

# How can adopting a trauma-informed approach help drive forward improved outcomes as part of Scotland's roadmap for COVID-19 recovery, renewal and transformation?

## Learning Report: Justice



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Responding to trauma is, now more than ever, a public health priority. The COVID-19 pandemic has, and will continue to, impact people involved in the justice system, as well as the workforces that support them. Research shows that trauma can have an adverse impact on people's lives, increasing their risk of experiencing poorer physical and mental health and poorer social, educational and criminal justice outcomes than people who do not experience trauma. However, inequality of outcomes for people who have experienced trauma is not inevitable, with a growing evidence base suggesting that adopting a trauma-informed approach can help improve health, wellbeing and life chances for people affected by trauma.

Through the National Trauma Training Programme, the shared ambition of the Scottish Government, COSLA and partners is to develop a trauma-informed and trauma-responsive workforce across Scotland. The aim of this work is to ensure we deliver services in ways that prevent further harm or re-traumatisation for those who have experienced psychological trauma or adversity at any stage in their lives and support their unique recovery journey.

As part of the programme of support available to professionals working across local authorities and other community planning partners, the Improvement Service, in partnership with the Scottish Government and NHS Education for Scotland, has been hosting a series of deep dive learning events over 2020-21. Each event provides an opportunity to explore how adopting a trauma-informed approach can support key community planning priorities and support professionals to identify tangible steps to help ensure this approach is embedded in policy and practice moving forward.

The event on 28th January 2021 provided opportunities for participants to:

- Learn about the impact of trauma and what a trauma-informed approach looks like;
- Learn from existing good practice and how a trauma-informed approach can support improving outcomes for people involved in the justice system;
- Hear about existing resources and support for implementing a trauma-informed approach through the National Trauma Training Programme; and
- Discuss how a trauma-informed approach can support the work of justice organisations and help participants to identify tangible actions they can take to embed trauma-informed approaches within their own organisation.

This learning event brought together over 100 attendees across statutory and third sectors, encompassing a wide range of professionals working to improve outcomes for people involved in the justice system in their local authority area. Participants included practitioners and frontline workers, service managers, policy leads, senior leaders and Elected Members.

The event was chaired by Kate Wallace, Chief Executive at Victim Support Scotland. We were delighted to be joined on the day by a number of keynote speakers who highlighted the importance of adopting a trauma-informed approach to working with people involved in the justice system at a local and national level. These included:

- John Swinney, Deputy First Minister (pre-recorded)
- Cllr Alison Evison, COSLA President (pre-recorded)

- Caroline Bruce, Head of Programme, Transforming Psychological Trauma, NHS Education for Scotland
- Kirsty Pate, Sector Manager, Criminal Justice Social Work, City of Edinburgh Council & Dave Scott, Head of Learning, Development and Innovation, Community Justice Scotland
- Yvonne Robson, Partnership Manager, Shine & Fiona MacKinnon, Partnership Manager, Shine
- Chief Inspector Colin Convery, Safer Communities, Police Scotland

[View the full video playlist](#)

[Link to Speaker Slides](#)



## Key Messages

While the remainder of this learning report outlines the key barriers and enablers and future action and support highlighted by participants during discussions, there were a number of key messages identified throughout this series of events:

- Training is a key part of developing a trauma-informed approach in systems and services, but other actions are also vital for long-term culture change, including trauma-informed leadership, meaningful engagement with people with lived experience in service design, robust evaluation of what is and is not working, and supporting staff wellbeing;
- The importance of responding to trauma and developing trauma-informed systems, services and workforces requires recognition and buy-in from senior leaders and decision makers, and leaders both locally and nationally must drive forward this agenda at a strategic level;
- No individual staff member, service or organisation is solely responsible for responding to trauma. A joined-up, multi-agency approach must be taken to ensure trauma-informed practice and policy is sustainably developed and embedded collaboratively across systems and services, shaped by the lived experience of people in Scotland who have been affected by trauma; and
- While there are numerous examples of good practice across Scotland, there is a need for tools and resources to support local areas and organisations to develop consistency and accountability.

# Barriers and Enablers for adopting a trauma-informed approach to justice – key themes identified by participants



## **BARRIERS**

Siloed working acts as a barrier to implementing trauma-informed practice.

It can be challenging to engage all relevant partners in systems change and to encompass the differences between national and local perspectives.

Staff are focused on providing high-quality services while often facing capacity and resource constraints. This can sometimes limit capacity to engage in planning for long-term culture change across organisations.

Terminology within the justice system can reinforce stigma and can re-traumatise people accessing justice services.



## **ENABLERS**

Strong leadership with a vision for a trauma-informed approach in the justice sector.

Embedding trauma skills development and strengthening understanding of trauma across the sector.

The voices of lived experience give insight into how people experience the justice system, and guide the change which is needed.

Trauma Champions and TPTICs<sup>1</sup> are a useful driver for embedding trauma-informed practice locally.

