



ENGENDER



Our voices ■ Our choices

GENDER MATTERS IN DISABILITY

Women's issues are often overlooked by the disability movement. Disability issues are not at the centre of the women's movement. How then, do disabled women get their issues raised?

Engender and Inclusion Scotland have been working together and with other partners to identify the particular issues of concern to disabled women in Scotland and how these could be addressed.

Existing research tells us that disabled women experience multiple challenges which include:

- access to paid employment
- poverty
- stereotyping
- reproductive rights
- parenting
- access to justice
- violence and abuse

Fact:

Disabled women and girls are more than twice as likely to experience violence during their lives as non-disabled women.

We sent out a survey to ask disabled women about the issues that concerned them the most. The main ones were:

- self confidence
- being judged
- fear of having children removed
- unequal access to health and education
- not being taken seriously
- not being listened to
- constant struggle to be heard and respected

We held events with disabled women and talked about the issues in more detail.

At these events disabled women told us that the biggest challenges for disabled women in Scotland are:

- Violence and abuse
- Discrimination in relation to reproduction and parenting
- Welfare reform
- Cuts to services
- Lack of accessible transport
- Barriers to employment
- Isolation

At every event we heard from women who told us that they lived in fear of having their children taken into care because they are disabled. We heard that women were not getting the support they needed to be parents. Instead they were being watched to see if they would make mistakes.

Women with a variety of conditions and impairments told us that they had been criticised for becoming pregnant, and encouraged to have abortions.

The women that we worked with us told us that they wanted:

- People to see disabled women as women
- Better support with parenting
- To be allowed to make choices about reproduction free from judgement
- More opportunities to meet up with other disabled women
- Services that understand and meet the needs of disabled women
- To be able to access the right support when they need it

We met with women's organisations and disabled people's organisations to ask what would help them to support disabled women. Their answers included:

- Opportunities for women's organisations and disabled people's organisations to work together
- Knowledge exchange between different organisations
- Mapping of what services exist for disabled women
- Mapping of where there are gaps in services for disabled women
- More local services
- Greater awareness of discrimination against disabled women
- Disability equalities training for staff
- More research into disabled women's experiences in Scotland

We asked disabled women what they wanted from service providers. Their answers included:

- Practical support, for example providing taxis to events
- Better communications, for example providing easy read or large print information, or making videos
- Truly accessible events
- Disabled women to be visible in decision-making positions
- Greater awareness of the needs of disabled women
- Better sex education

What should happen next?

- We need research to help us know more about disabled women's experiences
- Women's organisations and disabled people's organisations need to have more opportunities to work together
- We need to know what services exist for disabled women, including mapping where there are gaps
- Disabled women need to have opportunities to get together and network
- Events and communications need to be truly accessible
- Disabled women need to be visible in decision-making positions

Engender and Inclusion Scotland will continue to work together to ensure that disabled women's voices are heard, and that both disabled people's organisations and women's organisations know that Gender Matters in Disability.

Please contact us if you have any questions or comments.

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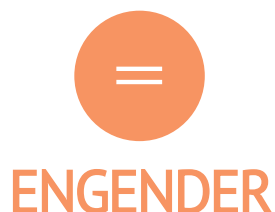
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