

A Practical guide for Managers and Seniors: Supporting Staff in a Trauma- Informed Way



PEOPLE



PROMOTE



PROTECT



PROVIDE



PARTNERSHIP

Delivering good health
and prevention services
Public Health in Leicestershire



Leicestershire
County Council

Table of Contents:

- 1. Executive summary**
- 2. Introduction**
- 3. Educate yourself**
- 4. Foster a safe and supportive environment**
- 5. Train and educate your staff**
- 6. Establish clear policies and procedures for mental health and wellbeing**
- 7. Regular check-ins**
- 8. Flexibility and Accommodations**
- 9. Encourage self-care**
- 10. Connect employees with resources**
- 11. Peer support networks**
- 12. Reflective practice/leading with empathy.**
- 13. Conclusion**

1. Executive summary

In February 2021, the strategic partnership board agreed to provide strategic leadership and governance for the development of a trauma-informed system across LLR', with the following strategic intent:

“To work collaboratively across organisations and with communities to develop a trauma-informed system which simultaneously aims to prevent childhood trauma and mitigate its harmful impact across the life-course”.

The Public Health department is committed to addressing trauma and adopting a trauma informed approach with a mission and vision statement approved in November 2022 by the Departmental Management Team (DMT).

LCC Public Health Vision:

Our vision is to work with staff within the department and commissioned services to become a trauma informed community ensuring that we understand trauma, recognise how it can affect us and members of the community, alongside upskilling staff to know how to respond appropriately to those needs.

LCC Public Health Mission statement:

To promote a trauma-sensitive community and build resilience throughout Leicestershire, supporting our department and partner organisations to become trauma sensitive which will reduce the effect of trauma on individuals, families and communities and prevent re-traumatisation. We will work together to create a safe and inclusive environment for our staff and members of the community and work with our commissioned services to support them to adopt this approach.

Childhood trauma, and its causes, were recognised as a common factor underpinning the majority of harmful behaviours the Strategic Partnership Board seeks to address such as domestic abuse, substance misuse and significant mental ill health, as well as a range of other poorer health and social outcomes such as violence, exploitation and wider offending.

Exposure to trauma during childhood is highly prevalent, which can result in detrimental emotional, behavioural, biological and health related issues across the life course. Research shows trauma exposure can result in poorer educational attainment, with higher likelihood to demonstrate aggressive behaviours and experience depression, anxiety, and low esteem throughout the life course.

The original Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study (Felitti et al, 1998) highlighted the link between childhood trauma and the onset of chronic health conditions later in life. ACE's can include but is not limited to, Child abuse, Mental Ill Health, Substance Abuse, teenage pregnancy and witnessing abusive behaviours. Those who experienced 4 or more ACEs were most at risk of poorer health and social outcomes. This has since been confirmed through subsequent studies, including some conducted in England and Wales. The trajectory of the health, and social impact of

trauma, have also been captured by Bellis (2016), highlighting the imperatives of prevention and mitigation in order to break the cycle of trauma.

There are many working definitions of trauma; however, Leicestershire County Council has adopted the definition used by Substance Abuse And Mental Health Service Administration (SAMSHA).

SAMSHA defines trauma as a result of an event or series of events, or a set of circumstances, that cause adverse lasting effects on the overall health and wellbeing of individuals (Huang et al., 2014). Trauma has a disadvantageous impact at both individual and community levels due to the severe lasting effects on how humans interact, function, communicate and manage their day to day lives .

Being a trauma informed organisation has its many benefits. Research suggests that by embedding trauma informed practice (TIP) into the workplace it will support the reduction of health inequalities by enabling the organisation to recognise long standing trauma, preventing re-traumatisation, supporting the mental and emotional wellbeing of staff and in turn reducing the likelihood of staff burn out, post-traumatic stress disorder, sick leave and poor work performance. Therefore, improving the staff retention within the workplace (Fenney, 2019).

Managers and seniors have a duty to provide a safe working environment, where individuals feel safe and supported. Adopting this perspective into Public Health services will enable practitioners and existing services to further develop preventative approaches within the workplace that aim to reduce the inadvertent and widespread traumatisation or re-traumatisation of our staff, which in turn will improve the overall health and wellbeing of our workforce (Magruder et al., 2017).

2. Introduction:

Embedding trauma-informed practice into leadership and management is crucial for creating a supportive and productive work environment. This approach recognises the potential impact of trauma on individuals and the need for sensitive and informed management strategies. Addressing trauma in the workplace not only benefits employees but also promotes organisational growth and success.

