



**National Trauma
Transformation
Programme**

Responding to Psychological
Trauma in Scotland

A Roadmap for Creating Trauma-Informed and Responsive Change

Guidance for Organisations, Systems and
Workforces in Scotland

Introduction



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

NHS
Education
for
Scotland


COSLA



is.
improvement service

Introduction

“...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.

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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



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



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



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.

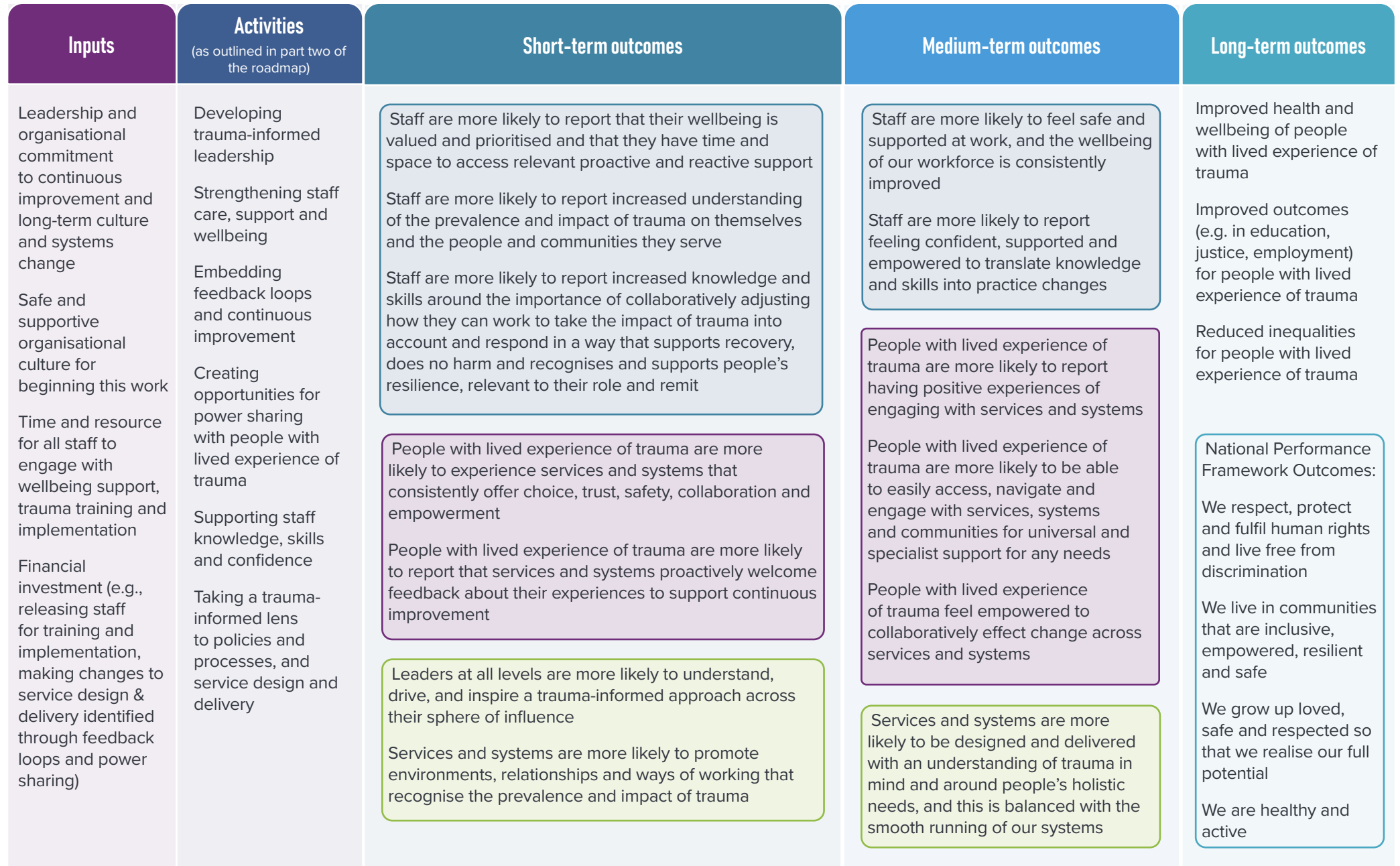


ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY

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



Logic Model



Aims of the roadmap

Raising awareness of the what, why and how

- Demonstrate the organisational environment and conditions that are essential for embedding a sustainable trauma-informed and responsive approach; and
- Highlight the different components of a trauma-informed and responsive approach and what it looks like embedded within an organisation, including the strategic and operational activities that are most effective in supporting organisations in their journey.

Supporting assessment and improvement

- Support organisations to conduct a self-assessment, identify and reflect on their progress, successes, strengths and opportunities for improvement;
- Engage staff in a reflective process, viewing their own system through a trauma-informed and responsive lens. Rather than allowing an outside entity to simply observe and give judgment without intimate knowledge of the system, this participatory process encourages critical thinking, which in itself promotes organisational change and sustainability; and
- Help organisations determine priorities to take forward this work, focusing particularly on 'quality', rather than only 'quantity' of work taking place to support a shift towards a trauma-informed and responsive approach. Recommendations from the self-assessment can be shared to facilitate wider discussion and can be the foundation for developing an action plan to help achieve better outcomes for people affected by trauma and to support workers.

Understanding progress, opportunities and challenges

- Provide consistency across Scotland in terms of what trauma-informed and responsive organisations, systems and workforces look like and a consistent basis for tracking the progress being made around implementation;
- Gather information on the progress organisations are making in their journey to identify areas for improvement and help inform future service planning and strategic investment at a local and national level, and make a persuasive case for continued investment in a trauma-informed and responsive approach; and
- Continue to build a national picture across Scotland to identify good practice, common opportunities and challenges, and provide useful data to enable the Scottish



Government and COSLA to identify any areas of challenge where additional focus or resources may be required.

Demonstrating impact

