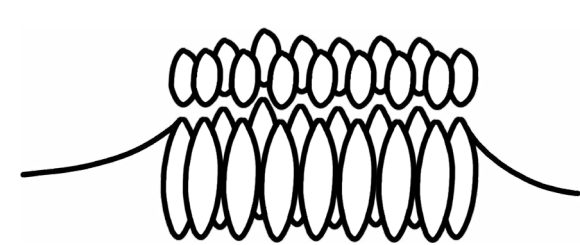
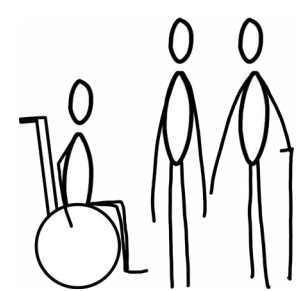


Vulnerability in Legal Services

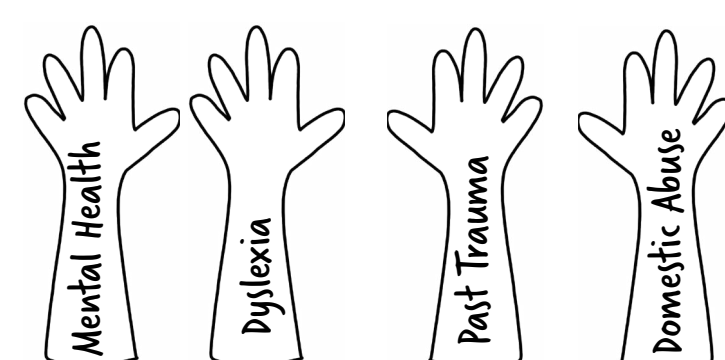
Everyone is vulnerable when they face a legal issue because legal issues bring stress and anxiety and the legal services market is daunting and unfamiliar.



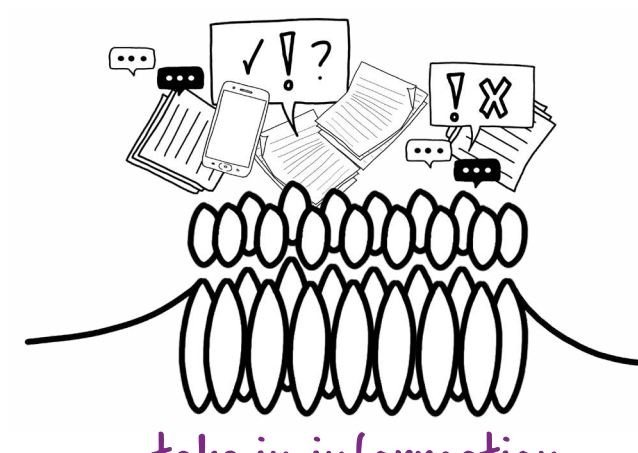
But some people have circumstances and characteristics that make them even more vulnerable.



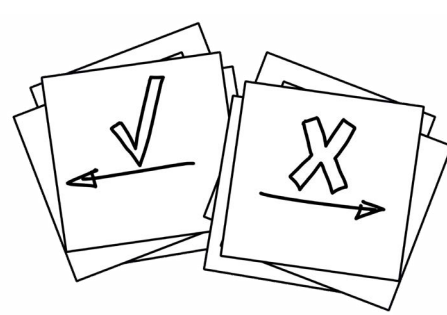
Vulnerability is not always obvious or visible.



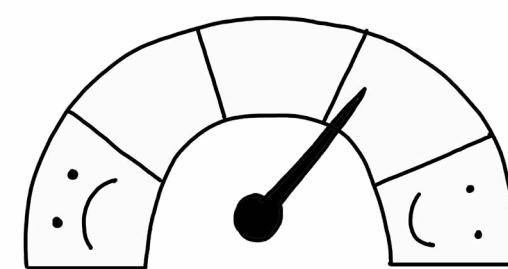
Vulnerability makes it hard for people to ...



