

Trauma Informed Practice in the Adult Social Care Sector Event, 23 September 2022

Learning Note



Introduction

As part of the [National Trauma Training Programme](#), a small number of volunteers from older adult care homes across Scotland took part in a short trial to explore how a peer support learning approach could facilitate shared learning and reflections in relation to embedding trauma-informed practice in their services. In September 2022, national partners came together to deliver a learning event aimed at sharing the learning from the trial and to explore the opportunities and challenges in embedding trauma-informed practice in adult social care settings. This free interactive event hosted by the Improvement Service, the Scottish Government, the Scottish Social Services Council and NHS Education for Scotland was open to anyone in Scotland working at a local level to improve outcomes for older adults accessing social care, including the care at home workforce.

The event aimed to provide opportunities to:

- Enhance understanding about the impact of trauma and the need for a trauma-informed approach within an older adult social care context;
- Hear about learning from the trial, including both the opportunities and challenges identified by participants in developing trauma-informed practice in their services;
- Take away learning about the importance of trauma-informed practice and to understand opportunities to engage with the [National Trauma Training Programme](#); and
- Hear about existing resources and support for implementation of a trauma-informed approach through the [National Trauma Training Programme](#).

Trauma-informed Practice and Older People

In Scotland, we have a shared ambition for a trauma-informed and responsive workforce and services. This is supported by a National Trauma Training Programme (NTTP), led by NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and funded through the Scottish Government. The NTTP takes a lifespan approach to understanding and working with psychological trauma. As part of this work, a small trial of trauma informed practice in the adult social care sector was commissioned to explore whether a peer support and learning group is an effective approach to supporting staff involved in caring for older people and people living with dementia, to build upon existing good practice in order to promote trauma informed approaches in care home settings.

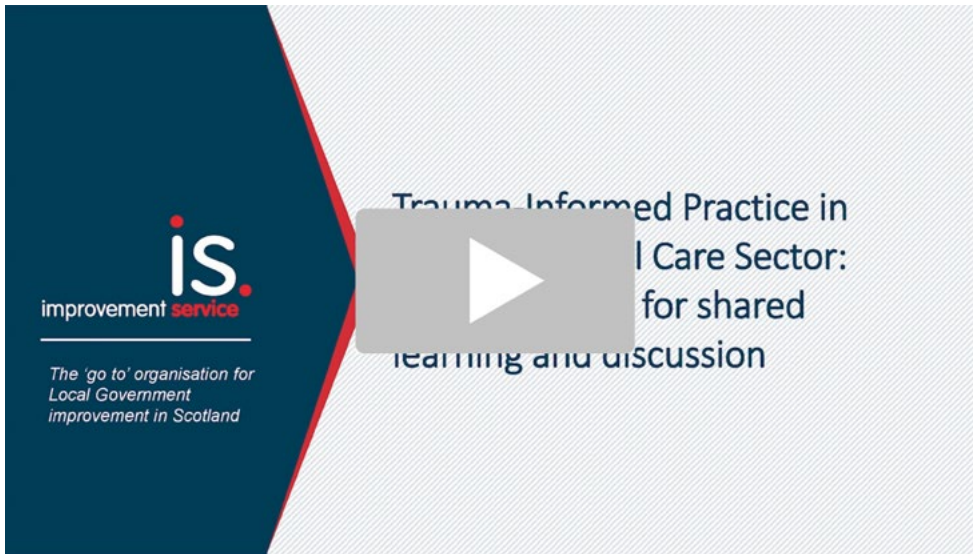
Experience of trauma increases the risk of experiencing poorer physical and mental health outcomes as well as poorer social, educational and justice outcomes. Older people, those living with frailty and people living with dementia are equally likely to have experienced trauma throughout their lives, however may not be able to disclose this or advocate for their needs as they once did. Further, by virtue of being admitted to residential care, individuals are likely to have experienced new physical and social losses, which can increase the risk of current events being experienced as traumatic.

It is also important to consider the impact of these caring roles on professionals, which is a key component of Trauma Informed Practice. The social care workforce are vital in supporting the older people of Scotland and we know that they are at increased risk of potentially traumatising experiences, chronic stress and burnout. A trauma-informed approach can support improved outcomes for older adults, as well as the wellbeing of the social care workforce.

Webinar Resources

[Slides from the event](#) can be accessed on the Improvement Service website.

A [recording of the event](#) can be accessed on the Improvement Service Youtube channel.



