

1 – What is trauma?

Trauma results from an event(s) or set of circumstances that is experienced by a person as harmful or life threatening. Trauma can cause lasting adverse effects, limiting the person's ability to function and achieve mental, physical, social, or emotional wellbeing.

Research shows that approximately half of the population has experienced at least one traumatic or stressful event within childhood. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) describe traumatic life events in childhood, including sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or neglect.

Given trauma is common, there are large numbers of people who may struggle to trust the professionals providing important services to vulnerable individuals. In order to ensure people access the support they need, there must be safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment.

7 – Further information

For more information, please see:

[‘Working definition of trauma-informed practice’ guidance](#)

[‘Embedding trauma-informed approaches in adult social care’ briefing](#)

[‘Action steps using ACEs and trauma-informed care: a resilience model’ article](#)

[‘Trauma-informed practice workbook’](#)

[‘What is trauma?’](#)

[‘Window of tolerance’](#)

6 – What does trauma informed practice look like?

Each profession will experience trauma and trauma survivors in different ways in their work. However, there are some important ways for practitioners to think/ behave:

- Use active listening skills
- Reduce ‘them’ and ‘us’ barriers
- Make building relationships a priority
- Don’t victim blame
- Avoid triggers, such as probing questions
- Understand that ‘irrational’ behaviour shows unmet safety or connection needs
- Reduce stress during transitions
- Connection before correction - regulate, relate, reason - ‘time in’ not ‘time out’
- Look for signs of trauma in colleagues

2 – What is trauma informed practice?

Trauma informed practice (TIP) is a strengths-based approach looking to understand and respond to the impact of trauma on people's lives - not just on people who we work with, but on us too. It aims to improve the accessibility and quality of services by creating culturally sensitive, safe services that people trust and want to use. TIP acknowledges the need to see beyond a person's presenting behaviours and to ask ‘what does this person need?’ rather than ‘what is wrong with this person?’

Trauma-informed practice means:

- Recognising potential impacts of trauma on people using services, practitioners, and others in the system
- Integrating trauma knowledge into policies, programs, and practice
- Preventing re-traumatisation

3- Key principles

Safety

Partners should ensure that the physical, psychological, and emotional safety of people using services and practitioners is prioritised.

Trustworthiness

Partners should ensure that their organisational policies and procedures are transparent and aim to build trust among practitioners, people using services, and the wider community.

Choice

Partners should ensure that they promote and encourage people to make their own choices, and support people to set their goals to determine the plan of action they need to heal and move forward.

4- Key principles

Collaboration

Partners should ensure that they recognise the value of practitioners and people using services when overcoming challenges and improving the system as a whole.

Empowerment

Partners should make efforts to share power and give people using services and practitioners a strong voice in decision-making at both individual and organisational levels.

Cultural consideration

Partners should make efforts to move past cultural stereotypes and biases based on, for example, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, geography, race, or ethnicity.

5 – Re-traumatisation & vicarious trauma

Re-traumatisation is a reminder of past trauma that results in a re-experiencing of the initial trauma event. It can be triggered by a situation, attitude, or an environment, and can it make a person feel as though they have lost power, control, or safety.

To help minimise the effects of re-traumatisation we need to:

- Remove unnecessary questions, institutionalised environments, and anything an individual feels is a trigger
- Be mindful of ourselves and how we respond
- Make people feel safe, supported, validated, and listened to

Vicarious trauma (also referred to as secondary trauma) happens when you are affected by another person's trauma. This can be especially common in health, social care, and many other services. There are ways in which practitioners and organisations can work to prevent and reduce the impact of vicarious trauma, including self-care and workplace strategies.



7 Minute Briefing