- Support organisations to evidence the potential contributions/ impact of a trauma-informed and responsive approach;
- Generate information on the social and economic impacts of trauma to help encourage local and national government, Community Planning Partnerships and other strategic bodies to recognise a trauma-informed and responsive approach as a central part of delivering other key agendas and identify it as a priority in strategic plans; and
- Contribute to the growing international evidence base on trauma-informed and responsive organisations, systems and workforces.

The resource should primarily be seen as a tool for organisations (and the strategic bodies to whom they report) to plan, track and reflect on their own progress in this work, supporting implementation and improvement planning. There are likely to be considerable variations in the progress being made in different organisations, as these will respond to differing needs, geography, organisational mission and priorities. It is expected that every organisation's work towards embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach will be shaped by, and respond to the needs of, people with lived experience of trauma in those communities and staff. Consequently, direct comparisons between one organisation and another is often neither helpful nor possible, as account should be taken of circumstance and context.

Who is the roadmap for?

The roadmap is designed for:

- **people affected by trauma, their families and support networks**, to raise awareness of what they can expect from trauma-informed and responsive organisations, systems and workforces, and the key role people with lived experience of trauma have to play in shaping organisations and systems that resist re-traumatisation, recognise resilience and support people's recovery.
- **services and organisations across the public, third, voluntary and private sectors in Scotland**, to identify how a trauma-informed and responsive approach can support their existing work and improvement planning;
- **managers, supervisors and leaders**, to identify their key role in creating environments and cultures for sustainably embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach;
- **workers, including paid staff, voluntary staff and peer support workers** (in conjunction with their appropriate generic and/ or professional guidance, where available), to help them understand the activities expected of organisations and workers to successfully deliver trauma-informed and responsive, evidence-based and effective services;
- **commissioners and funders**, to help them understand the benefits of a trauma-informed and responsive approach, what good practice looks like, and what could be expected of organisations;
- **inspection bodies**, to help them and the organisations they support understand how a trauma-informed and responsive approach contributes to their own quality frameworks and standards; and
- **Elected officials, local communities and Community Planning Partnerships**, to help them gain a better understanding of the work that is being undertaken to embed a trauma-informed and responsive approach at a local level and the impact this is having, ultimately helping to strengthen local democratic accountability.



