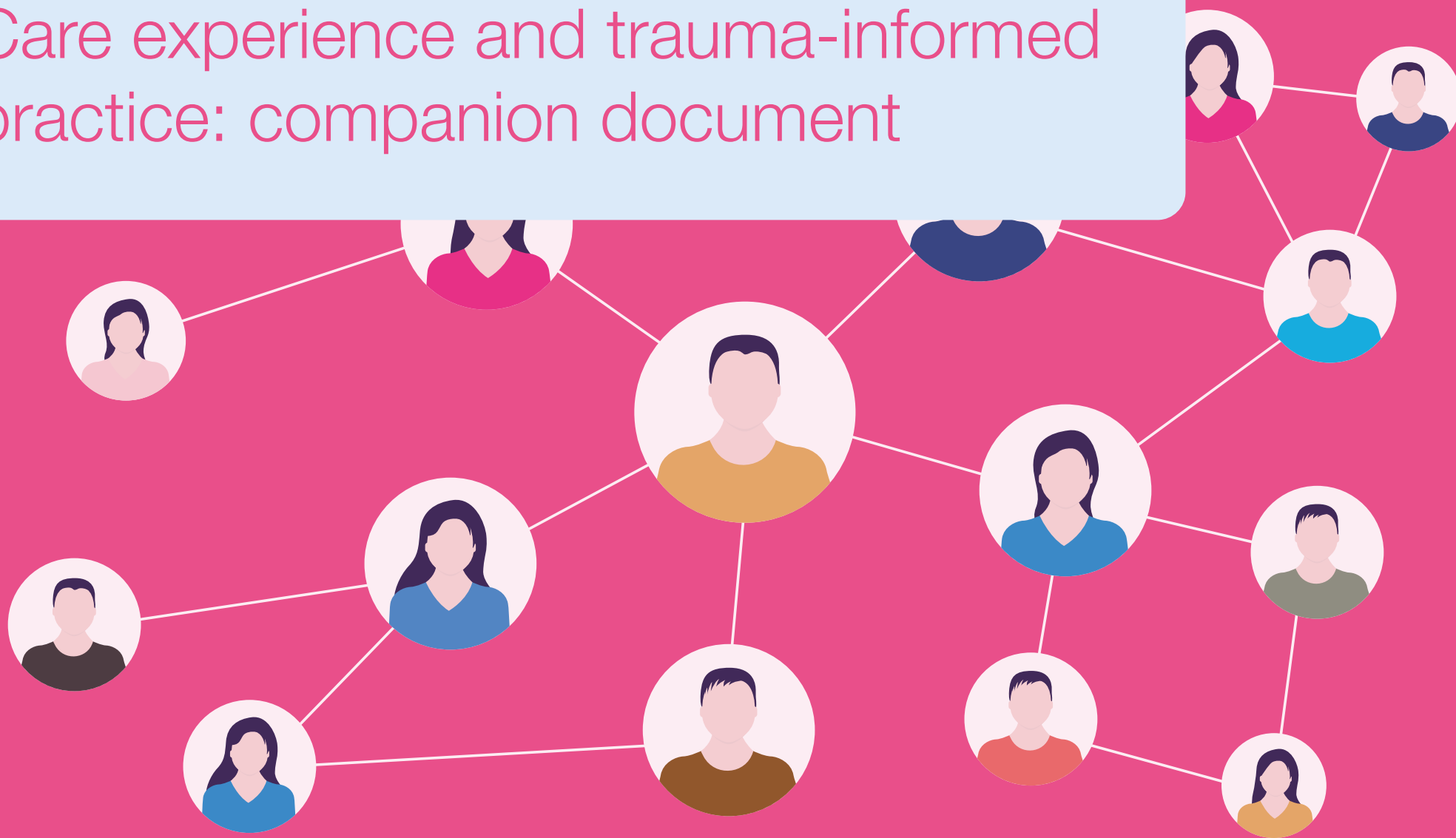















# Care experience and trauma-informed practice: companion document



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# Summary

With the right support at the right time, we know that each and every child who experiences trauma can recover and thrive. This document is for everyone who supports children and young people with experience of trauma. It has particular advice and guidance for those supporting children and young people with care experience - who may both need and benefit from trauma-informed practice. The sections provide more detail on the following key messages:

## **The prevalence of experiences of trauma in the lives of children and young people:**

Trauma is common across the entire population, but we know that many children and young people with experience of care have often experienced particularly high levels of trauma and adversity. Many of the circumstances which can lead to children and young people becoming involved with the care system can be highly traumatic. We also know that whilst the experience of care can be positive, it can also be a complex experience that can often put children and young people at increased risk of further trauma.

## **The impact of trauma on children and young people:**

Whilst not inevitable, we know that traumatic experiences, such as those experiences which often lead to involvement with the care system, can have a significant impact on children and young people. This can have ongoing and long-lasting implications for children and young people's educational, social, physical and psychological wellbeing.

## **The importance of resisting re-traumatisation:**

Responding to trauma means we acknowledge its prevalence and impact for many children and young people with care experience. It is an opportunity for services to consider the ways children and young people can be affected by trauma, by asking "Are you ok?", rather than "What's wrong with you?".

## **The importance of supporting children and young people's recovery and recognising their resilience and strengths:**

Whilst trauma can have a significant impact on children and young people, trauma and adversity are not destiny. Recognising children's strengths and resilience can help create the environment that children and young people need to recover, grow and develop.

## **The central importance of relationships**

Every child needs supportive and trusting relationships to thrive. While most trauma is experienced within our interpersonal relationships, it's also where it is most often healed. Working in a trauma-informed way means recognising the importance of relationships with family/ support networks, communities and services for all children who experience trauma, and in particular for those with care experience.

## **The importance of workforce safety and wellbeing for those supporting children and young people:**

It is vital that staff feel safe, supported and well when they are caring for and supporting others. Those working in services that regularly support care experienced children and young people may experience higher rates of burnout, vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue and moral injury.

# Aims, audience and scope

While recognising that experiences of trauma and care can continue to impact people throughout adulthood, this resource focuses explicitly on children and young people with care experience. The Scottish Government and COSLA have a shared ambition for a trauma-informed workforce and services across Scotland, supported by the [National Trauma Training Programme](#).

This means that universally, across all systems and services, we recognise where people are affected by trauma and adversity, respond in ways that prevent further harm, support recovery, and improve life chances for people affected by trauma.

This companion document is designed to support all those in the workforce who support children and young people to strengthen their understanding of:

- The relationship between experiences of psychological trauma and care;
- Trauma-informed practice, and how to strengthen their skills, knowledge and confidence in working with children and young people with care experience in a trauma-informed way;
- How a trauma-informed approach can help improve outcomes for children and young people with care experience; and
- How taking a trauma-informed approach to practice can support worker wellbeing and safety.

