

Embedding trauma-informed and responsive systems, organisations and workforces

National Learning Event, November 2025

Background and overview of the event

The Scottish Government and COSLA have a shared ambition for a trauma-informed workforce and services across Scotland, capable of recognising where people are affected by trauma and adversity, that is able to respond in ways that prevent further harm and support recovery and can address inequalities and improve life chances.

[The National Trauma Transformation Programme](#) (formerly known as the National Trauma Training Programme) is a major and long-term change programme, which aims to support this vision. The NTTP provides a wide range of learning resources, guidance and implementation support for all sectors of the workforce, including leaders, to upskill staff to the appropriate level of trauma-informed and responsive practice and, critically, to embed and sustain this model of working.

The Improvement Service supports the National Trauma Leads Network and provides support to local authorities to strengthen the capacity and capability of councils and partners to implement trauma-informed and responsive practice and policy. This event aimed to:



Share learning, reflect on progress and impact, and celebrate the work local authorities and key community planning partners have been doing to embed a trauma-informed and responsive approach across services, systems and workforces.



Provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on recommendations and next steps for this work across Scotland, and in particular, consider how to strengthen cross-cutting connections with other policy agendas aimed at addressing inequalities and adversity.



Share the [National Learning Report](#), developed and published by the Improvement Service, sharing learning about the progress, emerging impact, enablers and barriers from work happening across Scottish local authorities and their key community planning partners.

We heard from a range of speakers, including:

- **Scottish Government Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing, Tom Arthur**, and **COSLA President, Councillor Shona Morrison**, are co-chairs of the National Collective Leadership Group for the NTPP and both spoke of their commitment to progressing this agenda nationally.
- **Angela Pinkerton, Trauma Informed Practice Lead Officer for South Ayrshire Council**, and **Victoria Bannerman, Trauma Informed Practice Coordinator for East Dunbartonshire Council**, and co-Chairs of the National Trauma Leads Network, provided an overview of the NTPP and the current work and future priorities of the Trauma Leads Network.
- **Ariane Beaver, Learning & Evaluation Project Manager** and **Jenny Smith-Littlejohn, National Improvement Lead for Trauma** at the **Improvement Service**, provided an overview and background to the 2025 National Learning Report, including an overview of the key findings, learning and recommendations from local areas for progressing this work nationally and locally.
- **Kathryn Kilianska, Trauma Informed Practice Lead Officer at Inverclyde Council**, shared learning from their journey to embed trauma-informed leadership across Inverclyde Council.
- **Carrie McLaughlan, Programme Manager for the Promise at The Highland Council**, shared learning about the links between the Promise and embedding trauma-informed and responsive change, and the cross-cutting priorities of this work across Highland.
- **Alison Lang, Senior Officer for Trauma Informed Practice at North Lanarkshire Council**, shared learning from their work to embed a trauma informed approach across policies and processes, including within their Equality Impact Assessment.

Engagement

There were 547 registered to attend the event and **410** attendees on the day. This included a broad range of public, private and third sector organisations and policy areas, including representation from 31 local authorities, as well as senior leaders, managers, policymakers, practitioners and Elected Officials. Services/ policy areas represented included:

- Psychology & Mental Health services (including Children and Adolescent Mental Health)
- Public Protection
- Education (including Further and Higher Education)
- Housing
- Community Planning
- Specialist trauma support services
- Alcohol and Drugs
- Violence Against Women and Girls (including specialist support organisations)
- Specialist LGBTQI+ organisations
- Social Work (including Children and Families, Adults, and Justice Social Work teams)
- Emergency Services (including Police Scotland, and Scottish Prison Service)
- Inspection and Improvement Bodies (including the Care Inspectorate and Social Security Scotland)

Key messages and recommendations

There has been substantial progress across all nine key drivers of the [Roadmap for Creating Trauma-Informed and Responsive Change](#) since last year. Whilst many local areas are continuing to focus on early implementation activities and creating the right conditions, many are also thinking about how to sustainably embed this work in service design and delivery long-term. The National Learning Report, speakers, and participants shared key messages for continuing to progress this work across Scotland:



Developing **joined up practice and supporting staff care, support and wellbeing** is seen as increasingly important given the current context for public and third sector services. This was highlighted as **central to successfully embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach**, especially given the current context of ongoing complexity and challenge for the public sector. Staff wellbeing is becoming a main focus of work across many local areas who have invested efforts to ensure that the **rights of staff to feel safe and supported at work** are upheld and recognised.

Strengthening links to other cross-cutting policy agendas aimed at improving outcomes for people and communities affected by poverty, inequality, trauma and adversity and highlighting a **trauma-informed approach as central to delivering many local and national priorities**, including as part of wider public service reform.

Collaboration and **partnership working** was highlighted as central to the progress made across many local areas. This includes collaboration with a wide range of community partners to join the dots across different policy and service areas to strengthen **the collective commitment to a trauma-informed approach**.

Leadership and long-term organisational commitment are key enablers for sustainable progress and both operational and strategic leaders have a key role in embedding a trauma informed and responsive approach across services, systems and workforces.

Continue to build **capacity and capability of our workforce** to recognise and respond to trauma through training and implementation support as well as reflective spaces to take forward learning.

Continuing to develop and maintain **meaningful, robust and safe opportunities for people with lived experience of trauma to inform service design and delivery** to ensure services are responsive to the rights and needs of those who are accessing them.

Given the scope of the national ambition, this work needs to be supported by **infrastructure, scaffolding and leadership** at both national and local level to ensure **long-term sustainability and impact**.

What action are you taking forward after attending the event?

Participants identified key actions they will take forward in their own areas of influence, including:

- Ensure safe and meaningful engagement with people with lived experience and ensuring they are appropriately renumerated for their time and expertise.
- Strengthen leadership engagement to highlight the importance of trauma-informed practice and how it supports organisational culture and ways of working.
- Strengthen links with other cross-cutting policy agendas to promote a joined-up, collaborative approach across our local areas.
- Prioritise embedding the key principles of a trauma-informed approach into service design and delivery.
- Collaborate with leaders and colleagues to review current activities, identify areas of good practice and explore opportunities for improvement.
- Raise awareness of the importance of a trauma-informed approach and make trauma-informed practice part of the conversation within services.

Feedback from attendees:

- “ Information about the changes that different areas had made operational - sometimes hearing about the small changes is more meaningful. ”
- “ Presentations from the three council areas were incredibly powerful - really enjoyed the overview of main findings and recommendations. ”
- “ Hearing from how others have got on or are trying to get to where my organisation would like to be [was useful]. ”
- “ [I enjoyed] being able to see what is going on in other areas and shared experiences. ”



Further engagement

NTTP Newsletter: [Subscribe](#) to the NTTP Newsletter.

Useful resources

[National Trauma Transformation Programme Website](#)

[Training resources](#)

[NTTP Roadmap for Creating Trauma-Informed and Responsive Change: Guidance for Organisations, Systems and Workforces](#)

[Trauma case studies](#) – please contact us at trauma@improvementservice.org.uk if you have any good practice examples you would like to share!