...take in information



...make decisions

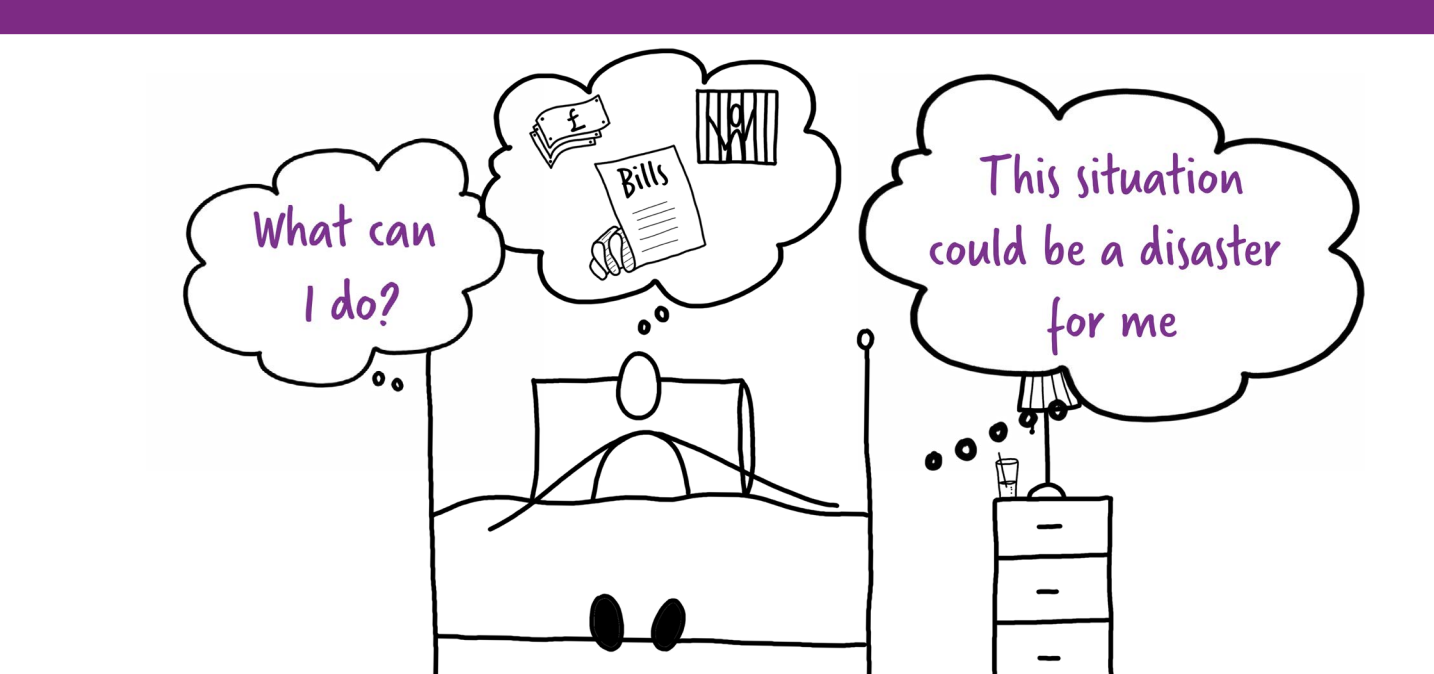







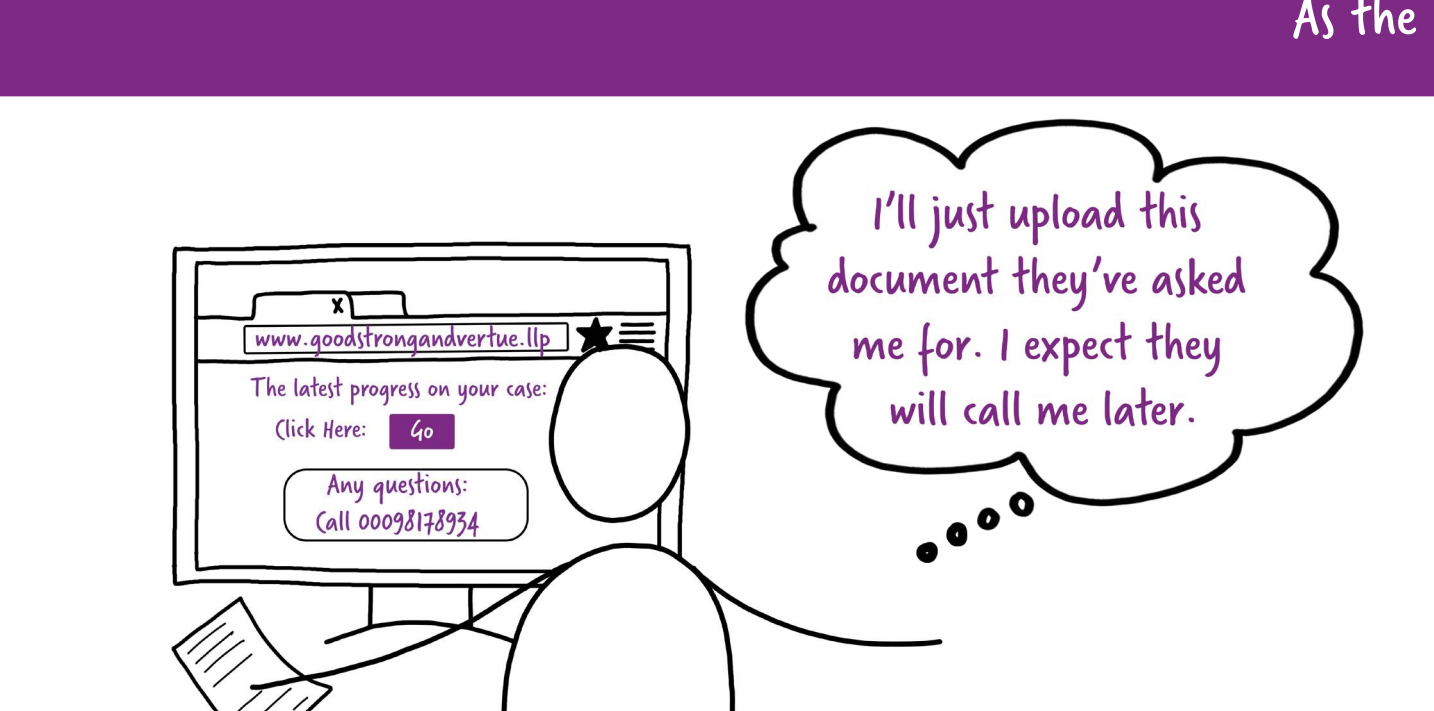


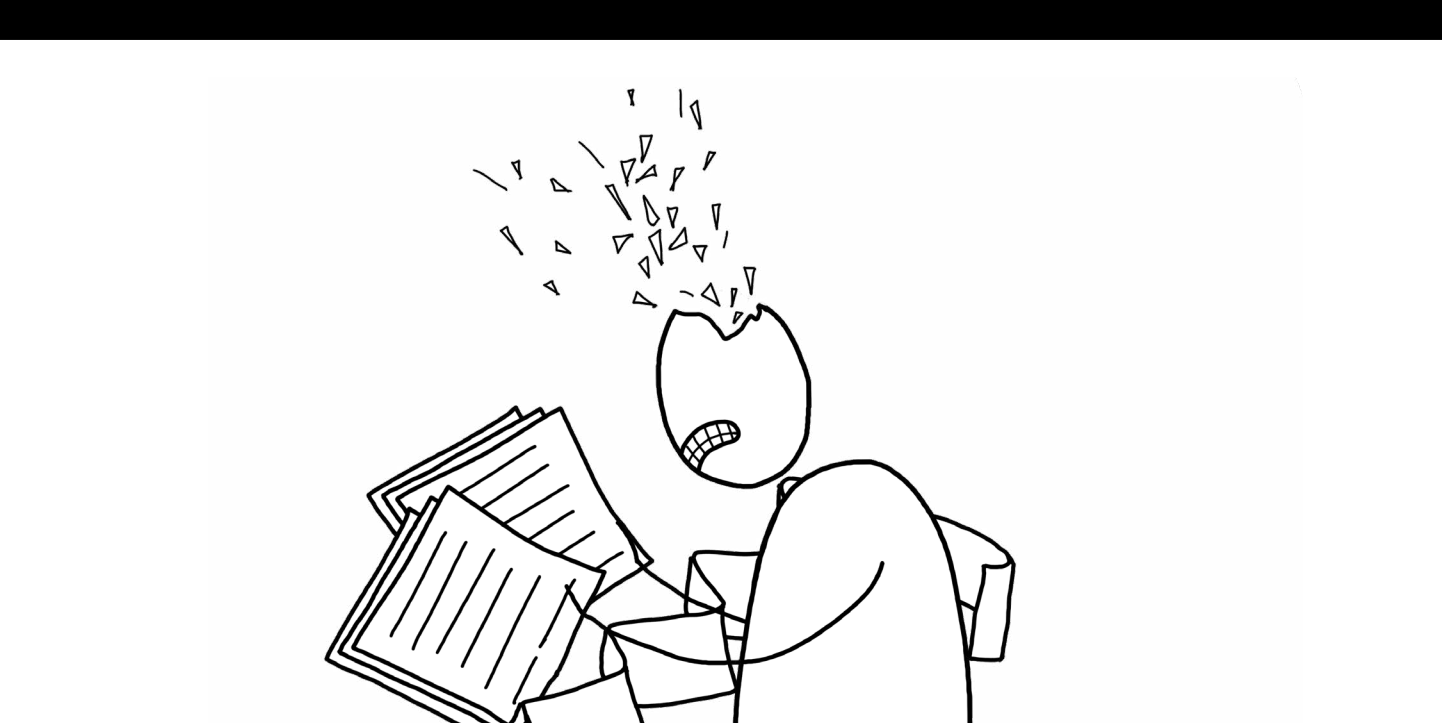

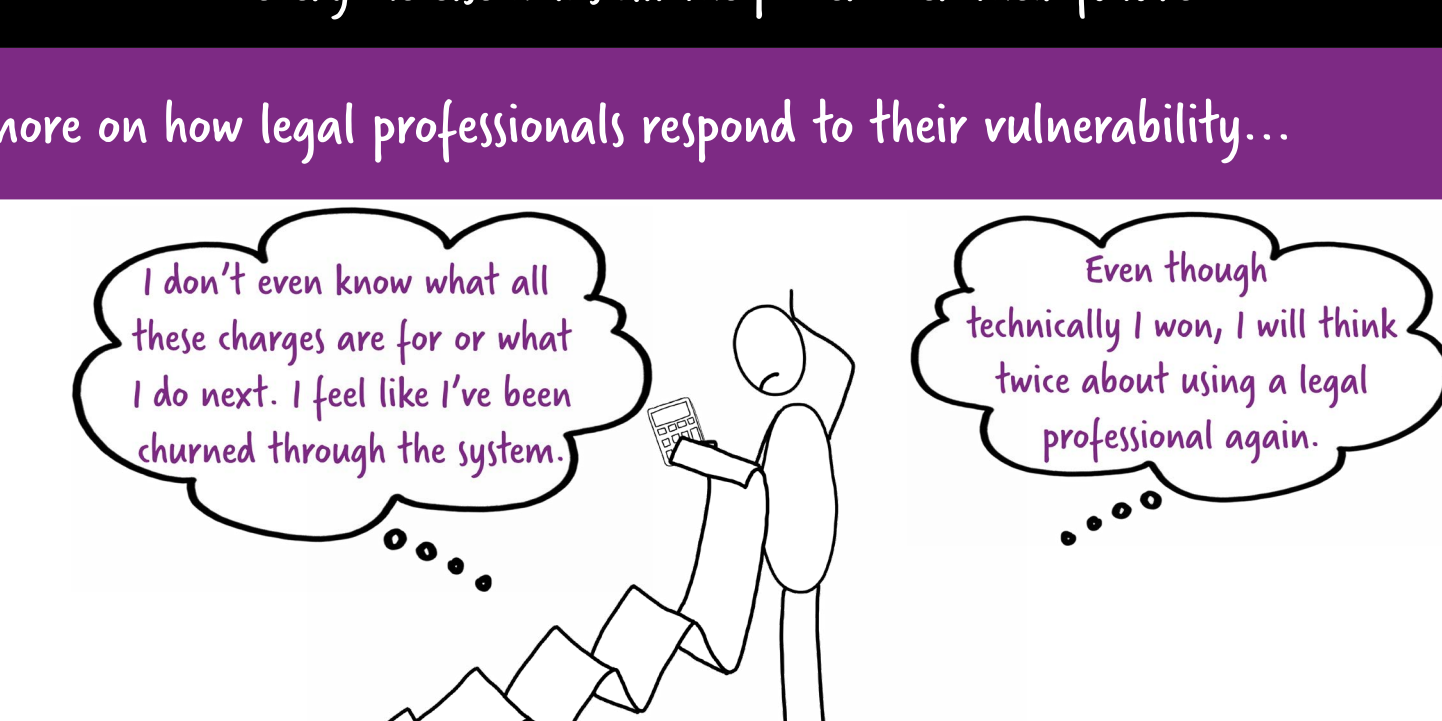


...feel in control of significant issues
affecting their lives

Legal professionals have a material impact on vulnerability.

Let's follow someone's journey through legal services, based on real people's experiences heard in our research.

one path reduces vulnerability, the other path exacerbates vulnerability.

Reducing Vulnerability	Increasing Vulnerability
We start with someone who is facing a challenging issue in their life...	
 <p>What can I do?</p> <p>This situation could be a disaster for me</p>	 <p>What can I do?</p> <p>This situation could be a disaster for me</p>
Many people do not realise a legal professional could help them when they first have problems.	
Even when people realise they need legal support, finding a legal professional can be hard and can bring worries...	