Where this document refers to ‘care’, it refers broadly to the numerous ways in which a child or young person can be formally involved with the care system. This encompasses children and young people in residential and secure care, foster care and kinship care, as well as children and young

people who are the subject of a supervision requirement whilst living at home with their primary caregivers, and those who have been permanently adopted.

## ‘Care Experience’

While recognising that experiences of trauma and care can continue to impact people throughout adulthood, this resource focuses explicitly on children and young people with care experience. The terms ‘care experience/d’ are used throughout this document to reflect the current evolution of language within this context. Where this document refers to ‘care’, it refers broadly to the numerous ways in which a child or young person can be formally involved with the care system. This encompasses children and young people in residential and secure care, foster care and kinship care, as well as children and young people who are the subject of a supervision requirement whilst living at home with their primary caregivers, and those who have been permanently adopted.

## ‘Workforce’

There are many people who take a specialist role in supporting children and young people with their experiences of trauma, and others in the workforce who support children and young people with care experience but who do not necessarily have a specific focus on trauma. Recognising we all have a role to play in supporting people’s recovery from trauma, this resource

aims to support all those in the workforce who might come into contact with children and young people with care experience and support effective corporate parenting across all those who are responsible for meeting the needs of care experienced children and young people. Where we use the term “workers” and “staff”, this includes the full range of people who support children and young people with care experience, including paid staff, volunteers and peer support workers, and those in education and business support roles, across statutory, private and third sectors.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A future focus of the NTPP will be developing resources to support alternative caregivers, including unpaid, kinship and foster carers.

# Key principles

## What do we mean by ‘trauma informed’?

Led by NHS Education for Scotland, the National Trauma Training Programme (NTTP) has produced a [Knowledge and Skills Framework for the Scottish workforce](#), alongside training resources appropriate for all levels across the workforce. The principles of trauma-informed practice referred to throughout this document are those developed by the NTTP which are based on international research, evidence and collaboration with people with lived experience of trauma.

Being trauma informed means being able to recognise when someone may be affected by trauma and collaboratively adjusting how we work to take a strengths-based approach and respond in a way which supports people’s resilience. The key principles underpinning trauma-informed practice, services and systems are **safety, collaboration, trust, empowerment and choice**.



Trauma-informed practice builds on and adds to these principles by recognising the specific ways in which the experience of trauma can impact on people’s experience of care, support and interventions. By being trauma informed, workers, services and organisations can adapt practice in ways that both enhance good care and reduce the likelihood of re-traumatisation and distress which people may feel when accessing support. In this way, it addresses the specific barriers to accessing and engaging with support that those affected by trauma can experience.

The principles of trauma-informed practice referred to throughout this document recognise that anyone can be affected by trauma at any point in their lives, and many people often have multiple experiences of trauma and adversity, which can compound their impact.

Different factors can further increase the risk of experiencing trauma and can impact children and young people’s safety, recovery and access to support. For example, children and young people and their families and carers living with poverty are more likely to experience additional challenges, including housing instability and insecure employment, which in turn can have a further negative impact on their ability to access support and increase risk of experiencing further trauma. It is also important to note that care experienced children and young people with protected characteristics and/or those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage may face additional barriers to accessing and engaging with support to recovery from traumatic experiences. This includes minority ethnic children and young people; refugees and asylum seekers; children and young people with disabilities (including people with learning disabilities); LGBTQIA+ children and young people; and girls and young women. For example, BME or migrant communities may have no recourse to public funds, and those who can access services may face barriers surrounding their specific needs such as language or culture.



### USEFUL RESOURCES FOR GETTING STARTED

We are often not aware of the full extent of experiences that children and young people have been through, and so thinking about your day-to-day practice in relation to trauma can help you to offer the best care and support possible to everyone. The NTTTP have produced free training resources for those working for and with care experienced children and young people – this level of awareness is called ‘trauma skilled’. The **‘Developing your Trauma Skilled Practice 2’** module is particularly relevant as it focuses on children and young people’s experiences of trauma.

# Key messages

Trauma-informed practice should not be seen as a siloed way of working, but rather a way of working that underpins all of our practice, policy and systems, which in turns supports existing priorities and can help ensure the best possible outcomes for our children and young people.

It is vital that those members of the workforce who are supporting children, young people and families and carers have access to high-quality trauma training relevant to their role in order to strengthen awareness and understanding of psychological trauma, its impact, and their role in the recovery and safety of people they support. More information about training and online learning resources are available at the end of this document.

Learning highlights that workforce training is a key component of any organisation's journey to becoming trauma informed. Equally important are the culture, environments and supportive ways of working in services and systems that can enable sustainable change that makes a difference to care experienced children and young people. Protocols and policies that do not recognise the impact of trauma can hold us back from doing the things that will make the most difference for children and young people. And this sense of helplessness can mean we take a step back from the people we're supporting.

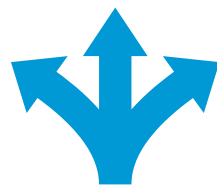
Alongside strengthening workforce knowledge and skills, it is crucial that people with lived experience of care and trauma have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to how services are designed and delivered, something which is central to The Promise. This must also allow for children and young people who can't advocate for themselves to contribute, as well as those who speak a different language. If done safely and meaningfully, this can help decision-makers and commissioners understand what helps children and young people in their recovery and how barriers to accessing services and support can be minimised. However, this should be done in an appropriate way to ensure that 'over consultation' does not put pressure on those with care experience and result in them being overwhelmed. It is important to draw on existing voices and learning.

# Structure

The NTTP has built on research and evidence to define what it means to work in a trauma-informed way:



**Realising** how common the experience of trauma and adversity is



**Recognising** the different ways that trauma can affect people



**Responding** by taking account of the ways that people can be affected by trauma to support recovery, and recognising and supporting people's **resilience**



Recognising the central importance of **relationships**



Looking for opportunities to **resist re-traumatisation** and offer a greater sense of choice, empowerment, collaboration and safety with everyone you have contact with

Each section provides guidance for how those within the workforce who are supporting care experienced children and young people can do so in a trauma-informed way and supports the workforce to strengthen their understanding of the complex relationship between care experience and trauma. The final section highlights the need to prioritise staff wellbeing

and safety and ensure that the workforce has the knowledge, skills and confidence to work with care experienced children and young people in a trauma-informed way. Each of these sections are underpinned by the trauma-informed principles of **safety, collaboration, trust, empowerment** and **choice**.

# Realise how common the experience of trauma and adversity is for children and young people with care experience



## HOW DOES TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PROMISE?

Children, families and the workforce must be supported by a system that is there when it is needed. The scaffolding of help, support and accountability must be ready and responsive when it is required.

