A Roadmap for Creating Trauma-Informed and Responsive Change

Guidance for Organisations, Systems and Workforces in Scotland

Executive Summary

> ❝ …it doesn't matter what your social background is, what class you come from, what job you do, you know, how high up in an organisation you are… you know, that anybody in our community can be a survivor of trauma or be experiencing trauma. ❞
> **Person with lived experience of trauma**

This resource is designed to help services and organisations identify and reflect on progress, strengths and opportunities for embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach across policy and practice.

Part One provides an overview of why trauma-informed and responsive organisations, systems and workforces matter and what good looks like. **Part Two** is a self-assessment checklist that includes a roadmap of activities that, based on growing evidence, are most effective in supporting services and organisations in their journey towards becoming trauma informed and responsive. There are a small number of appendices that contain further information/tools to support with the suggested activities. The visual on page 3 provides an at-a-glance overview of a service/organisation's trauma-informed journey over time.

This resource is part of a broader range of evidence-based training and implementation tools and support developed by The National Trauma Transformation Programme (NTTP), led by NHS Education for Scotland, in partnership with the Scottish Government, COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities), Resilience Learning Partnership and the Improvement Service. More information about psychological trauma, its prevalence and impact and the wider work of the NTTP is available on our website.

Preventing and more effectively responding to trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) is essential for Scotland's National Performance Framework's ambition of increasing wellbeing, creating opportunities to flourish and improving outcomes for people and communities. Scotland has paved the way in recognising that a trauma-informed and responsive approach is crucial to ensuring all children, young people and adults can lead healthy and fulfilled lives. The logic model on page 4 provides a shared vision for the short-, medium- and long-term outcomes of developing trauma-informed and responsive organisations, systems and workforces in Scotland. This helps us all consider what impact over time a trauma-informed and responsive approach could have for our staff and the people and communities we serve.

Scotland has paved the way in recognising that a trauma-informed and responsive approach is crucial to ensuring all children, young people and adults can lead healthy and fulfilled lives

Towards trauma–informed and responsive organisations, systems and workforces

CREATING THE RIGHT CONDITIONS

Our leadership makes a long-term commitment to this work, we assess organisational readiness, enhance staff working conditions and develop a safe and supportive organisational culture to begin this work

UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCES OF OUR ORGANISATION, SYSTEMS & HOW WE CURRENTLY WORK

We support all staff to develop a baseline knowledge of trauma and collaborate with people accessing, working in and with our organisation to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement

CONSOLIDATING CHANGE ACROSS OUR ORGANISATION, SYSTEMS AND PRACTICE

We focus on changes required across policy, systems and service design and delivery to support long-term sustainability, informed by feedback loops, safe and meaningful power sharing with people with lived experience of trauma and ongoing implementation support for staff

IMPLEMENTING AND TESTING CHANGE ACROSS OUR ORGANISATION AND PRACTICE

We support wellbeing, knowledge, skills and confidence of staff through training and implementation support to adopt trauma-informed and responsive practices