Group Discussion - Key Messages

After the presentations, participants were invited to offer their reflections on both the challenges and opportunities in implementing trauma-informed approaches and practice in their work with older people, particularly within care home settings. The following key themes emerged from this discussion:

1. A recognition of the importance of implementing TIP with older adults

Many participants fed back that they had found the session to be extremely helpful and thought provoking and that the presentations had highlighted what they felt to be very important aspects to consider when working with older people. Some attendees reflected that they felt that to date there has not been enough focus on and discussion around trauma-informed practice with older people but that this is hugely important. The need for more nuanced understanding of complex presentations and consideration of trauma as a driver of behaviour in older people and people living with dementia was highlighted as important. Working in a trauma informed way was seen to be a natural adjunct to person centred care planning and delivery, including responding to distress in service users.

2. The importance of multi-level and multi-disciplinary support for TIP across the older adults workforce

The need for long-term support to ensure proper implementation of trauma-informed practice was highlighted by several participants, as was the concern that if this is not provided then attempts to integrate trauma-informed practice risk becoming somewhat “tokenistic”. It was felt that there is a need for commitment across the board and at all levels of experience and seniority within the workforce in order to drive this agenda forward, highlighting the need for organisational support. It was voiced that this commitment needs to be multi-disciplinary so that both social care and health colleagues are working collaboratively and from the same understanding of and language around trauma, and that buy-in from senior and elected leadership is vital.

3. The need for meaningful training and development opportunities

The need for more dedicated and protected time for training and learning was voiced by several participants, as well as the need for opportunities for staff to have space for conversation and reflection with colleagues and other staff. Many attendees reflected on the capacity issues which arise when trying to make time for training and the challenges this can present in creating and embedding change. More in-depth training pertaining to trauma and dementia was requested by several participants, as well as the need for more people to be

trained to an enhanced level within the workforce in order to support implementation of trauma informed practice for those at a skilled level. Some participants also highlighted the need for a greater focus on trauma and trauma informed approaches within higher education social work training curriculums.

4. Staff wellbeing is key

Staff wellbeing was repeatedly highlighted by participants as being key to implementing trauma-informed practice and approaches. Many participants articulated that high levels of staff stress, absenteeism and burnout in the sector are prohibitive to creating change and that the health and wellbeing needs of the workforce to be addressed first and foremost before asking staff to implement new approaches and/or do more training. It was also recognised by some that utilising trauma-informed approaches and practice could have real benefits for increasing job satisfaction and enhancing team cohesiveness if implemented properly and from a basis of staff stability and wellbeing.

5. Lack of resources and capacity is restrictive

Many participants stated that lack of resources and staff capacity can or could be a significant barrier to implementing trauma-informed approaches, particularly when high turnover within the workforce can create a lack of continuity of trained staff. The need for more funding and resources at a local level was voiced by many as being key to meaningful implementation of trauma-informed practice, both in terms of building staff capacity and being able to create services which appropriately meet the needs of service users. This was highlighted by several participants as being particularly important in order to empower staff to have the time and space required to build quality relationships with and understandings of the people they are supporting in order to fully understand their stories and behaviours.

Additional Resources, Information and Support

[NTTP website](#) – you can find more information about the National Trauma Training Programme.

This interactive document outlines all the [NTTP training resources](#) which are available for online learning.

Appendix 1 contains links to view the guided Trauma Lens Walkthrough videos and accompanying resources to assist with conducting a walkthrough in your organisational/team setting.

The Improvement Service works closely with the Scottish Government and NHS Education Scotland on local implementation of the NTTP and trauma-informed approaches. You can find [more information and additional resources](#) on the website.

The Improvement Service hosts a [community of practice for trauma-informed approaches](#) on Knowledge Hub. You can sign up for access to networking, helpful resources, and events.

There is a newsletter for the NTTP. You can view the [most recent issue](#) and [sign up here](#).

The Scottish Government's [Trauma-Informed Practice Toolkit](#) can be found here.

NTTP [staff wellbeing resources](#) can be found online and the [national wellbeing hub](#) for all health and social care staff.

As part of the National Trauma Training Programme, the Scottish Government, COSLA, NHS Education for Scotland, Resilience Learning Partnership and the Improvement Service have been developing a Framework to help any service/organisation in Scotland work towards becoming trauma-informed. It highlights the key components of trauma-informed organisations, systems and workforces, raises awareness of the activities that are most effective in supporting organisations in this work, and helps organisations understand the impact/contributions of a trauma-informed approach over time for staff, for people affected by trauma and the organisation's wider mission. Please find a link to the [draft framework and feedback survey](#) here.