The statistics tell Scotland there are almost 15,000 children in its 'care system', but do not tell these children's stories. Many have and continue to go through deeply distressing and disturbing experiences that are often severely traumatic. The impact can be profound and lifelong. Some children who have experienced trauma told the Care Review that being taken into care and growing up in the 'care system' was among the most traumatising experiences they had ever had, exacerbated by being separated from their brothers and sisters, living with strangers and moving multiple times (p.7).

Without the right support, adversity and trauma experienced in childhood can impact a child's life into adulthood.

Experiences like abuse, neglect and violence in the community can cause stress. And when children experience stress that is severe and/or long-lasting, it can act in a way that's toxic to the developing brain. Our stress response becomes heightened and our body's systems suffer wear and tear. And this can lead to mental and physical health problems, throughout our lives.

Although the circumstances which can lead to children and young people coming into contact with the care system can often be considered traumatic, it is important to understand that this does not necessarily result in particular outcomes. The care system offers the opportunity to meet individual needs, minimise further harm, promote resilience and opportunities that children and young people have the chance to meet their full potential. However, as there is a high likelihood that care experienced children and young people will have experienced traumatic events, taking a trauma-informed approach to working and interacting with care experienced children and young people remains crucial.

It is important to understand the circumstances that could lead to a child or young person becoming involved in the care system. Many children become involved with the care system when parents struggle to navigate tough



times - like losing a job, housing problems or a death in the family. The [Children's Hearings system](#) is one of the key mechanisms by which children and young people become involved with the care system in Scotland. Grounds for referral to the hearings system which are outlined in the [Children's Hearings \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#) indicate a vast majority of grounds which could be considered as a traumatic experiences, such as a child being likely to suffer unnecessarily due to lack of parental care; and physical, emotional or sexual abuse. Being subject to a [Child Protection Order](#) is also a form of care experience, the grounds for which are that the child or young person is at risk of "significant harm".

[In 2020-21](#), there were 14,946 children and young people in Scotland who were 'Looked After' (care experienced) or on the Child Protection Register. We know that children and young people with care experience are also more likely to have experienced chronic or toxic stress in their lifetime. For example, the [level of exposure to ACEs](#) experienced by children and young people in secure care in Scotland in 2019 was reported as 74%.

Involvement with the care system can take many different forms and can be implemented on a voluntary or statutory basis. Some children and young people may enter foster care for periods of time, whilst some may go to live with members of their extended family. Some enter into permanent adoption or go to live in secure or residential homes, whilst others remain at home with one or both parents with supervision measures in place.



#### KEY POINT

Adverse and traumatic experiences are common across the entire population. Attempts to protect children from, and to support children with, these experiences often leads to families' involvement with the care system.

Children with care experience are then more likely to have also experienced - or to be experiencing - adversity and trauma. Your role or service supports children and/or young people with care experience, understanding the prevalence of trauma within this population is vital. In doing so, workers and services can open up greater opportunities for delivering meaningful and sustainable trauma-informed care and support.



## KEY QUESTIONS

How are services and people supporting children and young people encouraged to:

- understand trauma and adversity, and how common these experiences are within the general population?
- understand and acknowledge that, whilst having experience of care does not automatically mean that a child or young person will be impacted by trauma, there can be complex relationships between the two experiences?
- identify how these experiences may intersect with and impact on other needs the child or young person may have, such as their education, socialisation, relationships with adults and carers, mental health, physical health, and experiences of gender-based violence?
- champion a greater understanding of trauma across services and systems from leadership level?
- understand the ways in which protected characteristics and socioeconomic inequalities, such as race, gender, poverty, and homelessness might compound care experiences children and young people's experiences of trauma and its impact?

# Recognise the different ways that trauma can impact care experienced children and young people



## HOW DOES TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PROMISE?

- If a child experiences neglect, abuse or trauma, their development can be affected. They may not complete stages of development or consolidate fully what they are learning.
- The workforce must understand and be supported to consider the identities of the children they are working with, so children have a cohesive understanding of self and are able to hold their life experiences and understand them.
- All of the workforce should access, at a level appropriate to their role, initial and lifelong learning that is grounded in attachment theory, trauma responsive care and the clear understanding and application of children's rights.

Trauma can have a significant impact on children and young people, both in terms of how they might see and understand themselves, and in terms of how it can affect their interactions with their external world and their relationships with others. We know that trauma can have a wide-ranging impact on children and young people's mental health, their attachment styles, and their education and learning, increasing the risk of an unstable foundation for their future growth and development.

Trauma can profoundly impact children and young people's emotional worlds. Some children and young people who have experienced trauma may experience very unpredictable and intense emotions and can struggle to understand and manage these emotions. They may also struggle with trusting too little or too much, understanding appropriate social boundaries and communication styles, and intense feelings of shame or internalising other people's negative views of them.

This can result in difficulties for children and young people when relating to the world and others around them, particularly when they experience situations, feelings or sensory stimuli which return them to how they felt during traumatic events or periods in their lives. These can be completely unconscious reactions for children and young people, leading to confusion for themselves and those around them.

We know that children primarily communicate and express their feelings and needs through their communication styles and how they present to others. As such, for children and young people who have experienced trauma, the impact of this trauma tends to manifest in how they interact with others and the world around them. Our understanding of the kinds of "fight, flight or freeze" responses to trauma are likely to come from children and young people's interactions with us. For example, we may see children and young people become particularly aggressive or withdrawn.

Evidence suggests that care experienced children and young people are at higher risk of experiencing trauma. This could be through traumatic

events which have led to their involvement with the care system. These traumatic experiences can impact on children and young people's emotional, interpersonal and educational lives. These formative experiences can be further compounded by complexities and challenges from being involved with the care system, recognising that experiences of trauma often do not end when entering care. This can include feelings of loss when they leave a care setting, or when a worker moves on, which can be especially challenging for a child or young person's recovery and resilience.

Care experienced children and young people tell us that they can often carry a great deal of worry and uncertainty. Not only can they feel negatively about themselves due to their experiences of trauma, but subsequent changes to their family set up, care arrangements or how they feel about things can leave children and young people worrying that they are to blame for these changes, or that they hold a level of responsibility for feeling unsafe.

Care experienced children and young people tell us they can often feel rejected or abandoned and they can worry extensively about their families, particularly if they have played and/or continue to play a protective or caring role for parents and/or siblings. Even if children and young people have experienced extremely difficult circumstances at home and/or with particular caregivers, they may still miss that home and the people associated with it, resulting in feelings of loneliness, isolation and a lack of belonging. These experiences can be traumatic for children and young people, even when these transitions are well managed.

However, it is important to understand that resilience can be a protective factor that allows for a child or young person with care experience to overcome traumatic and adverse experiences. Personal strengths, trusting relationships and supportive environments can strengthen resilience which can allow for people to manage traumatic events in an effective way. Coupled with being able to access the right support at the right time, this can help children and young people overcome any potential challenges that could impact their future. It is crucial to remember that adversity is not destiny.



