



Integrating Trauma Knowledge into Organisational Cultures Workforce Briefing



Trauma Informed
Stoke-on-Trent
and Staffordshire

TICS LTD
TRAUMA INFORMED CONSULTANCY SERVICES

Integrating Trauma Knowledge into Organisational Cultures

Integrating knowledge and acting upon it to inform all we do is something that a collaborative, focused and sustained effort with the end goal of this being written into the fabric of our organisations. However, here are some of the requirements:

- Regular training is needed to increase the awareness and confidence of all members of an organisation.
- All understand and use the 6 values of Trauma Informed Practice, acting as a roadmap to navigate the transformation.
- Open and honest conversations with all members of the organisation who are receptive to the existence of trauma and committed to hearing and valuing all voices.
- The environment is one of psychological safety where children and adults alike feel safe, listened to and nurtured. They are empowered to share their experiences and can play active, involved roles where they are offered choices wherever possible.
- As illustrated below, all members of the organisations have a strong view of the systems around a child, where the organisations sits and how it can interact with other organisations.

The Power of Transformational Leadership

Understanding and identifying the needs of our team

To be a transformational leader, one that can take an organisation on a journey towards trauma informed leadership, we must first be able to support and be aware of our employees, our teams.

Indicators that someone might have lived or living experiences of trauma that are currently having an impact on their behaviour might include:

- Arriving late to work
- A change in their patterns of punctuality
- Struggling with aspects of the job they can usually manage
- Differences in how they interact with colleagues

Transformational leaders address under-performance supportively

Opening a conversation about under-performance with the threat of punitive measures such as termination of a contract is likely to be interpreted as threatening by someone with underlying trauma. Not only is this demotivating but it could lead to re-traumatisation. This doesn't mean that we will simply ignore under-performance. Instead, a trauma informed approach considers it this way:



- Use curiosity and enquire as to 'why' there has been a change in performance
- Explore barriers to thriving at work and consider how these can be reduced
- Compassionate enquiry into their situation enables a collaborative means of addressing the challenges

Such steps enable under-performance to be addressed but in an environment of trust and safety which is more likely to lead to the desired outcomes for all involved.

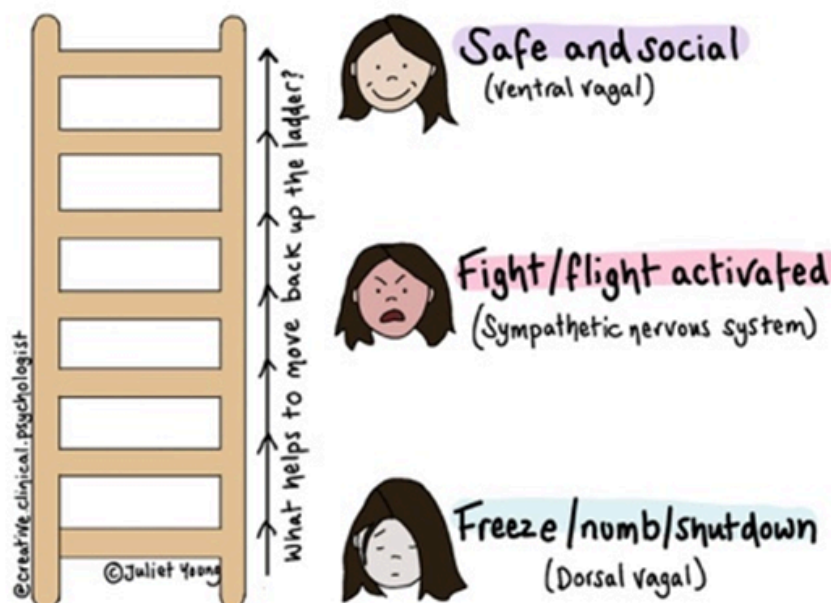
Transformational leaders recognise that getting it right for their teams gets it right for the whole community

The research evidence on the benefits that stem from the power of leaders who champion this sort of approach are so far reaching. We have hyperlinked to the original studies for those who are interested and want to take their learning deeper.

“People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they have not communicated with each other” - **Martin Luther King Jr.**

Polyvagal Ladder

A tool to think about body and mind states and what someone needs to feel safe



Valuing staff voices

Could you try some of these strategies to try to further promote staff voice in your organisation?

