

Easier Read Power and Control Wheel Narrative

The DIVAS Project is based at The Women's Centre, Cornwall, UK. The DIVAS are volunteers with learning disabilities and/or are autistic/neurodivergent, they are all survivors of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence.

We work together with different communities, including national and local organisations to remove barriers, deliver training, develop collaborative working and support survivors of abuse. At the heart of our work is coproduction, the DIVAS are experts by experience, and we work together to challenge the myths about the intersections of Learning Disabilities, Neurodivergent women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The DIVAS Project is dedicated to improving access to support for women with learning disabilities and neurodivergent women who have experienced domestic abuse and/or sexual violence. Our aim is to create inclusive, trauma-informed services that respond to the needs of our community.

The DIVAS all experienced barriers in accessing suitable support and found that some of the key resources used as part of support were often inaccessible and difficult to understand. Women with Learning disabilities and Neurodivergent women experience domestic abuse and sexual violence in different ways to their neurotypical counterparts (Thiara, et al, 2011) as a result, we felt that it would be appropriate to adapt the Power and Control wheel to reflect this and produce a resource that reflected the experiences of their community and was easier to understand. Our aim is that more women with Learning Disabilities and Neurodivergent women have a route to accessible and appropriate resources and education.

We ran several semi-structured workshops face to face, questions and focus were adjusted to meet the communication needs of participants (Hollomotz, 2018). Each session had a different focus to address each segment of the Power and Control Wheel. The DIVAS reflected on their lived experience to inform appropriate language use and ensure they understood the examples. This work was undertaken using the social model of disability (Thiara et al, 2012), to ensure that it captures the DIVA's voices. The workshops were grounded in the voices of the women using a positive empowerment approach (Downes et al, 2014), informed by their narratives to ensure their experiences and perspectives are fully reflected.

The wheel is intended as a resource for victim-survivors, those who support them, and as an informative tool for any institution or organisation that may support women with learning disabilities and neurodivergent women. This adaptation specifically focuses on women with learning disabilities and neurodivergent women, recognising the unique barriers and challenges they face. The adapted wheel offers a necessary starting point for organisations and institutions to better understand these intersecting challenges and begin taking meaningful steps to address them.

REFERENCES

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