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1. Transforming Psychological Trauma Implementation Coordinators are specialist level staff that have a remit to support organisations across health board areas with trauma training and implementation.

## How trauma informed is your organisation's policy and practice?

Participants were asked to reflect on existing work and awareness of trauma-informed approaches within their organisation or local area. The following key themes were identified across discussions:

- Participants highlighted that there is growing awareness of trauma-informed approaches across the justice sector.
- Some participants acknowledged that there is ambition to build trauma-informed policy and practice into all areas of their organisation or service, but this requires further resource.
- Participants highlighted that some of the organisations represented at the session had signed up to the [Leadership Pledge](#), which was considered a positive step in the journey to being trauma informed.
- There is progress being made within individual services but participants felt that there is still a need to develop a joined-up approach, with trauma-informed pathways and policies embedded across the sector as a whole.
- It was noted that there is a lot of work needed to embed an understanding that trauma is everyone's business, and that this approach is needed in all organisations and sectors, not just a select few frontline services.

# What action and support are required to ensure your organisation's policy and practice are trauma informed?

Participants were asked to reflect on key next steps and actions going forward that can support the implementation of a trauma-informed approach in their service, organisation or local area. The following points were identified:

## 1. Measuring the impact of trauma-informed policy and practice

Participants highlighted that being able to identify the impact of trauma-informed policy and practice on the experiences of people accessing justice services is key to supporting this approach. Participants noted that people accessing justice services may come into contact with a wide range of agencies and departments, and therefore strong multi-agency, collaborative working is needed to develop evaluation and accountability around trauma-informed practice.

### **ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FOR INDIVIDUALS/ORGANISATIONS**

Make use of TPTIC resource locally to help guide the implementation of trauma-informed practice and seek learning from existing good practice.

Seek qualitative evidence from people who access justice services to inform adaptations to practice.

Make use of opportunities to share and seek learning with other organisations/ services as well as being guided by the NTTTP resources.

### **SUPPORT REQUIRED**

Participants highlighted that it would be useful to have a national mechanism to evaluate trauma-informed practice and identify areas for improvement.

It was identified that robust information sharing across the sector, supported at national and local level, would help to strengthen understanding of the impact of trauma-informed practice across justice services.

## 2. A whole systems approach to the development of trauma-informed practice and policy

Participants highlighted that all roles need to be trauma informed so that service users receive an appropriate and positive response at every point of contact when seeking to engage with support. This requires a multi-agency approach to embedding training and development, and strong links across all partners involved in supporting service users.

## **ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FOR INDIVIDUALS/ORGANISATIONS**

Seek opportunities for multi-agency training in order to break down siloed approaches to working. It was recognised that this would help staff understand other roles and see the benefits of trauma-informed practice across the system.

Strengthen links within local Community Justice Partnerships to ensure people accessing justice services are receiving appropriate support at all stages of their journey.

Work with others to develop a collective voice, which can encourage positive change and innovative practice at a local and national level.

## **SUPPORT REQUIRED**

Participants highlighted that support from leadership at both local and national levels would make a significant difference in driving forward a multi-agency, whole systems approach to training and development of trauma-informed systems, services and workforce.

Participants highlighted that additional resources are required to support stronger links between voluntary and statutory services within justice and to help these partners to work together at a local level.

Participants felt that resources and evidence that can both highlight the benefits of a trauma-informed approach and emphasise multi-agency working would be beneficial for use locally.

### 3. Developing shared language and an approach that avoids stigmatisation and re-traumatisation

Participants highlighted that people accessing justice services often face significant stigma and re-traumatisation within the system and some of this is attributed to language/terminology that is not trauma informed. It was highlighted that involving those with lived experience of trauma and experience of the justice system is hugely beneficial in shifting understanding and building a trauma-informed approach.

## **ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FOR INDIVIDUALS/ORGANISATIONS**

Seek opportunities to involve service users in conversations about improving policy and practice, ensuring that service design is informed by their needs and experiences.

Managers and leaders can support staff to develop a shared language around trauma and have conversations about how this impacts their practice.

## **SUPPORT REQUIRED**

National support for staff to undertake training and development opportunities – both at an organisational level and on a national, capacity-building scale.

Guidance – informed by lived experience – which demonstrates how a trauma-informed approach can develop language, systems and services that reduce stigma and re-traumatisation. It was highlighted that this type of resource could have a justice-focus but could also be adapted to other sectors.

## What action are you taking forward after attending today's event?



Prioritise delivering services that are relevant to people's needs.



Co-production is key – ensure that people with lived experience are leading this change.



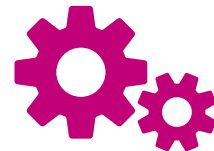
Revisit training and place a greater focus on the role of leadership as role models.



Explore how to reduce stigma and re-traumatisation for people in the justice system.



Ensure that staff feel supported and strengthen support for the vicarious trauma they may experience.