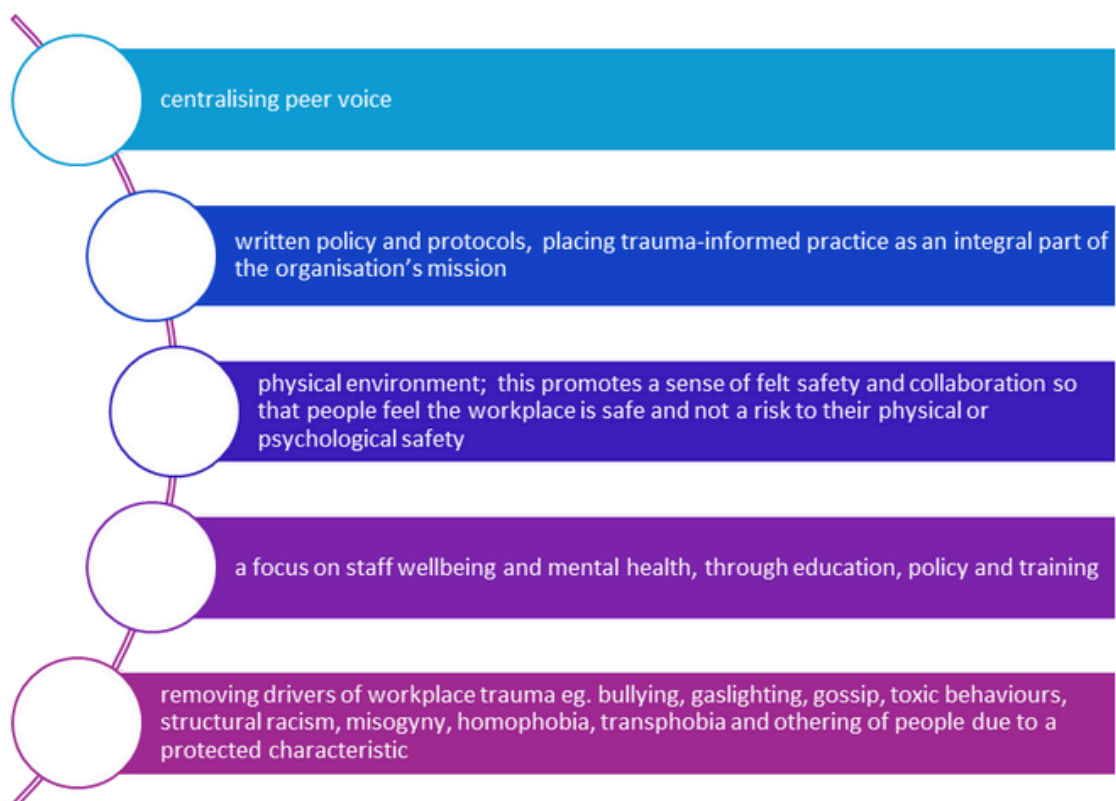
- Suggestion boxes (these are useful for employees who would rather share anonymously)
- Team meetings
- Staff surveys or focus groups
- 1-1 meetings (make the purpose for the meeting clear e.g. to gather feedback or views so as not to alarm employees)

Fostering psychological safety is paramount in eliminating the apprehension that people may face when expressing their thoughts.

When you receive feedback or comments, it's imperative to treat them as if they are a valuable gift and express gratitude with a simple "thank you." Keep in mind that for some employees, voicing their thoughts may have required a considerable amount of courage, as they may have hesitated to speak up since their school days.

Trauma-informed organisational cultures foster a sense of belonging

Putting relationship building at the core of everything we do contributes towards creating a sense of belonging in addition to the factors below:



Implementing Trauma-Informed Policies and Practices for Children and Young People In Our Organisations

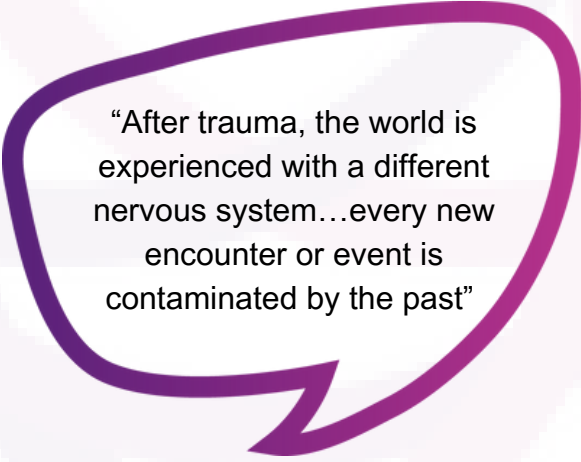
To implement trauma-informed policies and practices well, we need to consider **SAMHSA's 4 Rs Framework**, which helps us to consider what our initial priorities need to be as we start a process of reflection and continuous improvement. Whilst it is important to note that this is not all we need to do, it certainly provides a meaningful starting point.