#### KEY POINT

Childhood and adolescence are times of fundamental neurological, psychological, emotional and social development. When traumatic events impact the lives of children and young people during these developmentally vulnerable periods, this can be extremely disruptive to how they come to understand themselves, their relationships, and the world around them. For those children and young people who have experienced trauma, having contact with the care system can create further challenges. Experiences and circumstances which can occur as a result of being involved with the care system can be incredibly destabilising and frightening for children and young people, and can compound those emotional, social and educational difficulties that they may already be struggling with as a result of their traumatic experiences.



## KEY QUESTIONS

How are services and people supporting children and young people encouraged to:

- undertake appropriate training (as identified in the NTTP Knowledge and Skills Framework) to help them understand how trauma can impact care experienced children and young people, and how this might impact how they relate to and interact with adults and workers who are trying to support them?
- understand the function of behaviours in children and young people who have experienced trauma which may seem challenging or unusual? Are staff equipped with the knowledge required to consider the messages which care experienced children and young people may be trying to convey through their behaviour?
- understand the complexities of the care system and what this can look like for the lives of care experienced children and young people? Do workers understand how these complexities can interact with children and young people's historic or current experiences of trauma?
- recognise the complex ways in which care experienced children and young people might feel about and relate to their families and carers? Are workers supported to understand the importance of recognising and acknowledging the child or young person's role and story within their families and carer relationships, even when this might feel uncomfortable or contradictory?

# Respond by taking account of the ways that children and young people with care experience can be affected by trauma and recognising and supporting their resilience



## HOW DOES TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PROMISE?

- Children and young people must be listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision making about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what children want and need.
- Scotland's culture of decision-making must be compassionate and caring. It must be focused on children, and those they trust.
- People who children trust, and who have all the information available to them, must be able to make decisions that provide children with the best possible start in life.
- Services must be easy to access and must always try harder and be more creative in their listening.

Experiencing trauma and adversity can impact children and young people in multiple ways. This can have a profound impact on how children and young people experience and engage with the world, and can sometimes make it harder to find healthy ways of coping with challenges. It is extremely important that the workforce is able to respond in a manner that accounts for the particular ways in which children and young people affected by trauma may present, and to acknowledge that this is often a response to the trauma they have experienced. This is particularly relevant for children and young people with experience of care as often the coping mechanisms they have developed in response to any trauma they have experienced have evolved over time and recovery requires consistent nurture and support.

Children and young people tell us that it's important for workers to ensure there is:

- Less of a focus on behavioural management, and more attention paid to relationship building. Although there may be an inclination to respond in particular ways to “bad” or “challenging” behaviours, most often what children and young people require is a safe and compassionate connection in order to reduce distress to a level which allows their needs to be properly determined and understood.

- A non-judgemental and accepting stance. Exploring children and young people's behaviours, thoughts and needs with gentle inquiry and empathy is key. This means creating nurturing, safe, containing and available spaces and relationships which are emphasised through repetition and consistency. It is important that this is provided even though it may feel as though they are significantly pushing boundaries and expectations, or conversely, if they appear to be "doing fine". Workers should take care not to make assumptions about how they perceive the child or young person to be "coping", instead remaining open and curious.
- Effort to acknowledge children and young people's experiences. This can have a profound impact on supporting recovery and building resilience. Although they can be distressing and difficult experiences, it is important not to shy away from acknowledging the life story of care experienced children and young people. Where relevant and appropriate, these experiences can be acknowledged and integrated as part of a child or young person's understanding of themselves, so to not give space to feelings of shame, "otherness" or not belonging.

Despite the significant impact that both care experience and trauma can have, children and young people encounter multiple societal and structural barriers to receiving the kind of help and support they might need to recover and thrive. For children and young people who are also care experienced, this is often further compounded by the complexities and logistics of being involved with the care system, such as changing carers and support staff, inconsistent attendance at school, and moves between different home environments.

In order to be trauma informed, it is important that workers and services take time to consider these barriers and complexities which care experienced children and young people may face, not just in accessing specific support services, but also in terms of the functioning of their daily lives. By considering how to proactively address and accommodate for these challenges, workers and services can help care experienced children and

young people feel safer and more trusting, but also assist them to have a more "typical" experience of childhood where they don't feel re-traumatised due to feelings of being "othered" or stigmatised due to their experience of care. It is important to understand that the term "resilience" itself can have negative connotations for people with care experience. Often, they feel that resilience is something that is expected of them, and it can be an oversimplified way to discuss the impacts of trauma. It might be better to take a strengths-based approach rather than focussing on resilience.



#### KEY POINT

When supporting or interacting with children and young people with care experience, services and workers can utilise a lens of "are you ok?" rather than "what's wrong with you?" as a means of building trust and stability.

This approach of "connection before correction" should underpin all the approaches taken by workers and services when working with care experienced children and young people who may be affected by trauma. In doing so, it is also important to recognise that whilst care experienced children and young people may have particular vulnerabilities, this does not mean that they do not also have many strengths and abilities which, when supported with a strengths-based approach, can empower them to claim meaningful ownership over their lives and their choices.



## KEY QUESTIONS

How are services and people supporting children and young people encouraged to:

- fully engage with the children and young people they are supporting (where appropriate), as well as the important adults in their lives such as carers, families and other workers? This can help build a more holistic understanding of the life experiences of those children and young people and the trauma and adversity they may have experienced.
- understand that when care experienced children and young people may present with behaviours which may feel “challenging” or “difficult”, this is a trauma response and should be responded to through a lens of “are you OK?” rather than “what’s wrong with you?”
- understand the structure of the care system? Do they understand the practical and emotional complexities which can arise for children and young people as a result of being involved with the care system and are they able to accommodate for these complexities? Are workers encouraged to consider any actions that might address or minimise additional adversity and challenge for a child or young person, where possible?
- focus on connection and nurture, rather than “rules” or universal expectations?
- involve care experienced children and young people in discussion around their lives and their support? Are workers able to do this in a way which is meaningful, developmentally appropriate, and which gives a voice to children and young people, but which also does not place undue responsibility on them, and which retains a strong sense of care and safety?



# Recognise the central importance of relationships when supporting children and young people with care experience in their recovery journey



## HOW DOES TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PROMISE?

- Overcoming trauma often requires a foundation of stable, nurturing, loving relationships. Scotland's focus and understanding of risk must shift to understand the risk of not having stable, loving, safe relationships.
- Children must be actively supported to develop relationships with people in the workforce and wider community.
- Families must get support together to nurture love, and to overcome the difficulties which get in its way.
- Where nurturing relationships within the family are impossible, those who care for children must know that the most important thing they do is to provide a loving, stable, safe relationship – above everything else.