How has the roadmap been developed?

The roadmap has been developed by the Scottish Government, COSLA, NHS Education for Scotland, the Resilience Learning Partnership and the Improvement Service, as part of the NTTP, in close collaboration with people with lived experience of trauma, experts by profession and people currently leading this work in their organisations. An Advisory Group, co-chaired by the Scottish Government and COSLA, provided expert guidance and quality assurance throughout the development process.

To create the roadmap, we have drawn on:

The **evidence base** from the literature about the [impact of trauma-informed and responsive practice](#) and existing international tools/resources designed to support organisations with this work;

What **people with lived experience of trauma** have said would help improve access to support, reduce re-traumatisation, recognise resilience and support recovery;

What **experts by profession and leaders** across services and organisations have told us would support them to implement a trauma-informed and responsive approach;

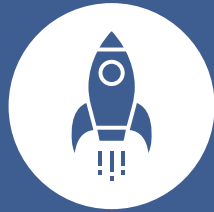
Existing learning and good practice from the Scottish context in embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach; and

Existing relevant Scottish frameworks and guidance that support key aspects of embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach. This includes building on the principles of the [Scottish Approach to Service Design](#) and the [Quality Improvement Journey Framework](#).



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.

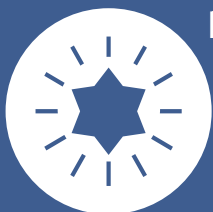
What works for your organisation?



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 staff and people and communities you serve, to support ongoing self-assessment, improvement planning and evaluation.

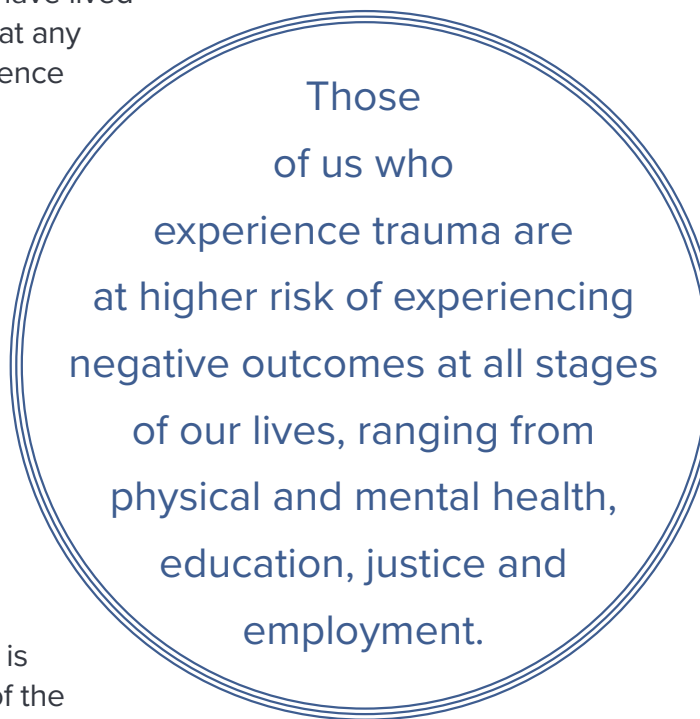
Why have we developed this roadmap?

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.

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.