The main benefits include:

Enhancing Employee Well-being:

Trauma can negatively affect employees' mental health, emotional well-being, and job performance. By adopting trauma-informed practices, leaders and managers can create a safe and supportive environment that fosters healing and growth. Understanding the impact of trauma enables leaders to provide appropriate support, resources, and accommodations for employees, contributing to their overall well-being.

Increasing Resilience and Engagement:

Trauma-informed leadership and management approaches encourage a culture of resilience and empowerment. By recognizing and addressing trauma, leaders can promote employee engagement, motivation, and loyalty. Employees who feel supported and understood are more

likely to take welcomed and measured risks, express their ideas, and contribute meaningfully to the organisation.

Mitigating Turnover and Absenteeism:

Trauma can manifest in absenteeism, high staff turnover rates, and decreased productivity. Incorporating trauma-informed practices into leadership and management can reduce these negative outcomes. By creating an inclusive and compassionate workplace, leaders can build trust, strengthen employee loyalty, and minimize the loss of talented staff. This, in turn, helps to maintain continuity, reduce recruitment costs, and foster a positive organisational culture.

Enhancing Conflict Resolution and Communication:

Trauma-informed leadership and management approaches promote effective communication and conflict resolution skills. Leaders who understand trauma can respond empathetically to conflicts and difficulties, fostering open dialogue and mutual understanding. By addressing trauma-related triggers and promoting healthy communication, leaders can minimise workplace conflicts and improve teamwork and collaboration.

Further reading:

Crucial Confrontations: Tools for Resolving Broken Promises, Violated Expectations, and Bad Behavior - by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler ISBN:0071446524 McGraw-Hill © 2005 (284 pages) – this book provides practical guidance on acing tricky conversations.



Crucial
Confrontations (1).pdf

Driving Organisational Growth and Success:

Organisations that prioritise trauma-informed leadership and management gain a competitive advantage. These practices foster a positive workplace culture where individuals can thrive, leading to improved productivity, innovation, and creative problem-solving. Additionally, employees who experience trauma-informed leadership are more likely to feel valued and respected, leading to increased loyalty, employee retention, and long-term success for the organisation.

Embedding trauma-informed practices into leadership and management is paramount for creating a supportive work environment. This approach not only supports employee well-being but also cultivates resilience, reduces turnover, enhances communication, and drives organizational growth. By embracing trauma-informed practices, leaders and managers can create a workplace where individuals can flourish, fostering a positive and productive organizational culture.

From this point, are these the expectations on managers? If so, perhaps a sentence here would go nicely. I think it needs to be clear what is being asked from managers.

3. Educate Yourself

Familiarise yourself with trauma, its effects, and common signs to look out for. Understand the importance of trauma-informed care and how it applies to supporting employees. Stay updated on current research and best practices in mental health.

SAMSHA describes trauma as a result of an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

Trauma can affect people in many ways from loss of self-worth, mental health illness through to physical illnesses such as paleness, lethargy, fatigue, poor concentration, and a racing heartbeat. Trauma can also have a profound impact on employees' ability to for fill day to day tasks, linking to absenteeism, decreased work moral, changes in work patterns and decreased motivation.

It is the responsibility of senior members of staff to continuously reflect on their knowledge skills and behaviours in relation to trauma informed care, it is recommended that all senior staff attend the trauma informed practice training E-learning on learning pool and attend the training sessions being provided by Barnardo's.

Dr Gabor Mate explains trauma as "...Trauma is not what happens to us, it is what happens inside of us, as a result of what happened to us. "

"It is not always caused by the bad things happening that shouldn't happen, it can be experienced when the good stuff that should happen, doesn't happen..."

4. Foster a Safe and Supportive Environment

Create a culture that promotes psychological safety. Encourage open communication, active listening, and non-judgmental attitudes. Foster a workplace where employees feel comfortable expressing their needs and concerns.

Creating psychological safety in the workplace means bringing your team together as one and creating an environment that sets everyone up for success. And it starts with you. Your interactions with your team will determine whether they feel safe airing their opinions and concerns.

Psychological Safety training can be accessed through learning and development namely: Insight - Manager Training - Psychological Safety, please search the learning hub for more details.

Stage 1 as developed by Timothy R Clarke: Everyone on your team feels included, accepted and respected. Ask for input, opinions and feedback, share your personal ways of working and be available and approachable to all.

How to know if your team has inclusion safety

- ✓ Job titles, position, and authority aren't used as status symbols.
- ✓ Everyone's personal differences and experiences are celebrated
- ✓ Everyone regularly connects, be it in person, online, or via messaging

- ✓ No one's name is unknown or mispronounced
- ✓ Everyone feels able to share information about their life outside of work

Stage 2: Everyone on the team feels able to take risks, fail and learn with the right supportive network around them. Focus on risks rather than blame, talk about risks you have taken or are currently taking and dedicate some time aside for wider learning and development.

