



Trauma Informed Practice Learning from reviews

Thanks to Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board for permission to use information from their resources

July 2023 developed by Jackie Barstow, Learning and Development Lead, Swindon Safeguarding Partnership (SSP) in consultation with Lin Williams, Domestic Abuse Lead, Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

About this resource

- This practice brief provides some useful information and links to resources for professionals and services to assist them to adopt a trauma informed approach.
- This information will be relevant to professionals working with children, families and adults.

What are trauma-informed professionals/services?

- Trauma often affects the way people approach potentially helpful relationships. This is because many survivors feel unsafe, lack trust or live with anxiety.
- Becoming trauma-informed is about supporting people to feel safe enough in their interactions with services to build trust, and to help people overcome any barriers to an effective helping relationship.
- Becoming trauma-informed is not an end state, but a process.

Background to this resource

Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) Andrew identified a learning theme related to trauma informed practice.

Andrew was a 77 year old male who in September 2020 was found unresponsive inside a property besides his adult son who was found deceased at the scene. Andrew subsequently passed away in hospital. Since that time both deaths have been ruled as suicide by the coroner.

A number of learning themes were identified but relevant to this brief the review highlighted that *“agencies should ensure that trauma informed approaches are being used and developed within their agencies when working with all their service users at the earliest opportunity. Trauma may not be known at the point at which agencies are working with people, a trauma informed approach enables professionals to open up conversations about possible trauma histories and if identified can respond better to the impact of this trauma”*. (page 19)

The SAR Andrew report and learning resources can be accessed via this link [Safeguarding Adult Reviews \(SAR's\) - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)



1. What is trauma?

Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as harmful or life threatening. While unique to the individual, generally the experience of trauma can cause lasting adverse effects, limiting the ability to function and achieve mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being. ([Working definition of trauma-informed practice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice))

Trauma can also mean how we have been affected by our experiences, both in the short and longer term. Response to trauma is very personal, 2 people might have the same experience but react very differently. It is ok to have these feelings and responses.

Trauma can include events where you feel frightened, humiliated, unsafe, trapped, ashamed, powerless, rejected, unsupported. It's not only about direct impact, but also by seeing harm happen to someone else, or living in a traumatic environment; it can happen through ongoing events or just a one-off incident.

For further information on trauma visit [Mind \(the mental health charity\) page about What is Trauma?](#) Or watch the clips on the next slide.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can shape how we respond to things as adults. Further information is included in the resources section – [click here](#) to go to this section.

What is Trauma? What these clips to find out more



[What is Trauma? – YouTube](#) (Psych hub duration 3:30 minutes) Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event. Understand the signs and ways different people respond to trauma.



[What is trauma? The author of “The Body Keeps the Score” explains | Bessel van der Kolk | Big Think – YouTube](#) (duration 7:48 minutes)



2. How do we respond to trauma? There are 5 main types of instinctive response to traumatic events:

- **Fight** (attack verbally or physically)
- **Flight** (getting away / leaving a situation)
- **Freeze** (shutting down, unable to engage)
- **Flop** (dissociation and, or fainting)
- **Friend** (feelings of anxiety and attempting to pacify a perceived threatening person by being overly helpful, supportive)

Our brains remember which of these automatic responses has helped us most in different situations - think about which of these you recognise in yourself when you have reacted to a difficult situation in the past.



3. What is secondary trauma ? This may also be known as vicarious trauma.

Secondary trauma is when you are affected by something that happens to someone else. This can be especially common in health, social care and many other services where we are supporting someone through a difficult episode in their life, seeing their trauma.

The risk of secondary trauma is that we then carry this with us into work with other people, with a negative impact on that intervention, and we can continue to acquire secondary trauma. This can lead to us feeling unhappy at work, leaving jobs and roles sooner, as well as physical and psychological effects.

Find out more by clicking on this link [PTSD UK \(the charity\) page about Secondary Trauma.](#)



4. What does trauma informed practice actually mean?

Trauma informed practice is more well known in children's services but it applies to adults too.

It's 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. There are 4 main points that define trauma informed care:

- Realising that trauma has a widespread impact on individuals, families, groups, organisations, and communities and understanding paths to recovery
- Ability to recognise the signs and symptoms of trauma in the people supported, staff, and others in the system
- Integrating trauma knowledge into policies, programs, and practices
- Seeking to avoid re-traumatization

Further information can be found here:

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



5. Window of tolerance.

If your work involves people who *'don't engage'* (Flight), think about how their life experiences might be affecting their responses – similarly for people who are aggressive or argumentative (the 'Fight' response). Consider how you document 'don't engage' in case notes, some alternatives may be:

- Due to the trauma XX has experienced, XX may find it difficult to trust unknown adults.
- Services have not yet found the best way to build relationships with XX.
- Support was offered that did not meet the needs of XX at that time.
- It is recommended that the services try an alternative approach to engaging with XX.

