Fairness Informed Practice (FIP)

This module aims to increase understanding of fairness and unfairness, the effects of unfairness on individuals, and how to use fairness-informed practices to support women with learning disabilities who have been affected by gender-based violence.

Learning outcomes

By completing this module, you will be able to:

- Apply fairness informed practice in your everyday work.
- Create environments that support sensitive discussions around relationships and disclosures of abuse.
- Listen and hear what women with learning disabilities say, show empathy, be non-judgemental, validate their experiences and ask what they need.
- Build trust and communicate fairly with women with learning disabilities who have been affected by gender-based violence.
- Make reasonable adjustments in line with victim/survivors needs and preferences.

What is fairness?

Activity 1

Reflect on/discuss:

- What does fairness mean to you in your everyday life?
- What does fairness mean to your organisation?
- What does unfairness mean to you in your everyday life?
- What does unfairness mean to your organisation?

Activity 2

Read what women with learning disabilities say about their experiences of fairness and unfairness here:

- What does being treated unfairly mean? *(https://equallysafe.scld.org.uk/toolkit/think-fairness-informed-practice-1/what-does-being-treated-unfairly-mean-11/)*
- What does being treated fairly mean? *(https://equallysafe.scld.org.uk/toolkit/think-fairness-informed-practice-1/what-does-being-treated-fairly-mean-13/)*

Activity 3

Reflect on/discuss:

- Can you think of any experiences in your own life that are similar to the ones you've just read about.
- What could you do to ensure women with learning disabilities who have been affected by gender-based violence are supported fairly.

The Fairness Informed Practice Framework

Fairness Informed Practice is a framework developed by Dr Gavin Hutchison on how to support adults with learning disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and abuse.

You can find out more about how the framework was developed here. *(www.scld.org.uk/supporting-people-with-learning-disabilities-who-have-experienced-domestic-violence-and-abuse-through-fairness-informed-practice/)*

Fairness informed practice is a way of working with women with learning disabilities based on a commonly understood idea: fairness. It pulls together four different ideas about what good practice should include when supporting women with learning disabilities who have been affected by gender-based violence. These are:

- Relationship-based approaches
- Trauma informed care
- Anti-discriminatory practice
- Professional reflexive practice.

In this video, Dr Hutchison gives an overview of the Fairness Informed Practice framework.

Watch Dr Hutchison's video about Fairness informed practice *(https://vimeo.com/1153991954)*

Now read the following statements, in activities 4-7, and choose whether you think they are true or false by clicking on your answer.

Once you have selected your answer, we will explain why the answer you gave is correct or incorrect.

Activity 4: Relationship-based practice

Engaging with a woman in ways that reflect her communication style, such as using visual cues or easy-read materials, is an example of relationship-based practice.

> **True:** Respecting individuals as a whole involves genuine interest and care to adapt your practice to their needs and preferences. These are all of core components of relationship-based practice.

In the next video, Dr Hutchison explains relationship-based practice.

Watch Dr Hutchison's video about relationship-based practice *(https://vimeo.com/1153992019)*

Activity 5: Trauma informed care

Providing structure and choice is part of trauma-informed care.

> **True:** Trauma-informed care includes empowerment, agency and choice to rebuild a sense of safety and control. This is key to the recovery of victim/survivors of gender-based violence with learning disabilities. Examples include offering control over the type, pace and location of support sessions and her desired outcomes.

In this video, Dr Hutchison explains trauma informed care.

Watch Dr Hutchison's video about trauma-informed care *(https://vimeo.com/1153992046)*

Activity 6: Anti-discriminatory practice

Giving every woman who attends your service the same information is fair and keeps things equal for all.

> **False:** Anti-discriminatory practice recognises that equal treatment isn't necessarily equitable. Materials need to be adapted to individual needs and preferences to be truly accessible. Examples of formats that people with learning disabilities find helpful include easy-read documents, photos and images, audio versions, the use of objects such as dolls, sandpits and role play. What works for one woman with a learning disability however, might not work for another, for example not all people with learning disabilities will benefit from a single approach, we need to be open to adapting to the person's needs.

In the next video, Dr Hutchison explains anti-discriminatory practice.

Watch Dr Hutchison's video about anti-discriminatory practice *(https://vimeo.com/1153991922)*

Activity 7: Professional reflexive practice

Once a service is established for people with learning disabilities, there is no need to revisit or question it – consistency ensures fairness across all cases.