All children need stable, loving and supportive relationships while growing up to support positive outcomes, which acknowledges that each child is unique. However, trauma is most often experienced within the context of interpersonal relationships such as those with parents and carers. For children and young people, this can be particularly distressing due to their reliance on parents and carers for nurture, care and survival. Children and young people look to adults to help them understand themselves, the world, and their emotions. When trust is broken in adult-child relationships, this can be extremely distressing and destabilising for children and young people. When this trust is broken through abuse, neglect or inconsistent care, this trauma can lead to long-lasting feelings of hopelessness, powerlessness and difficulties managing and maintaining relationships into adulthood.

Evidence shows that safe and supportive relationships are the best predictors of recovery following traumatic experiences. Having positive and nurturing relationships with the adults in their lives can have a significant impact on how children and young people continue to develop and adapt. This is particularly relevant for care experienced children and young people as the complexities and challenges that can arise from involvement with the care system can create feelings of instability, caused by moving home, missing school and having contact with many different services and professionals.

The unpredictability and change that can arise from these experiences can be particularly difficult for children and young people who have been affected by trauma and who may already feel unsafe and hyper aware of risk and/or change.

For care experienced children and young people, relationships are often the “thread” that helps them make sense of their lives. However, relationships with workers or carers may be significantly challenging for children and young people who have experienced trauma as there may be difficult power dynamics involved, which might remind them of how they felt at times when they have been disempowered and/or controlled in the past. Trauma can create heightened states of alert and vigilance, meaning that even when they are in fact physically safe and cared for, children and young people who have experienced trauma are likely to still feel unsafe and to retain a sense that adults aren’t “ok” or trustworthy.

However, if workers and carers are able to approach their relationships with care experienced children and young people with as much understanding, intention and care as possible, these relationships can create a very real sense of consistency, belonging, and hope. Workers and carers can have a significant impact by offering relationships and interactions that consistently offer high levels of unconditional nurture, which make thoughtful and extensive efforts to meet both present needs and past unmet needs, which prioritise and listen to children and young people, and which bring joy and fun. Even if those relationships only exist as brief interactions, children and young people affected by trauma can benefit hugely from experiences with adults which model something different, and are stable and trusting.

Relationships with family of origin are also important to consider when taking a trauma-informed approach to supporting care experienced children and young people. It is possible that care experienced children and young people may have quite complex feelings about their families, however it is important that workers don’t make assumptions and allow children and young people the space to explore and express these feelings without judgement or correction. Workers and services should not automatically

shy away from talking about children and young people’s families of origin or discussing the roles that these people have in their lives. For example, where appropriate, workers might want to take time to discuss with care experienced children and young people how they wish to refer to and discuss different care-givers and family members, whilst allowing for fluctuations in those relationships and in how they may feel about different family members.



#### KEY POINT

How we relate to others is significantly shaped by the nature of our relationships with caregivers and other adults in childhood and adolescence. Often referred to as “attachment”, the ways in which children and young people are responded to and cared for during these formative years can have a fundamental impact on the stability of their relationships both in childhood but also throughout their lifetime. If these relationships are disrupted - for example through neglect, inconsistency or abuse - this can create very real difficulties for children and young people to form a secure sense of self, as well as positive and healthy attachment styles in their relationships with others.

As many care experienced children and young people are likely to have experienced trauma, as well as potential disruptions to their attachments as a result of being involved with the care system, the adults in their lives play a pivotal role in providing safe and stable relationships and attachments. This can be modelled through all sorts of relationships, from carers, to teachers, to other professionals who can provide consistent and nurturing relationships that provide unconditional regard and who cheerlead for children and young people in their everyday lives.



## KEY QUESTIONS

How are services and people supporting children and young people encouraged to:

- understand the ways in which healthy and positive relationships of all kinds are important in promoting recovery from experiences of trauma and care?
- understand the importance of and embody safe and trusting professional relationships and interactions in promoting resilience and recovery for care experienced children and young people affected by trauma?
- ensure that wherever possible, care experienced children and young people accessing your service receive support from the same workers in order to provide continuity of support and to allow trusting relationships to develop?
- understand the importance of providing unconditional nurture and support to care experienced children and young people, even when they may present in “challenging” or difficult ways?
- take time to explore how care experienced children and young people wish to discuss and refer to certain people and relationships in their life, such as their family of origin?
- account for what additional support a care experienced child or young person might need to support them to engage with services and build relationships with workers? Are they able to choose who can join them at appointments, e.g., carer, social worker?
- develop a care experienced child or young person’s trust with them and the wider service? Are workers transparent, consistent and reliable in their behaviour and communication? Do workers explain why they are doing something in developmentally appropriate ways? Do they follow through on doing what they say they will?
- explain to care experienced children and young people about how information is recorded and shared? Is this done in clear and accessible ways so as not to confuse children and young people about the boundaries of trust and confidentiality?
- ensure they have the time and space to build relationships with the children and young people they are supporting in order to develop a fuller picture of what’s happening in their life and what intersecting and additional support needs they might have?

## Trauma-informed services, systems and workforces

Resist re-traumatisation and offer a greater sense of choice, trust, empowerment, collaboration and safety when supporting children and young people with care experience



### HOW DOES TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PROMISE?

- Children and families must be supported by a system that is there when it is needed: the scaffolding of help, support and accountability.
- Scotland must listen to what children and those close to them who know them best tell decision makers to understand the full picture of what is happening in a child's life, rather than relying on a professional hierarchy.
- Decisions taken about support must involve children and families with a focus on meeting their needs, as opposed to the system's needs.
- Children and their carers must have access to information about their individual rights and entitlements at any point in their journey of care.
- Young people with care experience must have access to independent advocacy and legal representation so that they understand their rights to certain benefits and services and are able to access them.

When a child or young person has experienced trauma, there is a high risk that they may experience repeated re-traumatisation throughout their lives. This can occur simply from experiencing similar feelings or emotions to those which they experienced when that trauma originally occurred. This often means that whilst a child or young person may appear to not be at any immediate risk, even just the tone of a conversation, a feeling of confusion or the sense of being ignored could cause re-traumatisation and distress. Children and young people also have different levels of developed, rational

thought and understanding of the world depending on their developmental stage. This can create further difficulties for children and young people who experience trauma to contextualise their experiences and understand the ways in which this might manifest in their emotions and behaviours, potentially creating even more fear and distress.

We also know that the system and processes of care can be complex and challenging for children and young people, as well as for their families and

carers. Care experience can involve highly sensitive situations and events, including separation from families of origin (including parents, carers, and siblings), the involvement of multiple different professionals and carers, transient home environments and absence from school. These challenges can be extremely destabilising and scary for children and young people and can create a risk of re-traumatisation.

Trauma-informed practice - where the impact of experiencing trauma is understood by staff and systems are improved accordingly - lessens the risk of re-traumatisation and sets up children and young people to thrive throughout their lives.