Realise

This guiding assumption is about understanding and acknowledging not only the existence but also the impact of trauma is has as well as the fact that recovery from trauma is possible.

We can learn from the wise words of **Bessel Van Der Kolk**:

Trauma changes everything. It changes how people see the world, how their brain functions, how they see others and what they see in themselves. Realising this helps us to be able to create an organisational culture which supports children in ways that contribute towards recovery but realisation is the first step.



“After trauma, the world is experienced with a different nervous system...every new encounter or event is contaminated by the past”

Recognise

Recognise the indicators of trauma in ourselves, our colleagues and the children we support is critical to a culture where everyone can thrive. You can read about this in-depth in the introduction to trauma and vicarious trauma guides.

Empathy and compassion are the fuel that trauma informed organisations need. Recognition is the first step to understanding...

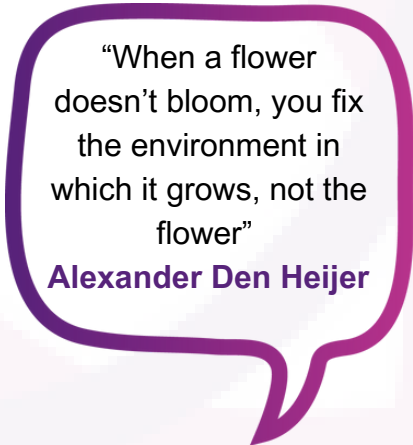
Respond

There is no cookie cutter perfect response that fits everyone. Instead, we can use our trauma informed principles to personalise our approaches:

- Respond by first ensuring safety: find out what the child's preferences are e.g. how they want to communicate, where they feel comfortable, what their triggers are etc. Use clear and factual language free of euphemisms and metaphorical expression. Be clear and transparent in all you do. Conversations can and do make a huge difference as Dr Lisa Cherry shares in her book.
- Respond by connecting: **Dr Bruce Perry** refers to “therapeutic encounters” and **Dr Karen Treisman** suggests that “Every interaction is viewed as an intervention.” This means that every time we respond to trauma, every time we use a trauma informed approach, we are initiating the opportunity for a “turnaround point” for the young person.

Resist

- We must take a preventative approach to avoid re-traumatising those we work with.
- We can do this by following our trauma informed principles!



“When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower”

Alexander Den Heijer

Creating Trauma-Informed Guidelines

- Establish clear protocols for managing space, handling disclosures of trauma with sensitivity and confidence, understanding what is behind behaviour, and minimising risk when these behaviours are displayed.
- All staff must receive ongoing CPD on how to apply trauma-informed principles and how these relate to the values and ethos of the specific organisation they work for.
- All guidelines should be co-produced, transparent and consistent and considered from the perspective of children and young people, caregivers and professionals.

Suggestions for wider reading

Below are some suggestions for wider reading in addition to the resources hyperlinked throughout the document.

Cardiff, S., Sanders, K., Webster, J., & Manley, K. (2020). Guiding lights for effective workplace cultures that are also good places to work. *International Practice Development Journal*, 10(2).

Home Office (2023) Trauma-Informed Practice: Learning from Experience of Violence Reduction Unit delivery 2021-2023. Available from:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65b3b99b0c75e30012d80125/TIP+Learning+from+Experience+FINAL.pdf> [Accessed: 4.04.2024].

Jonsdottir, I. J., & Kristinsson, K. (2020). Supervisors' active-empathetic listening as an important antecedent of work engagement. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(21), 7976.

NAPAC (2024) Trauma-informed practice. Available from: <https://napac.org.uk/trauma-informed-practice-what-it-is-and-why-napac-supports-it/> [Accessed: 4.04.2024].

Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (2022) Working Definition of Trauma-Informed Practice . Available from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice> [Accessed: 4.04.2024].



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