> **False:** Reflexive practice requires continuous review of practice and standards – asking whether they still deliver equitable outcomes for diverse individuals.

In this video, Dr Hutchison explains professional reflexive practice.

Watch Dr Hutchison's video about professional reflexive practice *(https://vimeo.com/1153991990)*

Putting Fairness into Practice

Activity 8

Watch this short animation. The animation contains the voices of women with learning disabilities and is based on their lived experiences of seeking support for gender-based violence.

Fairness informed practice – poor practice *(https://vimeo.com/1165979762)*

Now reflect on/discuss:

- How would you feel, and respond, if you were treated this way.
- How might your own personal experiences and beliefs about women with learning disabilities support unfairness?
- How do wider culture, society and organisations reinforce unfairness towards women with learning disabilities who have been affected by gender-based violence?

Now listen to what members of People First (Scotland)'s Equally Safe Group say about Fairness informed practice.

Watch the Equally Safe Group video about Fairness informed practice *(https://vimeo.com/1154009900)*

Activity 9

Watch this short video of the same professional offering support to another woman with learning disabilities.

Fairness informed practice – good practice *(https://vimeo.com/1165979790)*

Now reflect on/discuss:

- What practitioners can do to embed fairness-informed practices in their everyday work.
- What service providers can do to embed fairness-informed practices in their organisations policies and procedures.

Quiz

You can now test your learning by completing this short true or false quiz.

1. Assigning a different practitioner each session ensures the person with a learning disability won't be upset if the staff member is absent or changes job.

> **False:** Trust, familiarity and consistency are central components of relationship-based practice. A relationship-based approach is especially important for women with learning disabilities who frequently experience multiple traumas throughout their lives, as well as being ignored or disregarded in their everyday lives. Changing practitioners could adversely their level of engagement and ultimately their safety. It is therefore essential that any changes to support sessions or staffing are reported, explained, and agreed with women with learning disabilities, ahead of support sessions when possible.

2. Ensuring the physical safety of someone who may be unable to safeguard themselves is of greater importance than emotional safety. Emotional state can be considered but risk assessment takes priority.

> **False:** Trauma-informed approaches require not only assessing risk but also attending to emotional safety, relational connection and avoiding re-traumatisation.

3. Determining whether the experience that led the woman to your service stems from gender-based violence, or is because she has a learning disability, is vital to ensuring she is offered the right service and support.

> **False:** The Equality Act 2010 *(www.equalityhumanrights.com/node/14503)* says that you must not be discriminated against because: you have a disability; someone thinks you have a disability (this is known as discrimination by perception); you are connected to someone with a disability (this is known as discrimination by association). It is not unlawful discrimination to treat a disabled person more favourably than a non-disabled person.

4. Reflecting on how assumptions, stress and time constraints shape women's experiences and interactions, is an example of reflexive practice.

> **True:** Reflexive practice requires service providers to examine how personal and/or systemic factors influence their work, as well as supporting them to uphold the principles of fairness.

Recommendations for practitioners

- Remain mindful of the barriers that women with learning disabilities face when accessing support for gender-based violence.
- Listen, hear, and validate every woman's experience(s) of gender-based violence.
- Make any reasonable adjustments needed to ensure women with learning disabilities can access equitable support and justice for gender-based violence.

Recommendations for organisations

- Embed fairness informed practice in your organisations policies and procedures.
- Include discussions around fairness informed practice in all staff support and supervision sessions, annual appraisals, and personal development reviews.
- As part of their annual professional development review, ensure that all staff are assessed on their understanding and delivery of fairness informed practice.
- Review new practices, policies, and changes to existing ones, prior to implementation to ensure fairness informed practice is embedded throughout your organisations policies and procedures.
- Ensure that your information, website, communications, and marketing are available in accessible formats.
- Ensure that women with learning disabilities are routinely asked to provide feedback on the accessibility and performance of your services, then use this feedback to inform your Equality Strategy and performance reports.

Further information and resources

For further information about fairness informed practice see the THINK: Fairness Informed Practice *(https://equallysafe.scld.org.uk/toolkit/think-fairness-informed-practice-1/)* section of the Equally Safe and Supported self-assessment toolkit.

To access additional resources that can help you to embed fairness informed practice in your everyday policies and practices, see the fairness informed practice part of our inclusive resources and signposting section *(https://equallysafe.scld.org.uk/toolkit/inclusive-resources-and-signposting-9/#rlslider_1)* .