It is therefore crucial that the workforce, services and systems working with care experienced children and young people examine how they can integrate trauma-informed principles throughout all aspects of their work. Even those services which already work directly with care experienced children and young people affected by trauma and/or aim to deliver treatment and support around trauma can benefit from reviewing how their workforce, systems and structures operate together in a trauma-informed way.



## KEY QUESTIONS

To begin this work, it may be helpful to think of putting on some ‘trauma-informed glasses’ and look at a service or support journey through the eyes of a care experienced child or young person who may be affected by trauma. Taking a ‘walk through’ (starting from how a child or young person might come into contact with your service right through to the point at which they could leave) can help workers identify both what is functioning in a trauma-informed way and where improvements could be made. It may be helpful to use the following five principles of trauma-informed practice to guide such ‘walk through’ exercises. You might also find it helpful to use the [NES Trauma-Informed Lens Walkthrough Tool](#) and the [Toolkit for Scotland](#) to support this work.

**Choice** – ensuring that steps are taken to consider when it is possible and appropriate to involve care experienced children and young people with options regarding their care and support. This means taking time to consider what choices are age and developmentally appropriate and that communication around this is also pitched accordingly. This doesn’t mean offering choices and support which are not within the scope of what a worker, interaction and/or service can realistically offer, but rather being clear about what options are available and communicating what choices a child or young person has within that context. For some children and young people, choices can be difficult to understand and make when the options are not distinct and therefore discussion around choices and decisions may need to be approached more organically, rather than through “sit down” meetings and discussions.



How are services and people supporting children and young people encouraged to:

- promote children and young people to have different kinds of choices about the support they might receive? Do they have choice about how appointments are scheduled and where they are held? Do care experienced children and young people have the opportunity to express what makes them feel good or bad about that support and what helps them?
- consider how to actively involve care experienced children and young people in the decisions being made about their care and support? Is this done in a way which accounts for age and developmental stage and a balance of age appropriate boundaries?
- give careful consideration to who supports care experienced children and young people at meetings? Are children and young people given the appropriate information ahead of time and are they given time and space to think about any choices?
- reassure children that their choices are “ok” and that they are allowed to change their mind?
- pay attention to power dynamics which might be present when asking a care experienced child or young person to make decisions or choices; for example, any feelings of being “pulled” between adults? Are workers able to mitigate for this?

**Trust** – taking the time to establish and maintain relationships and interactions that are rooted in honesty, transparency and consistency. This includes giving care experienced children and young people space to meaningfully express how they think and feel; communicating with and treating them respectfully; workers showing up when they say they will; following through on agreed actions; and establishing and honouring boundaries. It also means addressing any judgement and stigma that children and young people may encounter because of their experiences.

How are services and people supporting children and young people encouraged to:

- be consistent? Do they follow through on what they say they will do? Do organisational and service structures enable this?
- understand the importance of making concerted efforts to make relational repairs after any rupture with care experienced children and young people? Do workers and carers take time to apologise if they have let children and young people down?
- provide consistent access to one worker, to provide the time and opportunity to develop a sense of trust, and to avoid them having to re-tell their experiences to multiple workers?
- accommodate for and destigmatise the ways in which care experience might create feelings of shame or stigma for children and young people, such as missing school due to appointments; receiving specialist rather than universal support; or visiting parent/s in prison?



- take a clear and explicit approach to explaining confidentiality to children and young people in a way that recognises the boundaries of child protection and explains this in developmentally appropriate ways?
- embed effective processes for addressing issues that cut across different policy areas, in order to avoid ‘siloes’ or inconsistent approaches to working with care experienced children and young people who may be affected by trauma?
- actively ask about knowledge and skills of trauma-informed practice in recruitment processes?
- have a workforce development strategy in place that aims to ensure that all those who come into contact with care experienced children and young people have the training and support they need to respond in a trauma-informed way?

**Empowerment** – acknowledging and nurturing care experienced children and young people’s existing strengths and resilience. This means liking the child or young person for who they are over their achievements, acknowledging where they are doing their best, and giving hope of recovery and a positive future. Empowering care experienced children and young people also means recognising and accommodating for the ways in which their behaviours may often occur as responses to trauma and as ways of expressing their emotions and needs.

How are services and people supporting children and young people encouraged to:

- take a strengths-based approach to their work with care experienced children and young people that acknowledges and supports resilience? Do assessments, case files and treatment plans include information about the child or young person’s strengths, likes and preferences?
- take a curious rather than corrective approach to the behaviours of care experienced children and young people in order to explore what they may be attempting to communicate?
- take a practical, age appropriate and balanced approach that allows children and young people to play a consistent and meaningful part in decision-making about their lives?
- to use trauma-informed language when talking to care experienced children and young people accessing support in your service? What language might feel stigmatising?
- promote positive messaging and encouragement about recovery from trauma? Does your service ensure that experiences of care and trauma are not framed as factors which necessarily always create “bad” outcomes for children and young people?
- ensure that independent advocacy is offered to young people with care experience? Are workers provided with the information to help young people access this support?



**Collaboration** – working alongside care experienced children and young people affected by trauma to “do with” and not “do to”. Often workers and services can take actions which, whilst established practice, may not actually be the most supportive for the child or young person concerned. Collaboration means conducting assessments that give space for care experienced children and young people to fully explain their thoughts and experiences, and creating support around them which is informed by what they say helps them feel good and safe. It can mean assisting children and young people to express themselves clearly in a language and context with which they feel comfortable and in making decisions with workers and carers which balance care and empowerment.

How are services and people supporting children and young people encouraged to:

- exercise a genuine and open curiosity about how to best support care experienced children and young people, as well as their families and carers?
- take steps to ensure that they feel comfortable and able to ask questions about their support at any point? Are proactive opportunities created for this which are relevant to children and young people’s age and stage?
- take time to explore and proactively address what the barriers might be for care experienced children and young people to accessing support and services?
- work with and share information with other services/agencies to address a child or young person’s holistic needs, e.g., more specialised mental health support if required, housing, substance use, child protection, or specialist gender-based violence services?
- consider if any requirements to accessing support from your service that, based on your knowledge of the impact of trauma and the complexities of the care system, might be a barrier for care experienced children and young people?
- consider how Corporate Parents collaborate with one another in order to provide effective support and services for care experienced children and young people?

**Safety** – striving to create both physical and emotional safety for children and young people being supported. In a physical sense this can mean making sure that environments are secure and well managed, and creating spaces and services which are calm and comfortable and which protect confidentiality and privacy. Emotional safety might mean ensuring that staff are equipped to approach their work in a calm and reassuring manner; ensuring that workers honour their commitments to the children and young people they are supporting; and that they strive to build relationships that are open and trusting. It may also mean ensuring that children and young people are provided with age and stage appropriate information and choice in order to participate in making decisions about what feels both physically and emotionally safe for them.



