

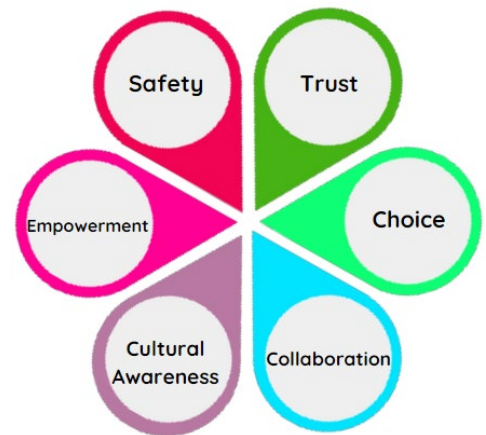
Trauma informed practice

Trauma informed practice is much more than knowing about trauma and being in practice. We do not know when and how trauma will appear, people's experiences are very different & people learn to cope with different things, so there is not a one size fits all approach to being trauma informed. The type of things that people are struggling with and those that may cause trauma will change overtime, so it is ever evolving and changing, as a trauma informed response needs to be.

Some people's trauma responses may trigger practitioners own human feelings; research advises that if only training is delivered to practitioners its impact will peak after 6 months if not supported by being in a trauma informed organisation, where leadership is trauma informed, policies are re-written to be trauma informed and there is space to be trauma informed in practice and receive emotional support for being trauma informed and listening to other people's trauma.

Trauma informed does not mean looking away from the harms people may cause to others, it is not about mitigating behaviour, but is about how trauma affects our development, thinking, feeling, behaving, and using this science to understand how we can help and reduce harm. It moves beyond the victim-perpetrator dialect and can help enhance how we support people to understand their responses towards situations and what may work to do things differently.

There are 6 pillars of trauma informed practice; Safety, Trust, Choice, Empowerment, Collaboration and Cultural awareness.



Safety

Safety has several meanings, but for trauma informed practice we should ensure that we are not re-traumatising those we work with.

To be trauma informed safety discussions need to explore what this means for the person, so this isn't about what other people feel is safe or unsafe, but exploring how the person feels about their physical, relational, and psychological safety; for example, professionals may feel someone's friendship group are unsafe peers, but how does that individual feel and what does this mean to them, who do they feel safe with and what is informing that. Rather than focus on they are behaving in unsafe ways and being focused on changing that behaviour.

Trust

Building trusting relationships with people needs to be prioritised; this may mean that when a trusted relationship is formed, systems and processes need to be malleable to support maintenance of this trusted relationship.

Choice

This isn't simply about giving people a choice, but understanding the choices people are making and therefore the choices that may be offered.

For example, we may feel that someone is unsafe, but they are not likely to turn up or listen to what we have to say; how can we create situations where they can exercise choice and control of their lives as a way of establishing safety alongside them.

For example, 2 young people are being criminal exploited; 1 being spoken about at a meeting that was not trauma informed would be focused about the things that the person had done, and conversations would be about how terrible this person was and how people fear him and what needed to be done to him because of this. The other one being more trauma informed would have conversation knowingly informed about what he had done, but with curiosity about what was happening for him, what was going on in his neighbourhood and ideas for engaging with him to co-construct a safer way forward.

Empowerment

How do we empower people to explore the world, to have opportunities to learn new things, try different 'versions' or themselves without being labelled and with permission to make mistakes and learn from them, rather than being categorised because of them.

Collaboration

Trauma informed practice requires that we have curiosity to try and understand someone's lived experiences and how that influences their thinking, feelings, and behaviour. This should lead to collaborative working where a professional knows the person; they talk regularly with them, rather than are talked about. They have sustained contact with the person until their needs are met, rather than multiple often short-term contacts or referrals because service can't engage the person. There are narratives of interests, ambitions, fears and how these grow or change; these are valued and communicated by professionals who advocate for their needs, rather than someone just being mapped on matrices, lists or profiles. Time is taken to understand the key points from the persons perspective, rather than just forming chronologies of incidents available.

Cultural awareness

A culture is a way of life of a group of people - the behaviours, beliefs, values, and symbols that they learn, share, and accept, through communication and imitation, often from generation to generation. There is a need to be sensitive to the differences and similarities between cultures.

There is also a need to understand that individual people will embody various social and political identities which result in their own unique combinations of discrimination and privilege. There is a need to understand how multiple oppressed identities (such as race, gender, sexuality, disability etc.) interact and can create overlapping and compounding systems of disadvantage that need to be understood from the individual's perspective.