Link with local Trauma Champions and seek opportunities to work together.

## How can a trauma-informed approach make a difference for people affected by crime?

Key messages from Victim Support Scotland lived experience group.<sup>1</sup>



“Listen to the victim and take time to go through what they're saying.”



“Trauma robbed me of my ability to understand acronyms, to remember the names of organisations and individuals... As a victim the rest was white noise interspersed with being re-traumatised by the system.”



“A Buddy system is something I've always wanted from start to finish. Someone who knows the justice system and is there to offer support and share experience.”

<sup>1</sup> This is a panel of people with lived experience of accessing justice services who provided feedback on the findings from this event.



## Summary

Looking ahead, stakeholders identified the need for:

- Robust evaluation resources and support that demonstrate the benefits of trauma-informed practice and policy and helps to evidence the need for this change.
- Leadership that supports and champions a multi-agency approach to embedding trauma-informed policy and practice in the justice sector through training, development and awareness raising.
- Support to ensure that lived experience of trauma and experience of the justice system can be embedded in the review/design of policy and practice.
- Guidance that supports a shift in language, systems and services which reduces stigma and re-traumatisation for people in the justice system.

## Next Steps

- The findings and recommendations from this learning report will be shared with the National Steering Group for Trauma Training, chaired by the Deputy First Minister, and will be used to help shape strategic priorities for the next stage of the National Trauma Training Programme.
- The Improvement Service, in partnership with NHS Education for Scotland and the Scottish Government, have launched an online community of practice, free and available to all professionals across Scotland who are interested in finding out more about trauma-informed policy and practice and who would like to share learning. To join, please visit: <https://khub.net/group/trauma-informed-approaches-in-scotland/group-home>
- The Improvement Service, NHS Education for Scotland and the Scottish Government are supporting the development of a network of trauma champions, who are senior leaders across local authorities, NHS Health Boards and other key community planning partners. The trauma champions will be supported to drive forward trauma-informed practice and policy across their organisations and local areas in a multi-agency, collaborative way. For more information, please visit the [NTTP website](#).
- Collaborating with key partners, the NTTP is currently developing a knowledge and skills framework for a trauma-informed justice workforce. The framework will highlight the knowledge and skills the workforce needs to enable them to support them to do no harm and minimise re-traumatisation for victims and witnesses, support recovery, gain and interpret best evidence, and make best decisions based on this evidence for victims. This framework is designed to address the specific knowledge and skills required in justice settings—for example, in situations where evidential or system demands can especially risk re-traumatisation, or the impact of psychological trauma on evidence that witnesses provide, and on their perceived credibility.

## Resources

### The National Trauma Training Programme (NTTP) and e-learning resources

- The [NTTP website](#) provides information on the training and resources developed by the NTTP to support the skills and knowledge of the whole Scottish workforce. This includes access to e-learning modules, videos about the benefits of trauma-informed practice, and information on the Scottish Trauma-Informed Leaders Training programme (STILT).
- This [interactive PDF](#) summarises the key trauma training resources from the NTTP that are openly available to support all members of the Scottish workforce to strengthen their understanding of their role in responding to people affected by trauma.
- This new [Trauma Informed Practice Toolkit for Scotland](#) has been developed in collaboration with experts by experience and provides clear, tangible examples of where trauma informed practice has been successfully embedded across different sectors of the workforce.

### Improvement Service briefing and infographic

#### [Taking a trauma-informed lens to COVID-19 recovery, renewal and transformation](#)

In partnership with COSLA and NHS Education for Scotland, the Improvement Service has published a briefing to highlight how adopting a trauma-informed approach to Scotland's COVID-19 recovery, renewal and transformation agenda can support key priorities, including improving outcomes for vulnerable people and communities affected by trauma and supporting workforce wellbeing and resilience.

#### [Infographic: A trauma-informed approach to Scotland's COVID-19 recovery, renewal and transformation](#)

In partnership with NHS Education for Scotland, the Improvement Service has published an infographic briefing to highlight the impact of COVID-19 on people affected by trauma, and how a trauma-informed approach can support Scotland's COVID-19 recovery, renewal and transformation agenda.

### Staff support and wellbeing

#### [Staff Wellbeing During a Pandemic and Beyond](#)

This resource developed by NHS Education for Scotland provides an overview of support available for staff wellbeing.



## **Join our new community of practice on the Knowledge Hub**

This Knowledge Hub group is for professionals across Scotland who are working to adopt a trauma-informed approach across policy and practice. It is a safe space for professionals to connect to each other and share good practice, learning and resources. National partners NHS Education for Scotland, the Improvement Service and Scottish Government will also share useful information and resources. It is free and easy to join the Knowledge Hub.

To join, please visit: <https://khub.net/group/trauma-informed-approaches-in-scotland/group-home>

## **Stay up to date**

Follow the Improvement Service and partners on Twitter to stay up to date with future events and new resources:

[@Improvserv](https://twitter.com/Improvserv)

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