DEVELOPING OUR AIMS

We collaboratively develop an action plan to support our long-term vision for becoming trauma informed and responsive, considering how we will support staff wellbeing and practice, embed power sharing with people with lived experience of trauma and adapt policies and processes and service design and delivery.
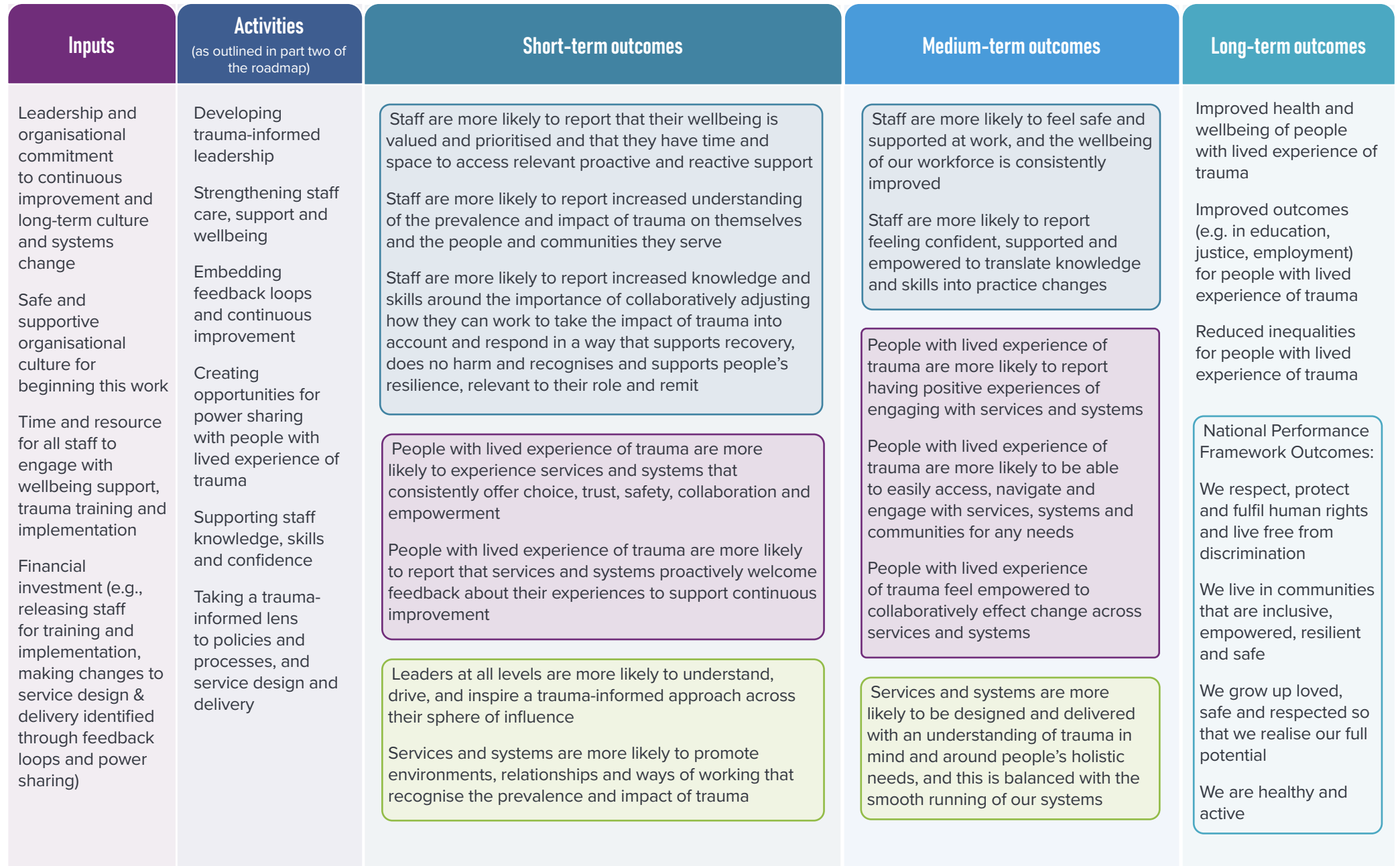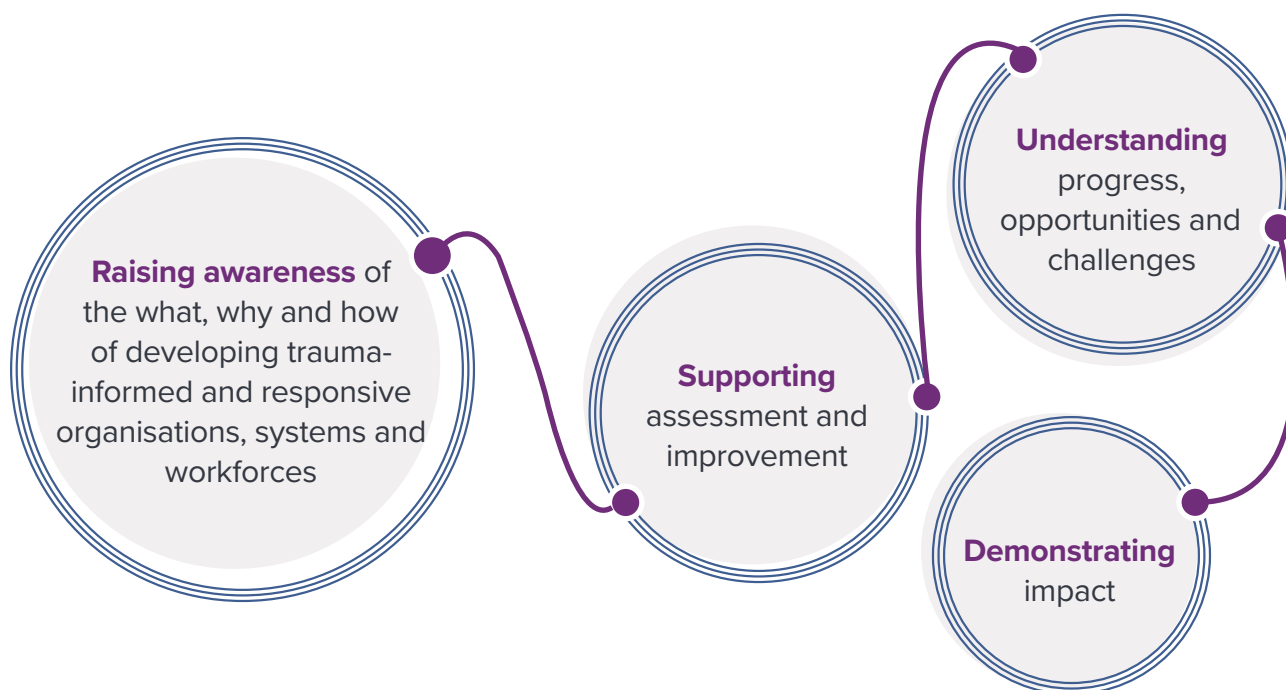
ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY

We create an improvement cycle to sustain changes over time, ensure trauma-informed and responsive principles, values and ways of working are inherent across and within our organisation and can evidence the impact of this work for our staff and the people and communities we serve

3

Logic Model

Inputs	Activities (as outlined in part two of the roadmap)	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
Leadership and organisational commitment to continuous improvement and long-term culture and systems change	Developing trauma-informed leadership	Staff are more likely to report that their wellbeing is valued and prioritised and that they have time and space to access relevant proactive and reactive support	Staff are more likely to feel safe and supported at work, and the wellbeing of our workforce is consistently improved	Improved health and wellbeing of people with lived experience of trauma
Safe and supportive organisational culture for beginning this work	Strengthening staff care, support and wellbeing	Staff are more likely to report increased understanding of the prevalence and impact of trauma on themselves and the people and communities they serve	Staff are more likely to report feeling confident, supported and empowered to translate knowledge and skills into practice changes	Improved outcomes (e.g. in education, justice, employment) for people with lived experience of trauma
Time and resource for all staff to engage with wellbeing support, trauma training and implementation	Embedding feedback loops and continuous improvement	Staff are more likely to report increased knowledge and skills around the importance of collaboratively adjusting how they can work to take the impact of trauma into account and respond in a way that supports recovery, does no harm and recognises and supports people's resilience, relevant to their role and remit	People with lived experience of trauma are more likely to report having positive experiences of engaging with services and systems	Reduced inequalities for people with lived experience of trauma
Financial investment (e.g., releasing staff for training and implementation, making changes to service design & delivery identified through feedback loops and power sharing)	Creating opportunities for power sharing with people with lived experience of trauma	People with lived experience of trauma are more likely to experience services and systems that consistently offer choice, trust, safety, collaboration and empowerment	People with lived experience of trauma are more likely to be able to easily access, navigate and engage with services, systems and communities for any needs	National Performance Framework Outcomes:
	Supporting staff knowledge, skills and confidence	People with lived experience of trauma are more likely to report that services and systems proactively welcome feedback about their experiences to support continuous improvement	People with lived experience of trauma feel empowered to collaboratively effect change across services and systems	We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
	Taking a trauma-informed lens to policies and processes, and service design and delivery	Leaders at all levels are more likely to understand, drive, and inspire a trauma-informed approach across their sphere of influence	Services and systems are more likely to be designed and delivered with an understanding of trauma in mind and around people's holistic needs, and this is balanced with the smooth running of our systems	We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
		Services and systems are more likely to promote environments, relationships and ways of working that recognise the prevalence and impact of trauma		We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential
				We are healthy and active

Aims of the roadmap

Raising awareness of the what, why and how of developing trauma-informed and responsive organisations, systems and workforces

Supporting assessment and improvement

Understanding progress, opportunities and challenges

Demonstrating impact

Who is the roadmap for?