 <p>This is great, I can compare firms and there's even an interactive app that explains my legal rights and what might happen!</p>	 <p>I wonder if a legal professional could help me? I'm not even sure if I can afford it, but I'm desperate.</p>
People want accessible and easy information to help them find the right legal professional.	But this is not always available or accessible, meaning it can be left to chance.
First impressions have a big impact...	
 <p>So, please explain your situation, take all the time you need.</p> <p>I didn't need to be so nervous, they seem really easy to talk to.</p>	 <p>They've made up their minds about me already, but that's not who I am.</p> <p>I've seen loads of people in your shoes, you don't need to tell me any more ...</p>
Some people are reassured by their first impressions.	For others, their first impressions increase their discomfort and worry...
First meetings are critical for setting expectations...	
 <p>This is what happens, this is what it will cost, this is how we will keep you updated ...</p> <p>Finally I can relax, someone is going to help me.</p>	 <p>This is Hell. What are they talking about? I feel so small and stupid.</p> <p>Blah, Blah, Legal Jargon, Blah Blah, Technical Term, Blah, Blah, Legal Jargon. Here, just sign this ...</p>
Some people praise their legal professionals for explaining things simply. This reassures and helps them feel more in control.	But other people say their legal professionals add to their confusion, anxiety and sense of powerlessness.
As the case progresses...	
 <p>I'll just upload this document they've asked me for. I expect they will call me later.</p>	 <p>No-one can take your call at the moment, please leave a message and we'll get back to you.</p> <p>I don't even understand the email they sent asking for some essential information ... What if that is crucial and I miss a deadline?</p>
Some people have regular updates, even tracking progress online.	others are left in the dark.
 <p>So now we need to apply for this order which means this ... I need you to do this, and I'll handle the rest.</p> <p>oh, I get it now...</p>	
Although there is a lot happening, some people are supported to understand what is happening.	others feel out of their depth, out of control and as though everyone else holds all the power over their future.
In the end, people's experiences depend less on the result, and more on how legal professionals respond to their vulnerability...	
 <p>Don't forget to fill in our client feedback form.</p> <p>Even though it didn't all go my way, they did their best for me. I'm happy with the result.</p>	 <p>I don't even know what all these charges are for or what I do next. I feel like I've been churned through the system.</p> <p>Even though technically I won, I will think twice about using a legal professional again.</p>
People report better experiences where they are treated with empathy, helped to understand and feel in control.	And people report poor experiences of using legal professionals where the opposite is true.

Everyone is vulnerable when they need legal services. Inclusive design and good practice will help everyone, even those who do not appear vulnerable. It's not about doing extra things for those who have obvious vulnerabilities. It's about designing the service better to reduce vulnerability and improve experiences for everyone who needs to use legal services.

It is a genuine win-win.

