

## Summary

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### **‘JustUS’. Getting the right support for victims of sexual violence (who have a learning disability) within the justice system**

#### About the DRILL Programme

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DRILL (Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning) was an innovative 5 year, UK wide programme led by disabled people, for disabled people and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Launched in 2015, the programme was managed by a partnership of Disability Action Northern Ireland, Disability Rights UK, Disability Wales and Inclusion Scotland.

The aim of the programme was to build better evidence about approaches which enable disabled people to achieve independent living. The findings from the projects it funded can be used to inform future provision across a wide range of policy areas, and give a greater voice to disabled people in decisions which affect them.

This is one of a series of summaries of the project supported by DRILL. Final reports, toolkits and summaries of all the projects are available from the DRILL website at [www.drilluk.org.uk](http://www.drilluk.org.uk).

### **Overview of the project**

This project aimed to create a toolkit to help increase the knowledge of people with learning disabilities about their rights in relation to the justice system, and how to access appropriate support.

## Approach

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The project recruited project advocates, using easy read versions of the role profile and application. They co-designed the counselling programme and all resources.

A consultation with 26 people with learning disabilities was conducted to gain their views and opinions on what information would support them to access the criminal justice system.

Thirty people were referred to the JustUS counselling; thirteen of them completed the programme.

A toolkit was produced, and also made available in an easy read format, aimed at victims of sexual violence and abuse trying to access the criminal justice system. A JustUS card was also produced to create a screening tool to support first response officers to check if someone may have a learning disability.

## Findings

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The law does not always embrace marginalised communities, such as those with learning disabilities.

People with learning disabilities may feel that they will not be believed if they report sexual violence or abuse.

The current criminal justice system can be seen as too daunting in reporting and processing serious sexual offences.

People with learning disabilities who have experienced sexual violence or abuse can benefit from a therapeutic response tailored to their needs.

There was a lack of knowledge amongst adults with learning disabilities about sources of support, their rights and how best to navigate the justice process if they became a victim of sexual violence.

There seems to be a lack of awareness of sexual violence and abuse against people with learning disabilities amongst social care professionals.

## Findings (continued)

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Consultation with people with learning disabilities meant that information on supporting them to access the criminal justice system could be more accessible and more available.

## Recommendations

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The project outlined many recommendations, some of which are listed here. The toolkit produced by the project is linked below.

- See people with learning disabilities as leaders, and empower them to share their voice and experience
- Involve people with learning disabilities in creating policy and training
- Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and Public Prosecution Service (PPS) require training in order to deal with situations involving sexual violence and abuse of people with learning disabilities.
- Produce any information in an easy read format so that it is accessible
- Ensure adequate and appropriate support is provided for people with learning disabilities who have experienced sexual violence and abuse.

## Resources

[‘JustUS’. Getting the right support for victims of sexual violence \(who have a learning disability\) within the justice system](#)

Please click on link to view the website.

## Project partners

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### Positive Futures



### Queen's University Belfast



### Public Prosecution Service (PPS)



### Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI)



### Nexus NI