o   People affected by trauma, their families and support networks

o   Services and organisations across the public, third, voluntary and private sectors in Scotland

o   Managers, supervisors and leaders

o   Workers, including paid staff, voluntary staff and peer support workers

o   Commissioners and funders

o   Inspection bodies

o   Elected officials, local communities and Community Planning Partnerships

To create the roadmap, we have drawn on:

o   The evidence base

o   What people with lived experience of trauma, experts by profession and leaders have told us

o   Existing learning and good practice from the Scottish context

o   Existing relevant Scottish frameworks and guidance

Key messages

Start where you are, do what you can, with what you've got
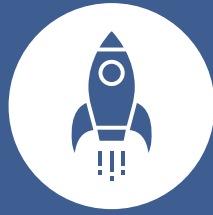
Many organisations will already be working in a trauma-informed and responsive way and be able to identify examples of good practice. This roadmap builds on an incredible amount of work that is already happening across Scotland. It is vital that we reflect on what is working well and celebrate successes, big and small. We encourage organisations to use this resource to identify good practice and successes, while exploring what may help build on this existing work to provide strengthened structure, improved impact and a more joined-up approach.

Much of this work is about taking a trauma-informed and responsive lens to how we work and reflecting on what **small changes** we could make in light of our understanding about trauma. Small changes can make a big difference.

Making any kinds of changes to how we work has the potential to feel overwhelming. Doing so in a changing environment can be extremely challenging, particularly given our collective experiences of the pandemic, the cost of living crisis, climate change and global events. Taking a collaborative approach and **prioritising care and support for the workforce at the start of and throughout this work** is vital.

What works for your organisation?

The resource is designed to be flexible and will evolve as further good practice and evidence emerges. This is not a prescriptive or exhaustive list of activities that all organisations are expected to implement. Instead, it makes suggestions about what evidence tells us is good practice for sustainably embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach, but recognises not all activities will be as relevant for every organisation. We encourage organisations to adapt this tool to ensure it meets your specific needs.

Recognising that trauma is everybody's business, the self-assessment is designed to support a whole-organisation approach. If you're a smaller organisation, you may wish to use the self-assessment to reflect on your entire organisation. However, if you're a large and complex organisation, you may feel that it's more realistic to focus on specific directorates/services/policy areas as smaller scale **"tests of change"** for embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach. This may help develop learning that can be shared with other parts of the organisation and build an evidence base of what works, what doesn't and what impact a trauma-informed and responsive approach may have in your particular context.

Embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach cannot be achieved or sustained without organisational supports and structures in place. The brief readiness checklist at the start of Part Two aims to help you **assess your organisation's readiness for starting this work** before you begin the self-assessment.

Embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach takes time

Embedding sustainable trauma-informed and responsive ways of working is rooted in long-term culture change. Embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach in an organisation usually doesn't happen in one step. The self-assessment will support your organisation to identify key priorities and actions for improvement over time. We provide a roadmap of activities, and suggest what it may be helpful to prioritise early on to support sustainable and effective progress, but priorities will look different for each organisation.

Working towards being trauma informed and responsive means working within a **cycle of continuous improvement**. We recommend that organisations use the self-assessment recurrently, in combination with feedback loops and meaningful engagement with engagement with staff and people and communities you serve, to support ongoing self-assessment, improvement planning and evaluation.

Why have we developed this roadmap?

As a society, we are becoming increasingly aware that living through traumatic events is more common than previously realised. Many of us will have lived and living experience of trauma, and trauma can affect us at any stage of our lives—there is no "them" and "us". The prevalence of traumatic experiences means that trauma will inevitably impact many of those within our workforce, whether through personal experiences or through the work we do. It is vital that all workers feel safe and supported in our workplaces. This is particularly important when we are caring for and supporting others because those of us directly supporting people affected by trauma face an increased risk of experiencing vicarious trauma, moral injury and compassion fatigue.

The term trauma can refer to a wide range of traumatic, abusive or neglectful events or series of events (including Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma in adulthood) that are experienced as being emotionally or physically harmful or life threatening. Whether an event(s) is traumatic depends not only on our individual experience of the event, but also how it negatively impacts on our emotional, social, spiritual and physical wellbeing.

Those of us who experience trauma are at higher risk of experiencing negative outcomes at all stages of our lives, ranging from physical and mental health, education, justice and employment.

We are all affected by traumatic events in different ways. Many of us will have existing support in place through family, friends and our community to support our resilience. Some people report experiencing positive post-traumatic growth. Although many of us have the right supports in place to recover from these experiences without adverse outcomes, we know that the experience of interpersonal trauma can disrupt our ability to form and maintain healthy and supportive relationships with others. This can be particularly true in childhood if we do not have supportive adults in our life. Those of us who experience trauma are at higher risk of experiencing negative outcomes at all stages of our lives, ranging from physical and mental health, education, justice and employment.

