

DISABLED WOMEN AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

“Evidence suggests that disabled women are perceived to be less capable and an easy target and are therefore likely to be more vulnerable to domestic abuse” - Disability Wales

Half of all disabled women experience abuse during their lifetime. There are often more opportunities for abuse, and there may be fewer opportunities to disclose. And despite being twice as likely to experience domestic abuse, we are much less likely to be able to access support services and refuges due to inaccessibility and lack of awareness amongst staff, and also because we may be wary to leave an area where we have a care plan set up, or an adapted home.

“Some refuges have refused to accept a deaf woman due to ‘health and safety’ or insurance issues,” - Lynn Shannon

When disabled women experience domestic violence, it can be more difficult to access help if their abusive partner is also our carer. If we need help to use the phone, or if we can't go anywhere without our partner, we have very few options.

“It can be harder for disabled women to get away, or to get support. Escaping an abuser can mean leaving a home adapted to meet their needs, or residential care. Refuges, already coping with cuts in funding, are not always accessible or able to meet needs.” - Dr Jackie Barron

- Disabled women are twice as likely to be assaulted or raped as non-disabled women
- 40% of women with disabilities have been assaulted or raped
- 50% of girls who are deaf have been sexually abused
- 81% of psychiatric inpatients have been physically or sexually abused
- The largest percentage of offenders (28%) are service providers and family members (19%)
- Among adults who have lifelong impairments, as many as 83% of the females and 32% of the males are the victims of sexual assault
- Abuse can also take many more forms when the victim has an impairment, such as being humiliated and belittled, having food and medication withheld, not being assisted to use the toilet
- Women with mental health problems have twice the risk of being sexually assaulted than the general population
- Homeless women with severe mental illness have a 97% likelihood of experiencing violence
- More than 90% of people with a lifelong impairment will experience some form of sexual abuse. 49% will experience 10 or more abusive incidents

“Disabled women are particularly vulnerable to abuse. Research has shown that disabled women experience abuse at least twice as often as non-disabled women. Abusers - including personal assistants (P.A.s) and carers - may exploit a woman's particular condition or impairment. There are also additional barriers that a disabled woman must overcome when she seeks help” - Women's Aid