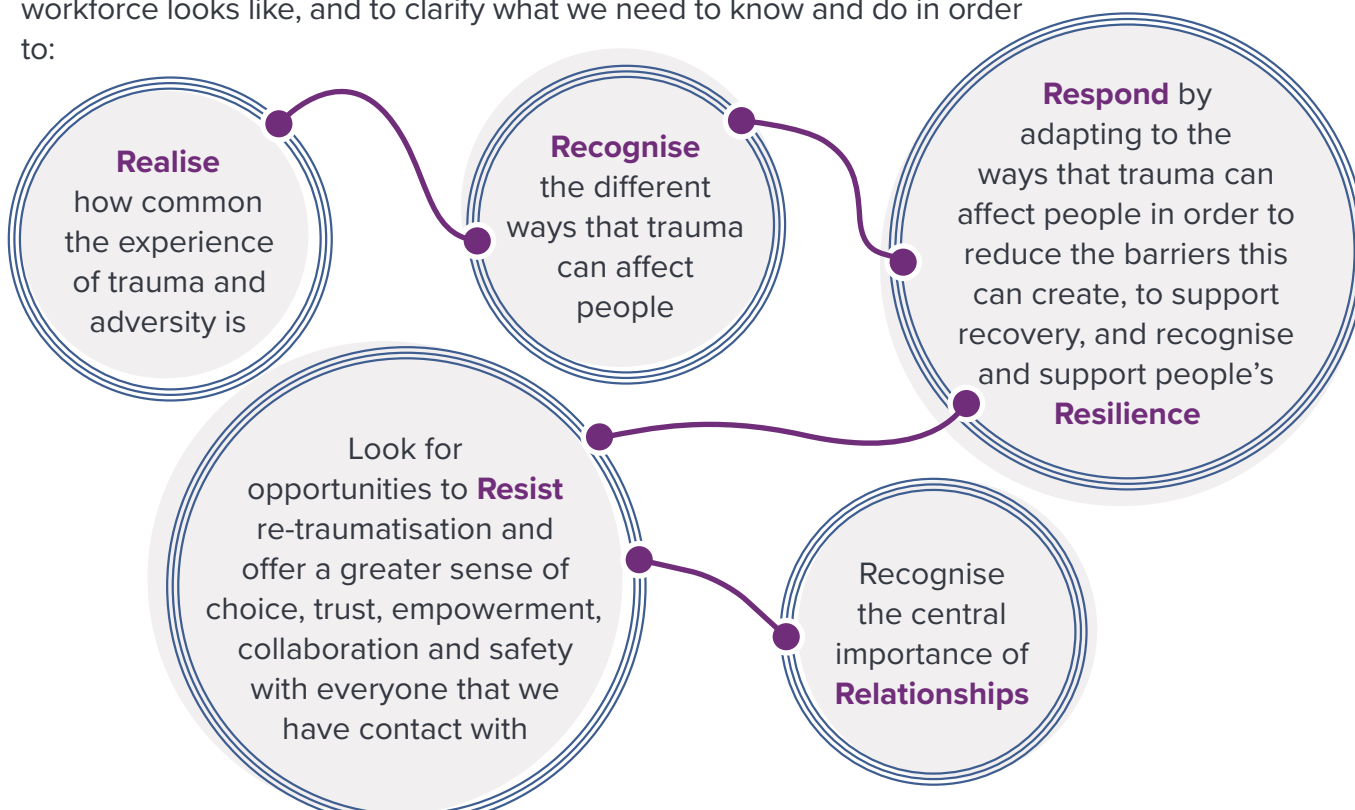
What is a trauma-informed and responsive workforce?

“ 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:



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:

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

- **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;
- **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;
- **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
- **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 necessary but not sufficient in developing organisations and systems that are fair, equitable and help people access the right

2. Similar key messages around trauma-informed systems are included in the [Trauma-Informed Wales Framework](#).

support at the right time. Trauma-informed approaches build upon a range of other principles, each of which will require an overlapping but distinct set of knowledge, skills and ways of working that are not covered in this resource.

We must learn to avoid locating responsibility and blame for the experience and impact of trauma on an individual. For example, it is crucial that systems, services and staff understand and respond to the cultural and gendered context of specific kinds of trauma such as gender-based violence, hate crimes and child sexual exploitation. [Equally Safe](#), Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women, recognises that women and girls are at an increased risk of violence and abuse precisely because they are female in our unequal society. If we are to improve outcomes for women, children and young people affected by gender-based violence and hold perpetrators to account, it is critical that staff are trained in the ways that discrimination and oppression both impose constrained choices on women and girls and enable violence perpetrated by men against them.



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