There is growing evidence that trauma-informed and responsive organisations, systems and practice, where the impact of trauma is understood by staff, and systems and ways of working are adapted accordingly, can reduce barriers for people to access support, whether through personal relationships, our wider communities and help from specialist and/or universal services. This can ultimately help those of us affected by trauma to build our resilience, recover and experience improved outcomes. If we don't respond in ways that adapt to the impact of trauma and reduce the barriers it can create, we risk a society in which those of us who have experienced the most harm and have the greatest need, have the least opportunity to access the specialist and universal services we need. It is the aim of this resource to support services and organisations to identify and embed the changes they need to be truly trauma informed and responsive.
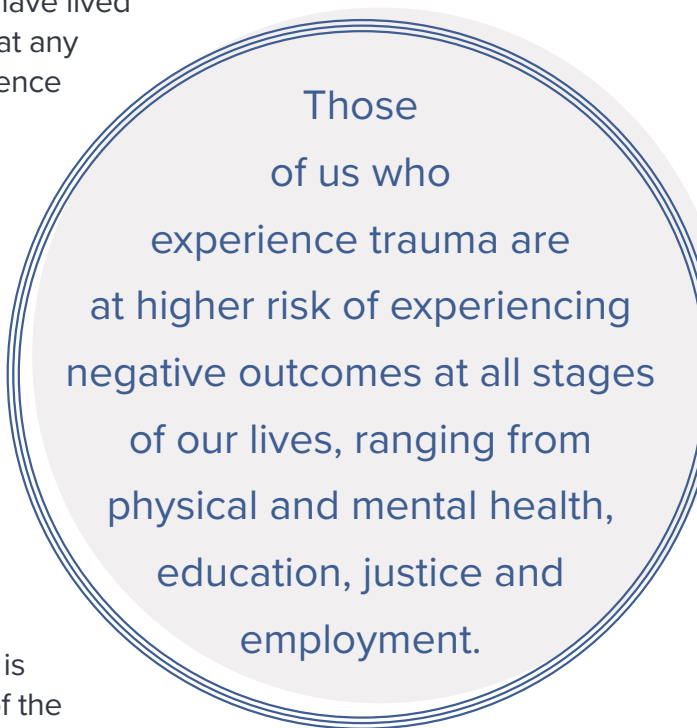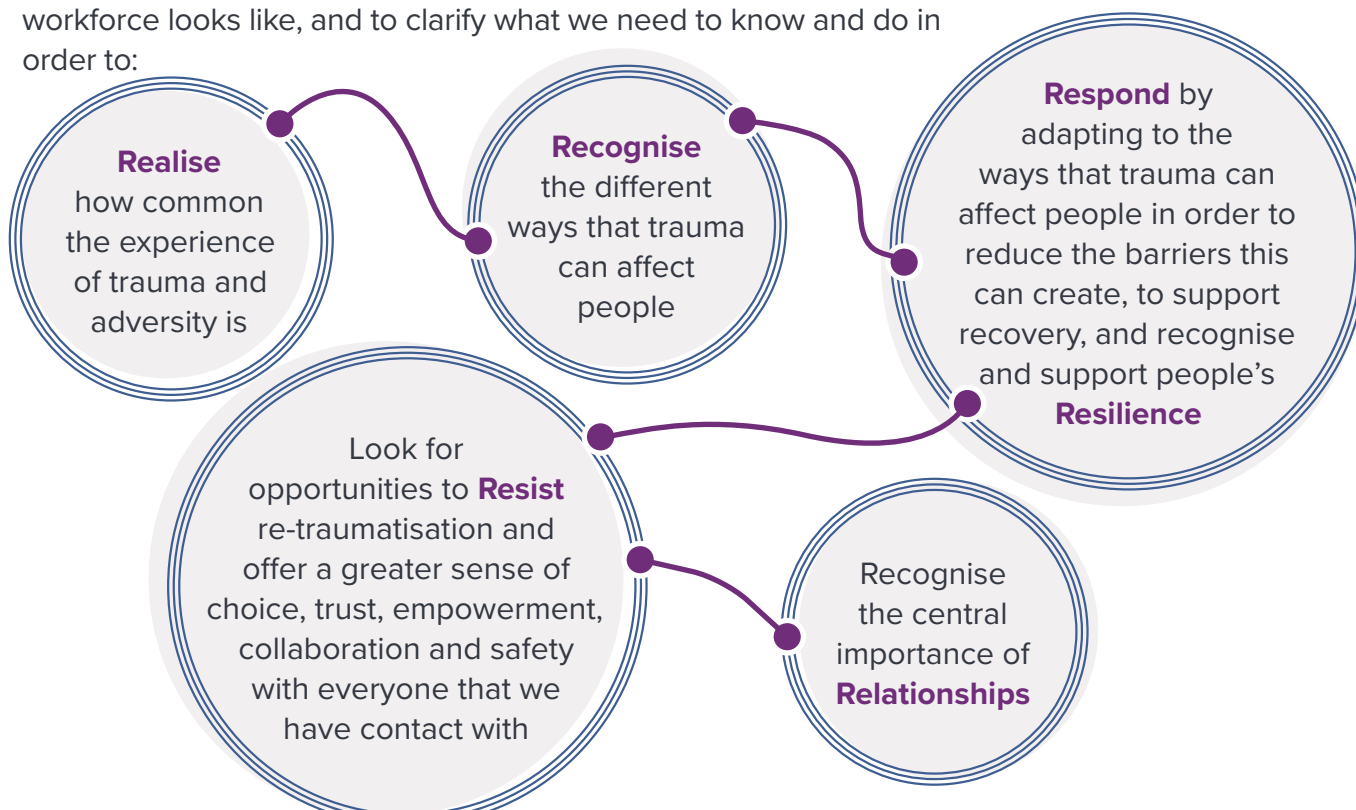
What is a trauma–informed and responsive workforce?