How to know if your team has learner safety

- ✓ Everyone feels able to make and share mistakes
- ✓ Learning is as important as the outcome
- ✓ Everyone is learning together, constantly (leaders, too!)
- ✓ Feedback is part of everyday company life
- ✓ Everyone is comfortable saying "I don't know"

Stage 3: Everyone on the team feels supported to share their own ideas and opinions. Proactively listen to your colleagues, express your gratitude and allow colleagues to use their own initiative and skills to develop new ideas.

How to know if your team has contributor safety

- ✓ Everyone is working with passion and enthusiasm
- ✓ Teams are solving problems, not completing tasks
- ✓ Everyone naturally works with autonomy
- ✓ More questions are being asked than answered
- ✓ Everyone feels able to participate and share their ideas

Stage 4: Everyone on the team feels comfortable challenging the status quo. Give permission, offer safe spaces to have a healthy debate/discussion and provide conflict resolution.

How to know if your team has challenger safety

- ✓ Everyone has a voice and is listened to
- ✓ There's no tiptoeing around bad news
- ✓ Teams are comfortable sharing their half-baked ideas
- ✓ Disruptive ideas are encouraged and discussed
- ✓ Things get done because your team is excited to tackle new problems

5. Train and Educate Staff

Provide regular training and workshops on trauma-informed care, mental health awareness, and self-care strategies. Equip your team with the knowledge and skills they need to recognise and respond to trauma-related issues.

Offer your staff the opportunities to attend trauma informed practice training sessions, provide them with the appropriate links to access training and signpost them to the learning hub to access training designed and developed through CFS.

Ensure that staff have the appropriate skills to understand trauma, recognise signs of trauma, understand their own mental health needs and how to appropriately seek support internally and externally depending on need.

Further training opportunities:

The attached link takes you to a range of free resources designed and developed by the Learning and Development (L&D) specialists and Children and Families Services (CFS).

<https://leicestershiretotara.learningpool.com/course/view.php?id=5334>

6. Establish Clear Policies

Develop policies and procedures that prioritise employee well-being and mental health. Ensure that staff are aware of these policies and provide ongoing reminders and updates. Set clear expectations around work-life balance, stress management, and self-care practices.

Regularly remind your staff team about the internal mental health offer, signpost to external services where necessary. Regularly familiarise yourself with internal policies that will support employee wellbeing and mental health.

Review the Trauma Informed Practice policy, gain a good understanding and sign post all staff to the policy, ensuring you provide staff the opportunities and time to review.

It is encouraged that staff review the wellbeing bulletin which is circulated via COMMS. The internal wellbeing offer can be reviewed here

<https://leics.sharepoint.com/sites/peopleservices/SitePages/wellbeing.aspx>

7. Regular Check-ins

Schedule regular check-ins with your staff to assess their well-being. Create a safe space where they can openly discuss any challenges or concerns, they may be facing. Use active listening skills and empathetic responses to validate their experiences.

When actively checking in with your staff team make wellbeing a priority, questions such as how are you? With a pause is beneficial- embrace the silence.

Keep check-ins separately from 1-2-1's or team catch ups, providing a safe platform for staff to be able to talk about things that are impacting them personally is essential.

Create virtual safe spaces where you can regularly talk to your teams about how are they doing, its important to capture any changes in their personal lives to understand how this can impact them on a day to day basis.

Promote self-care practices among your team members. Encourage employees to take breaks, engage in stress-reducing activities, and prioritise their well-being. Provide resources and information on mental health support services, wellness programs, and employee assistance programs.

8. Flexibility and Accommodations

Offer flexibility and reasonable accommodations to employees who may be dealing with trauma or mental health issues. This could include adjusting work hours, workload, or providing temporary modifications to job responsibilities. Ensure confidentiality and non-discrimination in handling these requests.

Offer Flexible Work Arrangements:

Recognise that individuals dealing with trauma or mental health issues may benefit from flexible work arrangements. Consider offering options such as flexible working hours, remote working, or part-time schedules. This flexibility can provide employees with the necessary time and space to prioritize their mental health while still fulfilling their work responsibilities.

Provide Reasonable Adjustments:

Work with the employee to identify reasonable adjustments that can be made to support their specific needs. These adjustments may include changes in workload, restructuring tasks, providing additional resources, or altering deadlines. Collaborate with the employee to find solutions that allow them to work at their best while managing their mental health challenges.