How are services and people supporting children and young people encouraged to:

- understand and reflect on the impact that trauma can have on care experienced children and young people, and accommodate for the ways in which this might cause children and young people to feel unsafe, even if they are physically out of danger?
- understand the ways in which different stages of development in children and young people can impact on how they perceive and understand their safety; for example, the ability to understand object permanence and distinguish between fact and “magical thinking”?
- reflect on how a service’s physical environment can help children and young people feel safe, calm and comfortable? Are age appropriate adjustments available?
- reflect on how a service environment may be distressing to care experienced children and young people? For example, language on posters/ leaflets, specific security measures?
- ensure there are private, comfortable spaces for safe and confidential discussions where children can feel relaxed and access relevant comforts and activities to enable organic and non-threatening discussion?
- ensure that all members of staff, including reception, administrative and cleaning staff, have the knowledge, skills and confidence to understand the role they have to play in providing a safe, supportive environment in the service?
- reflect on screening and assessment processes? How do workers communicate the purpose and aims of this process in a way that is trauma-informed and relevant and appropriate to the varying ages and stages of children and young people?

# Promote workforce safety and wellbeing for those supporting care experienced children and young people



## HOW DOES TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PROMISE?

- The workforce needs support, time and care to develop and maintain relationships. Scotland must hold the hands of those who hold the hand of the child.
- People in the workforce supporting care experienced children and young people must be supported: to listen, and to be compassionate in their care and decision-making.
- There must be more provision for all carers, recognising the support they need to care for children who have experienced trauma. This is not about professionalising those roles or providing specialist training but ensuring access to support, advice and networks.
- Providing adequate time for effective, flexible, day to day and more regular structured support, supervision and reflective practice is vital in caring for the workforce so that they can care for others.

Trauma can be a very difficult and complicated issue to work with. The challenges in supporting people affected by trauma can potentially leave workers physically and emotionally impacted, affecting both their wellbeing and their ability to feel connected to their work. The work of supporting children and young people with experience of care and trauma is vital, as it will have a hugely positive impact on children's growth and development. Children and young people have natural vulnerabilities and limitations by virtue of their developmental journey and this is reflected in the high expectations we have for those working with and supporting children and young people to protect and shield them from harm.

Workers who are regularly coming into contact with and supporting children and young people with experiences of care and trauma are often exposed to what can be very distressing details and this can have a significant emotional impact. This can be further exacerbated by pressures around having to inform and/or make difficult decisions about how to manage risks posed to children, often in time- and resource-sensitive contexts. The responsibility associated with supporting children and young people, particularly those who have additional vulnerabilities, can place a great deal of stress on workers to get things "right" and avoid further harm from occurring. Without high-quality, trauma-informed policies, practice, and approaches to both service operation and staff wellbeing, these pressures can become unmanageable for the workforce.

We know that the workforce needs to be well in order to support others. It is vital that staff feel safe and supported when they are caring for and supporting others, particularly because those directly supporting children and young people with experience of care and trauma face an increased risk of experiencing vicarious trauma, burn out, moral injury and compassion fatigue. It is also important to highlight that there is no “them” and “us” when talking about trauma; the prevalence of traumatic experiences means that trauma will inevitably personally impact many of those within our workforce. This includes those in foster and kinship care roles where there can also be difficult complexities and boundaries to navigate between supporting the wellbeing of individuals in their roles as both family members and as part of the care system and workforce.

**Vicarious trauma** is the experience of trauma-related difficulties that can arise from being repeatedly exposed to details of other people’s lived trauma. For example, a person might find that their view of the world, themselves, and others, is altered by the stories that they hear. Vicarious trauma is usually something that happens gradually over time.

**Compassion fatigue** is often experienced amongst people who work in the caring professions, where they have to regularly draw on their empathic resources. Emotional and physical resources can be eroded when unable to rest and recharge, and a point can be reached where workers feel they are unable to care anymore for others. This might be apparent in workers’ personal and professional lives. For example, they may notice that they feel deep irritation at the problems presented to them by people accessing their service for support, or feel unable to support a friend through a difficult time.

**Burnout** is a term specific to the workplace, whereby we feel physically and emotionally exhausted due to low job satisfaction and feeling overwhelmed by workload and powerless to change the situation. It does not mean that our view of the world has altered, or that we struggle to feel compassion for others.

**Moral injury** is the harm caused to our moral conscience and personal values when our actions (or lack of) go against these. It can result in feelings of guilt and shame and ‘moral distress’ which may overwhelm our sense of ‘goodness’.

There are many ways in which we can create a workplace culture that protects against some of the risks associated with providing support to people affected by trauma, including workers who provide support to children and young people with experience of care and trauma. This might include:

### Supporting culture change:

- Talking about care experience and trauma and how these experiences can affect people in non-judgemental, fact-based ways.
- Developing a culture that encourages space for reflection, peer support and open discussion to support worker safety and wellbeing.
- Ensuring managers and leadership are supportive and flexible and embody the principles of trauma-informed practice.
- Supporting an open culture where workers feel safe and supported to identify risks or challenges to wellbeing and highlight potential improvements.

### Developing policies and procedures:

- Setting policy and protocol guidelines that expect workers to understand the prevalence and impact of trauma on both the children and young people they support and themselves.
- Ensuring there are systems in place to support workers affected by vicarious trauma, burnout, compassion fatigue and/or moral injury. This includes ensuring your service/organisation has a specific worker wellbeing policy that addresses this.

- Support a wider culture shift around worker safety and wellbeing that allows workers to express safety concerns without worrying that they will be seen as unwilling and unable to do their job. This includes clear governance and processes for staff to raise concerns.
- Regularly assessing workloads to review capacity, time management and balanced caseloads.
- Ensuring that workers have more control over their time management and workload, including setting priorities for work-life balance, flexible working policies, etc.

#### Embedding reflection and trauma-informed supervision practices:

- Supporting a culture of reflection and critical thinking that encourages workers to process their personal history, biases and fears with supervisors, peers and coaches.
- Supporting a culture of meaningful supervision structures, with high quality supervision that uses a trauma lens and protected time for supervisors and workers to engage.



#### KEY POINT

Children and young people face additional vulnerabilities to those of adults, by virtue of their developmental stage, and it can be extremely distressing to be exposed to the ways in which those vulnerabilities have been abused or neglected. Our systems and services also place high expectations on those working with vulnerable children and young people in terms of how they manage risk and protect those children and young people from harm. Whilst it is vital that such high standards exist, this can be extremely stressful and high pressure for workers, particularly when they may also be hearing about and witnessing the impact of traumatic events, and/or they may also be trying to cope with the impact of their own traumatic experiences.