> ❝ Educating yourself on how trauma affects somebody. Like how that person will present, how that person maybe will react in the first instance but maybe react differently a couple of weeks down the line. It's not a cut and dry, "This is how trauma is" because it affects everybody different. Don't expect everybody just to be over it in the first couple of months…trauma affects people differently and there's no time limit on it. ❞
>
> **Witness in the justice system**

Trauma is everybody's business. We all have a role to play in recognising and preventing the barriers that the impact of trauma can create in accessing the relationships and services we need to recover to live the life we wish to. This doesn't mean that everyone needs to be a trauma expert —we know that different knowledge and skills are required to support people's recovery. But it does mean that all workers, in the context of our own role and work remit, have a unique and essential part to play in recognising when someone may be affected by trauma. This is through collaboratively adjusting how we work to take this into account and responding in a way that prevents barriers to opportunity, supports recovery, does no harm and recognises and supports people's resilience.

In 2017, NHS Education for Scotland developed the [Transforming Psychological Trauma: Knowledge and Skills Framework for the Scottish Workforce](#), accompanied by the [Scottish Psychological Trauma Training Plan](#). The aim was to create a shared language and understanding around what a trauma-informed and responsive workforce looks like, and to clarify what we need to know and do in order to:

Realise how common the experience of trauma and adversity is

Recognise the different ways that trauma can affect people

Respond by adapting to the ways that trauma can affect people in order to reduce the barriers this can create, to support recovery, and recognise and support people's **Resilience**

Look for opportunities to **Resist** re-traumatisation and offer a greater sense of choice, trust, empowerment, collaboration and safety with everyone that we have contact with

Recognise the central importance of **Relationships**

The Framework has allowed training to be developed consistently across the national workforce, developing the knowledge and skills of individual staff groups, depending on role and responsibilities in relation to their contact with people affected by trauma.

> ❝ ...stop asking someone what's wrong with them; start asking people what happened to them. For many of the people we were working with, that really screamed out as the bit that we weren't doing ... So, it started us to change our way of thinking. ❞
>
> **Attendee, Scottish Trauma-Informed Leaders Training**

What are trauma-informed and responsive organisations?

Workforce training is a key component of any organisation's journey to becoming trauma informed and responsive. Equally important are the culture, environments and supportive ways of working in an organisation that can enable sustainable change, which will ultimately make a difference to all of us who are affected by trauma. No matter how trauma informed a practitioner may be, if workers are constrained by protocols or policies that do not recognise the impact of trauma, we may be unable to minimise the risk of re-traumatisation that our training has taught us to recognise. This can risk disempowering staff and creating a sense of helplessness, leading to potential disengagement from empathy for people we are supporting.