9. Encourage Self-Care

Promote self-care practices and emphasise their importance in maintaining mental well-being. Provide resources, such as self-help materials, mindfulness apps, or access to wellness programs. Lead by example and encourage a healthy work-life balance within the team.

Wellbeing support page: <https://leics.sharepoint.com/sites/whatsnew/SitePages/confidential-workplace-wellbeing-support-offered-to-employees-31-january.aspx>

Support available includes:

- Support with mental health
- Support with stress
- Support with domestic abuse
- Support with substance misuse
- Support during the menopause
- Referral to occupational health

Pause to Talk

Employees can access a Pause to Talk slot by emailing the Well-being Service on counsellingandwellbeing@leics.gov.uk and putting Pause to Talk in the subject line. They will then be offered a slot to talk, usually within a week.

Other resources to be aware of:

- Resilience resources: <https://www.amazingif.com/listen/how-to-stay-resilient/>
- coping with uncertainty: <https://www.amazingif.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Coping-with-Career-Uncertainty.pdf>
- Reflective practice workbook: <https://www.amazingif.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Coping-with-Career-Uncertainty.pdf>

The Domestic Abuse Toolkit developed by CFS offers a range of advice, guidance and education on trauma, the impact of trauma and how to work with trauma. It also offers advice and guidance on safety planning and domestic abuse. Please familiarise yourself with this document and share amongst your teams.



Domestic Abuse
Toolkit 2021-Low Res

10. Connect Employees with Resources

Maintain a list of internal and external resources available to support employees, such as Employee Assistance Programs, counselling services, or support groups. Make these resources easily accessible and provide regular reminders of their availability.

Remind staff of the Joy app that provides information on local services and offers opportunities to staff to search for a service based on need, all seniors and managers should familiarise themselves with the local services that are accessible to all.

Seniors and managers are expected to know the internal health and wellbeing offer and where necessary support and signpost staff to access this.

11. Peer Support Networks

Encourage the formation of peer support groups or mentorship programs within your team. This creates a sense of belonging and provides a safe space for employees to connect, share experiences, and offer support to one another.

Make use of internal champions, develop buddying systems, or explore the implementation of mentors across your department. Use your staff skills, knowledge, and expertise on areas of interest and allow staff to offer a supportive culture.

12. Lead with Empathy

Show empathy and understanding when dealing with individual employees. Avoid making assumptions or judgments and aim to validate their experiences. Practice active listening and ask open-ended questions to gain insight into their needs and concerns.

- **Active Listening:** Empathy starts with actively listening to your team members. Encourage open communication and create a safe space for them to express their thoughts, concerns, and ideas. Be fully present, listen attentively, and show genuine interest in understanding their perspectives.
- **Understanding and Validation:** Seek to understand the emotions and experiences of your team members. Put yourself in their shoes and validate their feelings. Acknowledge their successes, challenges, and any difficulties they may be facing in both their personal and professional lives.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** Develop and enhance your emotional intelligence, which involves recognising, understanding, and managing your own emotions and those of others. This allows you to respond appropriately to different situations and adapt your leadership style to meet the needs of your team.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Recognise that different team members may have unique needs and motivations. Stay flexible and adaptive in your leadership approach, considering individual preferences and circumstances. Tailor your communication and management style to each person to ensure they feel heard and understood.
- **Empowerment and Support:** Empower your team by giving them autonomy and providing support when needed. Show empathy by offering resources, guidance, and opportunities for growth. Recognise and appreciate their efforts, reinforcing a positive and inclusive work environment.
- **Conflict Resolution:** In times of conflict, approach the situation with empathy. Be impartial, listen to all parties involved, and strive to find a fair and reasonable solution. Treat conflicts as opportunities for growth and learning, rather than sources of negativity.
- **Lead by Example:** Demonstrate empathy through your own actions and behaviour. Be kind, compassionate, and understanding towards your team members. Show empathy towards yourself as well, as self-care and self-compassion are crucial in maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Leading with empathy is an ongoing practice that requires self-awareness, active listening, and a genuine desire to understand and support your team members. By nurturing a culture of empathy, you can foster stronger relationships, improve morale, and create a more productive and harmonious work environment

13. Conclusion

Supporting staff in a trauma-informed way is an ongoing process. Regularly review and update your practices based on evidence based internal resources and communications provided, feedback, reflective practice, emerging research, and evolving needs within the workplace. By implementing these strategies, you can promote a healthier and more supportive work environment, which can ultimately allow people to thrive, prevent staff sickness and absence and promote high performance while supporting their mental health needs.