See [useful resources](#) section for SSP Practice Brief using appropriate language.

When working with people in domestic abuse situations – have they learned that 'Friend' removes the threat most quickly?

The key part to understand is that these basic brain responses are instinctive, not intentional – in these moments your brain and body can't tell the difference between a deadly attack and a stressful phone call or meeting - and it is often not until the threat has passed that more complex thinking is possible.

Another way of looking at this involves understanding about the Window of Tolerance – a zone where we are calm, in control and work effectively – but this zone is sandwiched between those basic responses to situations of hypo- (disengaged / depressed) or hyper- (stressful / anxious / aggressive) activation.

There are two short video clips on the next slide which better explain this idea.

Window of tolerance - resources to find out more

Below are links to two short video clips which better explain the idea:



[The Window of Tolerance - YouTube](#) (duration 3:42 minutes)



[Window of Tolerance Reimagined – YouTube](#) (duration 3:59 minutes)



6. Processing trauma in a work context.

Working in pressured systems, constant crisis or reactive situations means it is more likely that focus becomes very narrow, shutting down professional curiosity. Working all day with no break may mean that if something urgent comes in late in the day you are less likely manage this effectively.

When we recognise how the biology of trauma prompts automatic responses, we are more able to take steps to prevent it or minimise the impact – for example noticing when we are going into a heightened state, being able to take time out or to think through why that response is occurring may help to calm back down more quickly, moving us back into our window of tolerance.

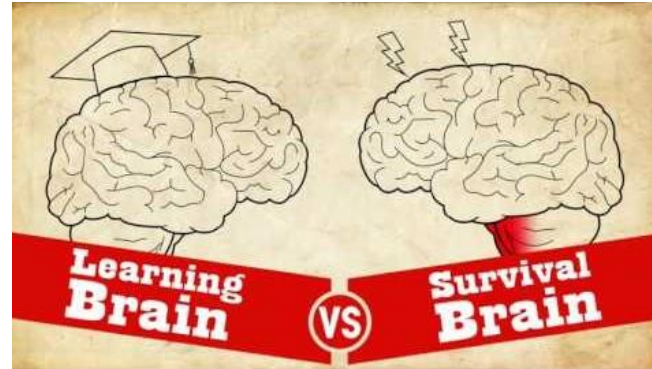
The next couple of slides provide some short video clips to find out more.

Being Trauma Informed



[Trauma Informed Starts with You - YouTube](#)
(duration 5:44 minutes)

This video from Jacob Ham summarises the gist of what it takes for an organization to become trauma-informed.



[Understanding Trauma: Learning Brain vs Survival Brain – YouTube](#)
(duration 5 minutes)

This video from Jacob Ham reframes a trauma perspective in terms of learning brain versus survival brain as a way to make it easier for teachers to talk about trauma with students. This may be useful for other professionals.



Find out how a traumatised child swings from fight/flight to freeze/collapse; and what adults can do to help bring the child back into their window of tolerance so they can be at their personal best.
[The Window of Tolerance Animation by Beacon House – YouTube](#) (duration 6:47 minutes)

Being Trauma Informed continued



Supports the development of trauma informed workforce for professionals. This resource highlights how traumatic experiences such as sexual abuse and domestic abuse can affect people. [Opening Doors Trauma Informed Practice for the Workforce on1080, Mp4 – YouTube](#) duration 8:41 minutes



Trauma and the brain: Understanding abuse survivors responses. Relevant for all professionals [Trauma and the Brain – YouTube](#) (duration 8.44 minutes)



7. What can we do for ourselves and others.

There is, of course, no magic wand here, and no 'one size fits all' either.

- Seek support / talk to your manager; make use of reflective practice / supervision if you have it to be honest about how you are feeling; be non-judgmental towards others who share their feelings; remember, our own perspective is unique, as are those of the people around us
- Understand the strength in recognising your needs early and acting – think about what triggers your own 'fight/flight/freeze/flop/friend' responses - what does that look like for you, what can you do to disrupt that instinctive response?
- Use preventative strategies – self-care, breathing exercises, physical exercise, mindfulness, time out.