> ❝ Rather than being a specific service or set of rules, trauma-informed approaches are a process of organisational change aiming to create environments and relationships that promote recovery and prevent re-traumatisation.[1] ❞

> ❝ I genuinely believe that people try to offer the best services that they possibly can. But I don't think that we can always appreciate how inadvertently some of our actions or behaviours might be impacting on someone who's been through quite a lot of distress within their life…taking a trauma informed approach ensures that we recognise this, we understand, and by taking sometimes very, very small steps in terms of where we provide our services, how you provide your services, even when we provide our services can make all the difference to someone and trauma being reduced rather than exacerbated by the efforts that we're trying to make for them. ❞
>
> **Senior Leader, Local Authority**

There is growing evidence that to sustainably embed a trauma-informed and responsive approach into practice, an organisation requires:

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1. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6088388/

An **organisational culture** that recognises the impact of trauma and sees being trauma informed as a way of working and an approach to everything that it does rather than as a standalone specific intervention or project, and where the key principles are intrinsic within and across the organisation and second nature to everyone;

Leadership at all levels that understands, drives and inspires trauma-informed change, embodies the key principles and builds accountability for long-term improvement;

Staff who experience their **wellbeing** as valued and prioritised, and they have time and space to access relevant proactive, protective and reactive wellbeing supports;

Feedback loops from people accessing, working in and with the organisation that are used to strengthen continued improvement;

Routine, meaningful **sharing of power with people with lived experience of trauma** so that services and systems are collaboratively designed and delivered around people's needs, rather than around the needs of organisations and systems;

Staff to have the **knowledge, skills, confidence and capacity** to recognise and respond to people affected by trauma, through training and implementation support relevant to their job role and service remit;

Policies and processes that reflect an understanding of the prevalence and impact of trauma and 'hard wire' a trauma-informed approach into all that the organisation does;

A **budget** that reflects this work as a priority, supports long-term commitment to embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach and ensures there are sufficient resources for this work; and

A commitment to ensuring that **every aspect of a person's experience of a service**—from first contact and relationships with staff to experiences of physical environments, communication and processes such as referrals and assessments—is underpinned by safety, choice, trust, collaboration and empowerment.

What are trauma-informed and responsive systems?

> 💬 If there's a consistency across agencies in terms of a trauma-informed approach and that people are trained in similar ways or using the same sort of resources or tools, then you would hope that the way in which different agencies deal with people who are dealing with trauma, would be somewhat consistent, even though the different agencies are there to achieve different things. 💬
>
> **Witness in the justice system**

All services and organisations operate within complex systems. The complexity of these systems can sometimes mean they work in ways that can be unintentionally re-traumatising, risk causing more harm, and may create barriers for those of us affected by trauma to access any specialist and/or universal services and opportunities that we need and have a right to expect. For example, people with lived experience of trauma highlight that it can be re-traumatising having to tell our story to multiple workers in different organisations and that having to navigate complex, lengthy pathways to support can leave us feeling disempowered and a sense of loss of control.

Trauma-informed and responsive systems are:[2]

o   **Designed around an understanding of the prevalence and impact of trauma and people's holistic needs**, knowing that this may sometimes impact the smooth running of the system;

o   **Actively supportive of services/organisations across sectors, agencies and geographies working collaboratively**, helping people to easily navigate and access the support they need, when they need it and for however long they need it. This helps people to see services and systems as trusted and supportive resources;

o   **Facilitated by a joined-up approach to funding, national priorities and reporting requirements**, designed to help services/organisations respond to their communities' own unique needs and priorities; and

o   **Aware that this work can't be done individually—it requires collaboration and power sharing** across communities, public, third and private sectors, and local and national government.

Responding in a trauma-informed way is essential but not sufficient for developing organisations and systems that are fair, equitable and help people access the right

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2. Similar key messages around trauma-informed systems are included in the Trauma-Informed Wales Framework.

support at the right time. This resource needs to be considered alongside and in addition to other work that will support improved outcomes for everyone. One example is Equally Safe, Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women. Equally Safe recognises that women and girls face a higher risk of violence and abuse in our unequal society because they are women and girls. To improve outcomes for victims of gender-based violence – and hold perpetrators to account – we need to understand and identify the roles discrimination and oppression play.

More information and resources are available on the National Trauma Transformation Programme website.

The complexity of these systems can sometimes mean they work in ways that can be unintentionally re-traumatising and risk causing more harm

Acknowledgements