Why co-production matters to women with learning disabilities

For women whose voices have often been ignored, dismissed, or misunderstood, co-production is a more effective way of delivering safe, efficient, and sustainable services.

Women with learning disabilities who experience gender-based violence often face:

- Disbelief or minimisation
- Over-protection and/or removal of their autonomy
- Inaccessible services
- Decisions being made without their involvement and/or consent.

When services are designed without their input, barriers are often built in unintentionally.

Co-produced services can help women with learning disabilities by:

- Improving their accessibility and relevance
- Reducing assumptions about what support they need
- Strengthening trust
- Increasing engagement
- Creating more effective safeguarding and support.

Most importantly, it recognises lived experience as expertise.

Co-production means:

- Involving women early, not after decisions are made
- Giving them real influence over decisions
- Providing the support they need to participate meaningfully
- Valuing their lived experience equally alongside professional knowledge.

Co-production is not:

- A one-off consultation
- Asking for feedback on a finished plan
- Inviting someone to attend a meeting without power to shape outcomes
- Tokenistic representation.