

How can adopting a trauma-informed approach help drive forward improved outcomes as part of Scotland's roadmap for COVID-19 recovery, renewal and transformation?

Summary of key learning from 2020-21 deep dive event series



Overview of the series

Responding to trauma is, now more than ever, a public health priority. COVID-19 and the restrictions put in place to contain the virus have significantly increased the risk of people experiencing trauma and re-traumatisation. There is growing national and international evidence that embedding a trauma-informed approach in the re-mobilisation of services, systems and workforces can support Scotland's long-term recovery and renewal. In partnership with NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and the Scottish Government, the Improvement Service developed a series of learning events over 2020-21 to explore how adopting a trauma-informed approach can support key community planning priorities, the barriers and enablers to driving forward this work, and tangible steps to help embed this approach in policy and practice.

Event themes

The thematic priority areas for the events were chosen due to the significant impact of COVID-19 on these areas of work, while recognising that there are many other priority areas. The [learning reports, videos and presentations](#) from all of these events are available on the Improvement Service website. You can also click on each theme below to access the report.

Key messages

Participants identified a number of key messages from the events. These include:

Training is a key part of developing a trauma-informed approach, but this should be combined with adaptations to policy and practice, long-term culture change, and meaningful engagement with people with lived experience.

Developing trauma-informed systems, services and workforces requires strong buy-in from senior leaders and decision makers, at local and national levels.

A joined-up, multi-agency approach must be taken to ensure trauma-informed practice and policy is sustainably developed and embedded collaboratively across systems and services.

There is a need for tools and resources to support local areas and organisations to develop consistency and accountability to ensure high-quality trauma-informed practice and policy.

Trauma-informed approaches in Scotland: where are we now?

Current policy and practice

At each event, participants were asked to reflect on existing work and awareness of a trauma-informed approach within their service, organisation or local area.

Participants highlighted:

- There is growing awareness of trauma-informed approaches across the various thematic areas of work.
- Many participants had undergone training or had accessed e-learning materials, such as those produced by the National Trauma Training Programme.
- A key area for further development is sustainably embedding trauma-informed approaches into policy and practice.
- A more effective response to vicarious trauma, chronic burnout, and wellbeing amongst staff is needed, particularly since COVID-19.
- More opportunities to collaborate with other organisations would help to develop a joined-up approach to responding to trauma.



“(If people were trained in trauma)... it would have made a huge difference at the start for me.”

SafeLives authentic voice panel member



“Listen to the victim and take time to go through what they’re saying.”

Victim Support Scotland lived experience group member²

Barriers and Enablers

Participants at each event discussed the barriers and enablers they experienced in their services/ organisations/ local authority areas to implementing sustainable trauma-informed practice and policy. Some of the key themes highlighted across the events include:



BARRIERS

Long-term culture change is needed to recognise, understand and embed a trauma-informed approach across Scotland.

There is limited capacity for all staff to undergo training and development, particularly in light of COVID-19.

Siloed working presents a challenge in developing a shared, whole systems approach that ensures people receive a trauma-informed response.

Staff burnout and experiences of poor wellbeing have increased during periods of lockdown/ restrictions.



ENABLERS

Buy-in and commitment to this agenda from leadership and senior staff is absolutely vital for driving forward systems and culture change.

Trauma Champions and TPTICs¹ have been a useful driver for developing a trauma-informed approach locally.

Multi-agency, collaborative working across sectors reduces the burden on single services and staff.

Staff across frontline services feel supported when they have opportunities to share learning, learn from others and have space to reflect on practice.

1. Transforming Psychological Trauma Implementation Coordinators are specialist level staff that have a remit to support organisations across health board areas with trauma training and implementation.
2. See reports on the VAWG and Justice events for more feedback from people with lived experience of trauma.

Actions and next steps

Next steps and support needed

Participants were asked to reflect on key next steps and actions going forward that can support the implementation of a trauma-informed approach in their service, organisation or local area. The key themes were:



Ensuring systems and services are informed by lived experience.



Strengthening awareness raising and multi-agency working at national and local levels.



Embedding a trauma-informed approach into practice and policy beyond workforce training.



Prioritising support for staff wellbeing.



Buy-in for trauma-informed approaches from leaders locally and nationally.

Summary

Looking ahead, stakeholders identified the need for:

- National networking opportunities to share learning, collaborate with other organisations and sectors, and build awareness of trauma-informed practice.
- Guidance and support to ensure that systems and services are informed by lived experience meaningfully and robustly.
- Development of national standards for strengthening training, policy and practice within organisations and services, in order to ensure consistency and accountability.
- Further engagement with training and awareness raising from leadership in order to highlight the importance of this agenda and develop senior buy-in.
- Commitment at every level to staff wellbeing as a key priority to achieve national outcomes and embed a trauma-informed approach.

Next steps

- The findings and recommendations from this series will be shared with the National Steering Group for Trauma Training, chaired by the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for COVID recovery, and will inform future delivery and implementation of the next stage of the National Trauma Training Programme.
- The Improvement Service, in partnership with NHS Education for Scotland, COSLA and the Scottish Government are supporting the development of a network of trauma champions, who are senior leaders across local authorities, Health and Social Care Partnerships, NHS Health Boards and other key community planning partners. The trauma champions will be supported to drive forward trauma-informed practice and policy across their organisations and local areas in a multi-agency, collaborative way.

What action are you taking forward after attending the event?

Participants were asked to identify a positive action to take forward. Common themes emerged within these actions:



Awareness Raising

Share information and raise awareness beyond usual networks.

Review resources and signpost to colleagues.

Link up with new contacts and plan ways to share learning.



Staff Wellbeing

Make trauma awareness and responsiveness part of everyday language.

Encourage self-care in the workplace and support staff to access wellbeing resources.

Strengthen support for the vicarious trauma staff may experience.



Training

Promote further training on trauma across local Partnerships.

Ensure all training and policy activities are given a trauma informed lens.

Embed trauma training into learning and development strategies.



Policy and Practice Informed by Lived Experience

Develop engagement with people with lived experience.

Review policies to make sure they are trauma informed.

Prioritise delivering services that are relevant to people's needs.



Multi-agency Working

Link with multi-agency partners and plan for future collaborative working.

Develop a multi-agency plan for a trauma-informed response across services.

Link with local Trauma Champions and seek opportunities to work together.

Resources

- This [interactive PDF](#) summarises the key trauma training resources from the National Trauma Training Programme that are openly available to support all members of the Scottish workforce to strengthen their understanding of their role in responding to people affected by trauma.
- The [Trauma Informed Practice Toolkit for Scotland](#) has been developed in collaboration with experts by experience and provides clear, tangible examples of where trauma informed practice has been successfully embedded across different sectors of the workforce.
- This [briefing](#) and [infographic](#) highlight how adopting a trauma-informed approach to Scotland's COVID-19 recovery, renewal and transformation agenda can support key priorities, including improving outcomes for vulnerable people and communities affected by trauma and supporting workforce wellbeing and resilience.

Further engagement

- Join our new community of practice on the [Knowledge Hub](#) for professionals across Scotland who are working to adopt a trauma-informed approach across policy and practice. It is a safe space for professionals to connect to each other and share good practice, learning and resources.
- Follow the Improvement Service and partners on Twitter to stay up to date with future events and new resources:
 - [@Improvserv](#)
 - [@NES_Psychology](#)
 - [@IS_VAWandTrauma](#)