Where a situation has affected several people, think about having a peer or team debrief – a chance for all of you to get together and reflect on what has happened, to unpick what happened, how it made each of you feel, and how to move forward.

Useful Resources

Guidance - Working definition of Trauma-informed Practice

The following slides provides an overview of HM Government guidance for practitioners working in the health and care sector, providing a working definition of trauma-informed practice and highlights 6 principles of trauma-informed practice.

Source: [Working definition of trauma-informed practice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice)

Overview – Working definition of trauma-informed practice

- Guidance provides a working definition of trauma-informed practice (TIP) for practitioners working in the health and care sector.
- Reflects the [definition developed by the United States Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#).
- **Trauma can affect individuals, groups and communities:** Trauma informed practice... is grounded in the understanding that trauma exposure can impact an individual's neurological, biological, psychological and social development.
- **Recognise the signs, symptoms and widespread impact of trauma:** increase practitioners' awareness of how trauma can negatively impact on individuals and communities, and their ability to feel safe or develop trusting relationships.
- Trauma-informed practice acknowledges the need to see beyond an individual's presenting behaviours and to ask,

‘What does this person need?’

rather than

‘What is wrong with this person?’.

Overview continued

Prevent re-traumatisation

- Avoid re-traumatisation (*re-experiencing of thoughts, feelings or sensations experienced at the time of a traumatic event or circumstance in a person's past*).
- Generally triggered by reminders of previous trauma which may or may not be potentially traumatic in themselves.
- Purpose of trauma-informed practice is not to treat trauma-related difficulties (*this is the role of trauma-specialist services/ practitioners*).
- Instead, it seeks to address the barriers that people affected by trauma can experience when accessing health and care services.

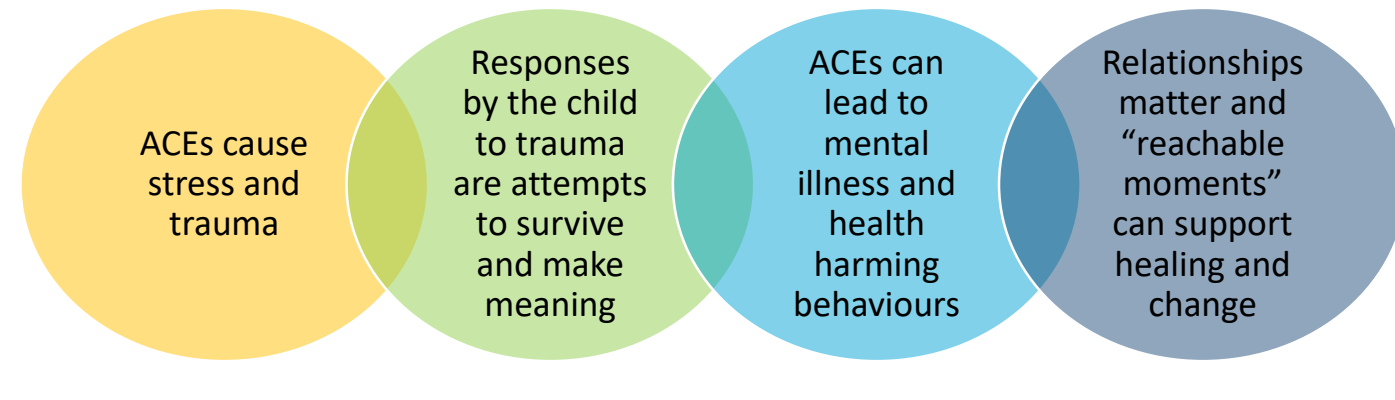
6 Key principles of trauma informed practice:

- Safety
- Trustworthiness
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment
- Cultural consideration

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adverse childhood experiences or ACEs are traumatic events occurring before the age of 18 years, that can have negative lasting effects on health and behaviour and can shape how we respond to things as adults.

High or frequent exposure to ACEs, without the support of a trusted adult can lead to toxic stress.



Public Health Wales has done work to raise awareness of ACEs and this short animation film developed with Darwen Local Authority provides an introduction to the subject.

[Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\) \(Wales\) – YouTube](#) (duration 5: 40 minutes)



Reachable moments: Ian Wright talks about a teacher who made a difference to his life [Ian Wright talks about his 1st teacher/football coach – YouTube](#) (duration 2:30 minutes)

Some additional resources about ACEs

ACEs: Impact on
brain, body and
behaviour

6 minute clip

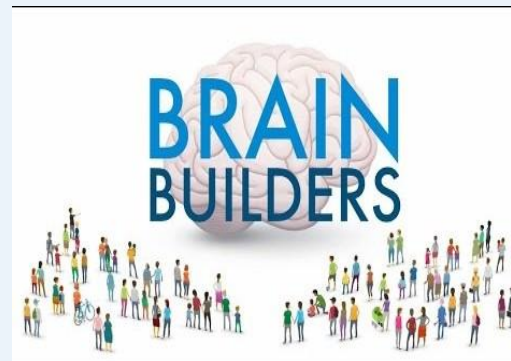
[Adverse Childhood
Experiences \(ACEs\): Impact
on brain, body and
behaviour - YouTube](#)



NSPCC: How a child's
brain develops through
early experiences

4 minute clip

[How a child's brain develops
through early experiences -
YouTube](#)



Free online learning:
[ACEs - An introduction
to adverse childhood
experiences and early
trauma - Swindon
Safeguarding
Partnership](#)

Website: [12 Myths of
the Science of ACEs |
PACEsConnection](#)

Training /eLearning

- **Free learning - The Gift of Reconnection: Trauma-Informed Practice training:** Thrive LDN has partnered with Nicola Lester Psychological Trauma Consultancy to offer free, pre-recorded trauma-informed practice training to support individuals and organisations. Levels include an introduction, bronze, silver and gold [Trauma-Informed Practice training – Thrive LDN](#)
- **Free elearning [NHSE elfh Hub \(e-lfh.org.uk\)](https://www.e-lfh.org.uk)** This is a bite-sized session for health and care professionals to provide an overview of vulnerabilities across the life course - including key evidence, data and signposting to trusted resources to help prevent illness, protect health and promote wellbeing.

Other resources to find out more

- Webpage and useful resources: [Trauma Informed Practice | PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK](#) including
 - [Dr Jessica Taylor discusses victim blaming and trauma informed practice for Plymouth City Council – YouTube](#) (duration 23:29 minutes)
 - [Keynote ACES to Assets 2019 – Dr Gabor Maté – Understanding addiction as a result of trauma – YouTube](#) (duration 54 minutes)
 - [Good relationships are the key to healing trauma | Karen Treisman | TEDxWarwickSalon – YouTube](#) (duration 17:21)
 - [How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime | Nadine Burke Harris – YouTube](#) (duration 16:02 minutes)
- [Trauma-informed practice: what it is and why NAPAC supports it – NAPAC](#)
- Young Minds (2018) [Adversity and Trauma Informed Practice: A guide for professionals working on the front line](#)
- For Baby's Sake, a therapeutic programme which works to end the affects of domestic abuse on babies and children. Website - [Home - For Baby's Sake \(forbabysake.org.uk\)](#)
- A strength-based approach to supporting parents with unresolved trauma: a short film to explain this tool - [Trauma Insight Tool Parents film \(For Baby's Sake\) – YouTube](#)
- Website: [Home Page \(ladslikeus.co.uk\)](#)

Resources continued

- Anna Freud - [Childhood Trauma and the Brain | UK Trauma Council – YouTube](#)
- [Trauma-informed Practice | The Innovate Project](#) – includes resources and recorded webinars.
- Community Care Inform have several useful resources however you will need an account to access.
 - [Trauma-informed practice with young people affected by extra-familial harm - Childrens \(ccinform.co.uk\)](#)
 - [What is a trauma informed approach? \(ccinform.co.uk\)](#)
 - [Domestic abuse: the impact on children and young people - Childrens \(ccinform.co.uk\)](#)
- **Implementing a Trauma Informed Approach** - American body SAMHSA (Substance Misuse and Mental Health Services Administration) have produced a very useful [Practical Guide for Implementing a Trauma-Informed Approach](#).
- [Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center - Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center \(chcs.org\)](#) American website – some resources/information.

Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Resources

SSP Policies and Publications

- [Policies and publications Information - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

Published Reviews

- [Safeguarding Adult Reviews \(SAR's\) - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- [Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Case Learning leaflets - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

SSP Training

- Further information about the training offer can be found on this webpage [Training Information - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- Alternative learning resources:
- [7-minute briefs and learning resources to improve practice - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

Including

- [Language practice briefs for those at risk of exploitation - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- [Safeguarding adolescents resource pack - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- [Resource pack - Professional Curiosity - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- Video archive [Video archive - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)



We hope you have found this resource useful.

We would really like your comments.
It will only take a couple of minutes either click on this
link <https://forms.office.com/e/cu6LZuGNkb>
or use the QR code.