This can mean that those working in services that regularly support children and young people with experience of care and trauma can experience high rates of burnout, vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue and moral injury. It is therefore of vital importance that services prioritise worker wellbeing and have robust procedures in place to support a culture of trauma-informed practice. For example, it might be helpful for services to consider how they have open and honest discussions with workers about risk and how the uncertainties and worries associated with managing risk can impact on wellbeing, how services can support workers with the emotional impact this can have, and how leaders and service structures can ensure that staff are best supported to make decisions about risk that feel robust and informed.



## KEY QUESTIONS

- Do services, systems and policies integrate a culture of understanding and openness about the ways in which working with children and young people with experience of care and trauma can be challenging and professionally and personally affect staff? Are consistent messages promoted about these complexities and the importance of providing a supportive and inclusive environment for workers to discuss any difficulties?
- Are workers provided with the tools to understand the various ways in which working with children and young people with experience of care and trauma may impact them? Are they equipped to be able to identify when they might be experiencing vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue, for example?
- Do leaders and managers have a clear understanding of how this complex work can affect workers and services? Are they able to identify when this might be happening for those they supervise and are they comfortable initiating conversations about this and signposting to appropriate support?
- Do workers have the ability to debrief and reflect with a peer or manager after challenging interactions at work? Is this approached in a non-judgmental way and are there safe and confidential spaces to have these discussions?
- Are workers supported to reflect openly and honestly about their feelings around the work they undertake and how this might affect them personally, professionally and emotionally? Are workers encouraged to speak freely about their work and their interactions with the children and young people they support?
- Are there mechanisms in place within services that encourage staff to acknowledge and reflect on the positive aspects of their work, the strengths they bring to their jobs and what keeps the work meaningful? Are opportunities created to collectively recognise and celebrate when things go well?
- Do workers have space to reflect on and discuss their own life experiences and how this might affect how they feel about their work?
- Are the dual roles which some carers can play as both family and as part of the care system and workforce acknowledged? Are there measures in place to support these carers with their unique set of emotional and wellbeing needs?

# Useful resources

[The National Trauma Training Programme website](#) has a number of free training resources to support professionals across the Scottish workforce. This [interactive PDF](#) summarises all of the resources available.



[Who Cares? Scotland](#) are a national independent membership organisation for care experienced people. They support advocacy and participation for people with care experience, as well as providing education and representation of the needs and voice of care experienced people. The Who Cares Scotland website hosts [resources and learning](#) which you may find helpful.



[The Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum \(STAF\)](#) is Scotland's national membership organisation for all of those involved in the lives of young people leaving care. Their website hosts a number of resources, including a number of [practice resources](#) relevant to supporting people with experience of care.



[The Promise website](#) hosts information about The Promise agenda and the various work streams taking place to implement this large scale change across the care system.



The [Improvement Service](#) can provide a range of support to local authorities and planning partnerships with improvement and action planning around developing trauma-informed practice and policy.



[Each and Every Child](#) is an initiative that aims to shift public attitudes towards care experience in Scotland to improve life chances of children, young people and their families. The [Each and Every Child Toolkit](#) provides a guide, as well as tips and advice, on how to change your language to frame care experience in a way that focusses on what each and every child needs to thrive.



[CELCIS](#) is a leading improvement and innovation centre in Scotland. They aim to improve children's lives by supporting people and organisations to drive long-lasting change in the services they need, and the practices used by people responsible for their care. Their [Knowledge Bank](#) hosts a range of useful resources.



[Education Scotland](#) offers [learning programmes](#) that aim to support staff wellbeing with sessions such as [Keeping Trauma in Mind](#). These sessions can be adapted to suit the local context and meet sector requirements.



# Policy context

There are multiple local, national and international drivers for developing services, systems and workforces in Scotland that recognise and respond to the impact and prevalence of trauma for children and young people with care experience.

## Strategies and key priorities

The Scottish Government's [Getting It Right For Looked After Children and Young People Strategy](#) (2015) aims to improve the lives of children and young people in the care system. This strategy is based on [Getting It Right For Every Child](#) (GIRFEC), the national approach to improving the wellbeing of children and young people in Scotland to ensure they reach their full potential. This approach puts the best interests of the child at the heart of decision-making, ensuring children have the access to the right support at the right time.

[The Promise](#) is Scotland's response to the [Independent Care Review](#), which outlined what needs to change to ensure that every care experienced child and young person is safe, loved and respected. The findings recognise that many care experienced children and young people have been affected by trauma and that growing up in the care system was among the most traumatising experiences they faced.

The Scottish Government's [Mental Health Strategy](#) notes that it is important for children and young people to feel listened to and that their mental health and wellbeing needs are recognised in relationships with families, carers and adults. It also emphasises that mental health services need to recognise the impact that family breakdown can have on children and young people at different ages and stages of life.

The Scottish Government's youth justice strategy, [Preventing Offending:](#)

[Getting it Right for Children and Young People](#) (2015) identifies a need for a joined-up approach involving children's, youth and criminal justice services, specifying close alignment with work relating to children and young people with experience in the care system.

## Legislation

The [Children's Hearing \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#) is the legislation that strengthens children's rights within the children's hearing system, specifying that a child's views should be taken into account, where possible. Recent developments within the children's hearing system include a specialist advocacy service for children and young people, which was introduced in Spring 2020. This has also been expanded to support siblings with participation rights for children's hearings. A report on the [re-design of the Children's Hearing System](#) has been published in response to The Promise. This will see the transformation of the hearing system based on the experiences of children and families across Scotland.

The [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) outlines the rights of all children and young people in Scotland, including provision of services and support. This Act outlines the responsibilities of named Corporate Parents to every child and young person who is, or has been, looked after by a local authority. This includes monitoring and promoting their wellbeing.

The [Children \(Care and Justice\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#) makes changes to the law in relation to the care of children and the involvement of children in the



criminal justice system. It aims to help uphold The Promise by ensuring that children who come into contact with care and justice services are treated with trauma-informed and age-appropriate support.

The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC) is an international statement of children's rights which includes rights on parental responsibilities to a child, protection from all forms of negative treatment from parents, and the right to protection and assistance from the government if a child is unable to live with their family. The Scottish Government is committed to Scotland being the first UK nation to incorporate the UNCRC into domestic law. [Arrangements are underway](#) to begin the process of Parliamentary Reconsideration of a revised UNCRC Bill.



#### KEY POINT

This [short paper](#) explores how a small number of key cross-cutting agendas to tackle inequality, trauma and adversity, including The Promise and the intended domestic implementation of the UNCRC, and a trauma-informed approach, can be aligned at the local level to maximise commitment and resources available.

Many thanks to all of the individuals and organisations who contributed to developing this resource, ensuring this document has been shaped by the voices of expertise by experience and expertise by profession, including:

- CELCIS
- Each and Every Child
- Education Scotland
- Local authority colleagues
- The Promise
- Who Cares? Scotland



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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